

The perception of authenticity in brands' digital employer branding posts: A comparative discourse analysis of authenticity indicators

Markaların dijital işveren markası paylaşımlarının otantiklik algısı: Otantiklik göstergeleri üzerine karşılaştırmalı bir söylem analizi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how brands build a perception of authenticity in their digital employer branding communications. Due to the impact of digitalization, employer brand communication has largely shifted to online platforms; this situation has made it even more critical for brands to be perceived as trustworthy, sincere, and transparent by both potential and current employees. In this context, the significance of this research lies in its contribution to the literature by revealing the relationship between digital employer branding and authenticity at the discursive level. The study employed discourse analysis as a qualitative method; a total of 74 posts shared by Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol on LinkedIn and Instagram were analyzed within the framework of the core dimensions of brand authenticity. The findings indicate that the perception of authenticity is not one-dimensional but is constructed through multiple indicators such as consistency, innovation, reliability, and naturalness. Furthermore, while the banking sector tends to feature a more institutional and consistent discourse, the technology sector stands out for its more sincere, experience-focused, and dynamic communication style. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that authenticity has become a strategic element in digital employer brand communication and plays a decisive role in helping brands gain a competitive advantage.

Keywords: Digital employer brand, authenticity, brand authenticity, discourse analysis, employee experience.

Öz

Bu çalışma, markaların dijital işveren markası iletişiminde otantiklik algısını nasıl inşa ettiklerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dijitalleşmenin etkisiyle işveren markası iletişimi büyük ölçüde çevrimiçi platformlara taşınmış; bu durum, markaların potansiyel ve mevcut çalışanlar nezdinde güven, samimiyet ve şeffaflık temelinde algılanmasını daha kritik hale getirmiştir. Bu bağlamda araştırmanın önemi, dijital işveren markası ile otantiklik arasındaki ilişkiyi söylemsel düzeyde ortaya koyarak literatüre nitel bir katkı sunmasıdır. Araştırmada nitel yöntemlerden söylem analizi kullanılmış; Türkiye İş Bankası ve Trendyol'un LinkedIn ve Instagram platformlarında paylaştıkları toplam 74 içerik, marka otantikliğinin temel boyutları çerçevesinde çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular, otantiklik algısının tek boyutlu değil; süreklilik, yenilikçilik, güvenilirlik ve doğallık gibi çoklu göstergeler üzerinden inşa edildiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca bankacılık sektöründe daha kurumsal ve tutarlı bir söylem öne çıkarken, teknoloji sektöründe daha samimi, deneyim odaklı ve dinamik bir iletişim dili dikkat çekmektedir. Sonuç olarak, dijital işveren markası iletişiminde otantikliğin stratejik bir unsur haline geldiği ve markaların rekabet avantajı elde etmesinde belirleyici bir rol oynadığı ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital işveren markası, otantiklik, marka otantikliği, söylem analizi, çalışan deneyimi

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Introduction

Digital transformation has become one of the key drivers profoundly reshaping organizations' communication processes, human resources practices, and competitive strategies in today's business world. Advances in communication technologies, the proliferation of online platforms, and increasing competitive pressure have made it imperative for brands to maintain an effective presence in digital channels—not only in the delivery of products and services but also in their communications with employees and potential candidates. This transformation has also impacted the concept of employer branding; the representation of employee experience, organizational culture, and core values in digital environments has brought the strategic dimension of employer branding into sharper focus. In this context, digital employer branding emerges as a critical communication arena that makes an organization's value proposition as an employer visible, meaningful, and appealing through digital platforms.

Digital employer brand communication plays a decisive role, particularly in the processes through which potential candidates gather information about organizations, evaluate them, and form perceptions. Today, candidates' first impressions of a brand or company are often shaped by the content they encounter on digital platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram. Employee stories, posts about workplace culture, visual narratives, and corporate messaging provide key indicators of the kind of work environment the brand offers and the nature of its relationship with its employees. However, simply being visible in the digital space is not sufficient on its own. The content shared must also be perceived as sincere, trustworthy, consistent, and original. For this reason, authenticity is considered one of the most critical elements of digital employer brand communication. The central problem of this study is that the literature has not sufficiently clarified how brands construct the perception of authenticity in their digital employer brand posts. Although there is significant existing research in the fields of employer branding, digital

communication, and corporate reputation, studies examining which discursive elements are used to establish authenticity in employer branding content shared on digital platforms remain limited. In particular, the question of how brands create an employee-focused, natural, trustworthy, and unique employer image through specific narratives, representations, and discursive strategies necessitates a more in-depth examination. In this regard, the study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on the phenomenon of authenticity in digital employer brand communication.

The aim of this research is to reveal how brands construct the perception of authenticity in their digital employer brand posts. To this end, the digital employer brand content shared by Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol on LinkedIn and Instagram is examined using a comparative discourse analysis method. The study evaluates the dimensions through which authenticity is established in digital employer brand discourse, the indicators through which it becomes visible, and how it differs across platforms.

The rationale for this study stems from the growing influence of digital platforms on employer brand communication and the fact that potential candidates' perceptions of organizations are largely shaped by online content. Candidates evaluate organizations not only through official statements or career pages but also through social media content, employee experience narratives, and posts reflecting everyday work life. Therefore, examining how the perception of authenticity is produced in digital employer brand content is deemed necessary both to understand organizations' communication practices and to interpret employer brand management in the digital age. The significance of this study emerges at two levels: theoretical and practical. From a theoretical perspective, the research brings together the literature on digital employer branding and brand authenticity, examining this relationship through discourse analysis. Thus, it offers a conceptual contribution to understanding how authenticity gains meaning in digital employer branding communication. From a

practical perspective, the study has the potential to generate guiding evaluations to help brands develop a more trustworthy, sincere, and credible employer narrative on digital platforms. In this regard, it is anticipated that the research will contribute to both the academic literature and the practical applications of digital human resources and corporate communication.

Digital Employer Branding and Employee Experience

The reality that sustainability is impossible without digital transformation has served as a wake-up call for brands. Digital employer branding is a crucial step in this transformation. Before discussing how employer branding is evolving through digital transformation, it is helpful to define the concept of employer branding. An employer brand is a dynamic and ongoing commitment based on mutual investment and trust between an organization and its employees, beginning during the recruitment process (Vasco et al., 2022). The concept of employer brand was first introduced in the literature by Ambler and Barrow (1996). Viewed as a strategic tool for distinguishing businesses from their competitors (Tsang et al., 2011), the employer brand, according to Ambler and Barrow (1996, p.187), is defined as an organization where one can work and represents the sum of the economic, functional, and psychological benefits provided by the employer. Van Dam (2006, p.3; cited by Dursun & Eriş, 2018) defines it as the process through which an organization achieves the goal of securing high-quality and qualified employees in the present and future. According to Kapoor (2010: 51), employer branding is a Western concept and involves defining the strategic mission to become an “employer of choice.” Mosley (2014) defines it as “an effective commercial bridge between HR, internal communication, and marketing.” In the literature, the terms “Employer Brand” and “Employer Branding” are used together and sometimes refer to the same concept; here, “employer branding” refers to the management of the employer brand

(Lissaneddine, 2019). Lloyd (2002) defines employer branding as the sum of a company’s efforts to communicate that it is a desirable place to work for both current and potential employees. This concept represents a company’s efforts to convey a clear vision to both internal and external stakeholders regarding the elements that make it distinct and attractive as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It is an undeniable fact that a strong employer brand enhances a company’s attractiveness in the labor market and consequently impacts recruitment and employee retention outcomes (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

An employer brand that provides a clear vision of what makes an organization distinct and desirable as an employer—based on its promotion and its values and culture—for both internal and external stakeholders; it creates an organizational image based on the values, systems, policies, and behaviors it offers to attract, motivate, and retain current and potential employees (Sengupta et al., 2015, p. 309). Mosley & Schmidt (2017) define employer branding in two stages. The first stage is internal branding, defined as building a desirable place to work. In this stage, a unique organizational culture is built alongside tangible components such as ideas, symbols, and physical objects or artifacts. The second stage is defined as external branding, where the organization introduces its culture to desirable, high-potential employees who can contribute to the company’s goals. The primary objective of the employer brand at this stage is to attract employees with the skills the organization needs to achieve its defined goals and objectives (Mosley & Schmidt, 2017, p. 63–64); because the employer brand is an integrated structure that includes the company’s cultural framework, management style, work systems, and relationships among employees, all of which support employees’ personal and professional success (Ötken & Yolbulan Okan, 2015, p. 31).

Becoming a brand in the minds and hearts of employees; being preferred by potential candidates and becoming a company people want to work for—the need for an employer brand has become one of the hottest topics in human resources

in recent times. In light of the definitions provided, it is possible to note that the employer brand essentially involves processes quite similar to branding. It is essential to be aware, provide value, and make current employees—the primary target audience—feel valued; however, while these are not sufficient on their own, building an employer brand is the most critical first step toward becoming a company that effectively communicates its identity, creates a strong and positive perception, and nurtures current employees with this perception. Subsequently, redesigning all human resources strategies and practices to become an “employee brand,” and collaborating closely with marketing and corporate communications, are other steps that must be well-planned within employer branding processes.

With the digital age, a new era has begun in the employer branding approach, which has undergone a fundamental transformation. As both employees and candidates increasingly follow employers through digital platforms, businesses are now compelled to use digital tools in a much more active and interactive manner to sustain their employer brand image. This transformation has not only changed communication channels but has also reshaped the strategic management of employer branding into digital employer branding. Digital employer branding is the process of creating sustainable digital value among current and potential employees through all applications that ensure the company is discussed and presented effectively across digital channels.

Digital employer branding involves reflecting the company culture in the digital realm and ensuring that the company's reputation and values are best represented in digital environments. Attracting and convincing talent who align with the company culture and share its vision and values will be easier with a strong digital employer brand. At this point, digital communication channels also play a significant role; because engaging with current and potential employees through digital channels—such as featuring employees' success stories, sharing their creative projects, and conducting

hashtag-focused campaigns tailored to social media dynamics—all contribute to making the digital employer brand easily recognizable.

Another key point to focus on in digital employer branding is transforming the employee experience into a comprehensive digital employee experience. Rather than viewing the digital employee experience solely as part of the recruitment strategy, it must be evaluated throughout the entire lifecycle of current employees. Integrating and strengthening the employer brand and the employee value proposition with digital components, then communicating them to potential candidates, and continuously monitoring and improving the process are crucial for the digital employer brand. Therefore, the digitalization of the employee experience is a significant nuance that contributes to the strengthening of the employer brand and has made it imperative to adopt an approach centered on the employee experience. Unlike interaction, which is a long-term concept, experience has a high impact and is of shorter duration. The convergence of many experiences constitutes interaction for an individual. The evolution of the employee experience aligns with the organization's evolution and develops in tandem with it (Thompson, 1993; Lee & Kim, 2023). Employee experience holds strategic importance in organizations, driving increased productivity and strengthening employee engagement. A positive work environment reflects an employee's perception of the workplace's atmosphere and tone. Perks that reflect the organization's people-centric approach, along with a culture and work environment that help enhance and improve employee experience, serve as indicators of a positive environment (Morgan, 2015). In this era of experience, the promises of employee experience are as follows (İrfan, 2022):

- Clarifying and communicating the organization's purpose,
- Enabling the establishment and development of meaningful relationships between the organization and employees,
- Providing a positive work experience in the workplace,

- Providing a positive experience with the tools offered to employees to perform their jobs,
- Tracking experience designs that foster a sense of belonging through touchpoints using data-driven insights,
- Making the real-time status of the experience accessible to relevant stakeholders in a data-driven and meaningful way
- Collaborating with employees to enhance and improve the overall experience.

Consequently, the employee experience has been defined as the intersection of employees' expectations, demands, and needs with the organizational design related to these expectations, demands, and needs. This experience represents the journey an employee undergoes with the organization. It can be summarized as the sum of all interactions an employee has with an employer, from pre-hiring through post-departure (Morgan, 2017). Digital employee experience, on the other hand, is a field that examines how digital technologies are transforming the way employees work in the business world. Digital employee experience aims to increase employee productivity, satisfaction, and engagement through the use of technology (Hatipoğlu & Akduman, 2024, p.161). According to Çetin (2021), the digital employee experience encompasses employees' interactions with digital workflows, tools, and technologies; their competencies and productivity; the digital adoption of new technologies, including orientation and training; and the usability of digital tools. According to Pordoki et al., (2023), the digital employee experience is influenced by the usability of digital tools, technology accessibility, access to training opportunities, leadership support, organizational culture, and the work environment; therefore, it is beneficial to address the digital employee experience through various dimensions. Harlianto & Rudi (2023) identified the physical, cultural, and technological environment as the key drivers of employee experience. In a study by Joshi et al., (2024), 20 dimensions of employee experience were examined. These are: (1) organizational support, (2) compensation and development, (3) organizational culture,

(4) job security, (5) remote work, (6) work-life balance, (7) organizational policy, (8) compensation and benefits, (9) employee safety, (10) workload, (11) talent development, (12) organizational policies, (13) working hours, (14) job rotation, (15) work experience, (16) management, (17) discrimination/bias, (18) moral support, (19) recognition, and (20) working during the pandemic. Panneerselvam and Balaraman (2022), on the other hand, have addressed the core elements of the employee experience—a new employee value proposition—in five ways: Meaningful and purposeful work (the search for meaning is innate in the human spirit), an empowering culture (collaborative people and teams), enabling technologies (technologies beneficial to both people and the organization), flexible HR policies/practices (personalized benefits and rewards), and inclusive leadership (people-first, inspirational leadership).

In this context, guiding the digital employee experience in alignment with the company's work model and culture, delivering technological infrastructure and digital resources to employees in the best possible way, and creating positive, consistent, and transparent digital solutions throughout employees' entire lifecycle; it is a fact that their ability to find purpose and meaning, their sense of belonging, motivation, and their roles in receiving or providing inspiration will be directly and indirectly affected. Therefore, it would be appropriate to address the digital employee experience by specifically considering a particular dimension, process, or touchpoint.

The Concept of Authenticity and Brand Authenticity

In today's digital world, communication has become a form of existence for brands that is dictated by the digital age. Consumers evaluate brands holistically—not only their products and services, but also their digital identities, attitudes and behaviors in the online environment, and the authenticity of the content they provide and the interactions they establish. At this point, the concept of authenticity has become one of the fundamental

criteria defining a brand's authenticity and sincerity. Authenticity is a crucial concept that profoundly influences consumer expectations and has taken a central position in brand communication. As the abundance of content on digital platforms has evolved into a new competitive factor, consumers' expectations of authenticity, sincerity, consistency, and transparency from brands have steadily increased. In this context, the concept of authenticity relates to the extent to which consumers perceive the values a brand professes as sincere and genuine. Etymologically, the concept of authenticity is said to derive from the Greek term "authentico," which is defined as being natural and original (Akbar & Wymer, 2017, p.16). In Turkish, it has been adopted through the use of the French word "authentique." The concept is defined as "being genuine, original, and based on the original" (Aktürk et al., 2019, p. 2205). It is also defined as "worthy of being accepted or believed as true or based on truth," "conforming to the original in order to reproduce its essential characteristics," and "made or carried out in a manner similar to the original" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2025). According to the Turkish Language Institution's dictionary, authenticity refers to something that has retained its characteristics from the past, meaning original and unique (tdk.gov.tr). Authenticity or originality, described as one of the fundamental arguments of contemporary social structure, cannot be evaluated as a concept separate from the social structure in which it exists (Ericson, 1994, p. 28) and is therefore closely associated with the field of marketing, just as it is with disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology.

The dynamic nature of marketing is increasingly altering today's consumers' expectations of brands. The number of consumers who prefer to position brands in their minds as meaningful entities rather than mere objects of consumption is growing numerically day by day. For consumers seeking meaning—and thus possessing a high level of cognitive engagement—a brand's authenticity is evaluated not so much by how the brand defines itself, but rather by how it behaves; the consumer develops a judgment about the brand within this

context in their own mind. In this context, the concept of authenticity for a brand is not a claim, but a perception.

Authenticity provides brands with competitive advantages such as being perceived as valuable, unique, and preferable in the eyes of consumers (Yavuzalp Marangoz & Aydın, 2021, p. 83). Additionally, consumers believe that authentic brands must be original, reliable, genuine, natural, and consistent for them to purchase their products or services. They do not perceive brands lacking these characteristics as authentic (Yaşın et al., 2017, p. 127).

Authentic brands are those that place control over the brand's narrative more in the hands of consumers than in their own. In this way, they achieve an iconic and heroic status in the eyes of consumers (Napoli et al., 2016, p. 1217). Brand authenticity is defined as a brand's ability to fulfill the promises it makes to consumers in a credible manner (Passikoff, 2016). According to another definition, brand authenticity is a concept related to a brand's degree of originality and authenticity, its uniqueness, and its ability to deliver on its promises (Akbar & Wymer 2017, p. 29). An authentic brand differentiates itself through its quality, sincerity, originality, and commitment to its origins (Napoli et al., 2014, p. 1090). Brand authenticity is the perceived consistency of a brand's behaviors that reflect its core values and norms (Fritz et al., 2017), and it represents a subjective assessment of the reality attributed to a brand by consumers (Napoli et al., 2014, p. 327).

Authentic brands demonstrate their core values in their business actions and practices. This increases trust in the business, creating a meaningful and direct impact on the company's profitability (Eggers et al., 2013, p. 341). At the same time, brand authenticity strengthens the quality of the relationship by fostering strong emotional bonds between the consumer and the brand, thereby increasing brand loyalty (Fritz et al., 2017, p. 339). Campagna et al. (2023) defines contemporary brand authenticity as a brand strategy pursued by genuine brands that prioritize openness and honesty toward consumers while maintaining a unique

style that adapts to changing times and trends (p. 138).

Authenticity in consumer behavior, however, is primarily associated with brand transparency, product uniqueness, ethical business practices, and emotional connection (Prajapati & Sharma, 2025, p. 702). Marketing researchers have long regarded the concept of brand authenticity as one of the cornerstones of marketing (Holt, 1998). Brand authenticity is viewed as an element that consumers desire and consider of vital importance (Audrezet et al., 2020). With the growing academic interest in this field, practitioners have also begun to place the concept of perceived brand authenticity at the center of brand positioning and communication efforts; in other words, they have adopted perceived brand authenticity in their brand positioning and communication strategies (Morhart et al., 2015, p. 211).

According to Nunes et al. (2021), consumer evaluation is determined across six dimensions. These are: accuracy, connectedness, integrity, legitimacy, originality and proficiency. A consumer's conceptualization of what constitutes an authentic experience varies depending on how they perceive authenticity and the context in which the consumer finds themselves.

According to Kovács & Kovács (2020), brand authenticity, which reflects the extent to which a brand remains true to its values, mission, and promises; product authenticity, which ensures originality and uniqueness rather than imitation; emotional authenticity, which fosters a sincere emotional connection with consumers; and ethical authenticity, which demonstrates the company's commitment to fair trade, sustainability, and social responsibility—these dimensions can be examined in various ways. Definitions of brand authenticity in the literature are grouped around four main themes. The first defines brand authenticity as self-validation. The second is possessing a unique identity. The third is loyalty to the brand. The fourth and final one is its longevity (Campagna et al., 2023, p. 129). Bruhn et al. (2012) categorize brand authenticity into four dimensions: stability or continuity; originality, creativity, or innovation;

trustworthiness or honesty; and genuineness or naturalness (p. 569). The main characteristics of brand authenticity are as follows (Bruhn et al., 2012, p. 567):

- Brand authenticity relates to the authenticity of products or services, as opposed to the authenticity of individuals.
- It is more closely associated with consumers' evaluations than with the brand's intrinsic characteristics.
- Since there is no fixed definition of the concept of authenticity in branding, it can be described as a strategy with various characteristics.

In light of these definitions, it is noteworthy that authentic brands are perceived as unique, transparent, and honest toward consumers, and they prioritize being seen as sincere brands. Considering that today's consumers do not merely seek high-quality products but prioritize the trust-based emotional bonds they form with brands, as well as credibility and consistency, it is highly likely that authentic brands that encourage transparent and honest communication may have a competitive edge over rivals. Indeed, authentic brands play a role in encouraging consumers—both in brand advocacy and in word-of-mouth marketing. Brand advocates contribute to the development of a strong employer brand and the support of brand reputation through social media platforms and personal recommendations, thereby facilitating the building of trust and loyalty among consumers.

Authentic Brands in the Context of Digital Employer Branding

Digital transformation has profoundly impacted the business world with its dynamic nature and competitive landscape. In this process, employer branding refers to the strategic practice of defining and communicating an organization's unique value proposition as an employer to both current and potential employees. It encompasses the company's identity, culture, values, and the overall work experience it offers (Sule & Wani, 2024). Employer branding also involves constructing a compelling

narrative that presents the organization as a desirable place to work (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). Effective employer branding not only attracts top talent but also helps retain employees by aligning their personal values with the organization's goals and culture (Ullah et al., 2023). In increasingly competitive labour markets, employer branding is therefore not limited to recruitment communication; it also plays a critical role in attracting, motivating, and retaining employees by aligning organizational values, workplace culture, and employee experience (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Kashive et al., 2020).

Digital employer branding, emerging at the intersection of employer branding and digital communication, focuses on how businesses position themselves in the digital sphere and how they engage with current employees within the organization and with potential candidates outside of it. Approached as a strategic communication process, the digital employer brand describes how the value proposition offered to current and potential employees is represented through digital platforms. In this regard, corporate identity, organizational culture and values, employee experiences, employer promises, corporate websites, career pages, and attitudes and behaviours on digital platforms constitute the scope of the digital employer brand. The growing impact of online reputation management also requires organizations to actively use digital tools in order to maintain a positive, credible, and consistent employer image (Theurer et al., 2018). At the same time, digital employer branding provides organizations with significant opportunities to differentiate themselves in the job market by making their employer identity more visible, accessible, and distinctive (Erickson & Gratton, 2007; Kashive et al., 2020).

Social media has revolutionized employer branding by offering a multitude of new opportunities and challenges. One of the most significant impacts of social media on employer branding is its ability to enable organizations to reach a broader and more diverse audience (Mahajan et al., 2022). Platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram allow or-

ganizations to communicate employee experiences, workplace culture, organizational values, career opportunities, and everyday organizational practices through both textual and visual content. In this respect, social media has become an important space where employer brand narratives are produced, circulated, and evaluated by current employees, potential candidates, and wider stakeholder groups. Therefore, the effectiveness of digital employer branding depends not only on visibility but also on the credibility, consistency, and perceived sincerity of the messages shared through digital platforms.

Within this digitally mediated employer branding environment, authenticity and brand authenticity have become among the most critical components of the digital employer brand. Authenticity refers to the consistency between a brand's or organization's identity, values, practices, and messages across all touchpoints with its target audiences. For brands to develop a trust-based emotional connection with their stakeholders, they must consistently demonstrate genuine, sincere, transparent, and credible behaviour on digital platforms. The identity of authentic brands is based not only on functional characteristics but also on symbolic values, brand experiences, history, and stakeholder memories (Beverland, 2005; Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020). Therefore, authenticity should not be understood merely as a stylistic feature of communication but as a broader perception shaped by the relationship between what the brand claims, what it represents, and how it is experienced.

Brand authenticity is frequently associated with originality, sincerity, reliability, continuity, and consistency. Beverland (2005) emphasizes authenticity through the balance between tradition and modernity, including commitment to tradition, craftsmanship, and excellence in production, while Bruhn et al. (2012) conceptualize brand authenticity through continuity, originality, reliability, and naturalness. Similarly, Fritz et al. (2017) associate authenticity with originality and credibility, and Morhart et al. (2015) underline the importance of

perceived authenticity in strengthening brand relationships. In the context of employer branding, these dimensions can be adapted to the relationship between an organization's employer promise and the actual employee experience it offers. Accordingly, an authentic digital employer brand is one that presents a coherent relationship between its stated values, organizational culture, employee narratives, and everyday workplace practices. As the labour market becomes increasingly digital, the interaction between brand authenticity and digital employer branding has become more visible and more significant. Employer brand messages delivered through digital platforms are evaluated by employees and candidates not merely at the level of promises but through the lenses of experience, consistency, sincerity, reality, and commitment to organizational identity. In this context, the alignment between an employer's digital messaging and the reality of organizational appeal reinforces trust and contributes to the credibility and sustainability of the digital employer brand. Practices such as sharing real employee stories, presenting workplace experiences transparently, highlighting organizational achievements, and maintaining a consistent tone across digital platforms strengthen the perception of authenticity. Therefore, being an authentic brand emerges as a fundamental condition for the reliability, attractiveness, and long-term effectiveness of digital employer branding.

Methodology

Research Objective and Significance

The concept of authenticity is frequently emphasized in the literature on digital employer branding. Moving beyond being an abstract value, the phenomenon of authenticity—grounded in concrete indicators and discursive practices—has become an essential requirement for a trust-focused and appeal-based sustainable digital employer brand.

In this context, the purpose of this study is to reveal how the perception of authenticity is constructed in brands' digital employer brand posts on digital platforms and to examine the authenticity

indicators used in these posts within the framework of a comparative discourse analysis. In this regard, the research aims to provide a qualitative contribution to the academic literature that deeply examines the relationship between digital employer branding and authenticity, as well as to offer insights that could serve as a roadmap for human resources and corporate communication professionals in building a sustainable digital employer brand based on trust and appeal.

Research Methodology

This study, which aims to reveal how the discourses used by brands in their digital employer brand communications construct perceptions of authenticity, employs discourse analysis, one of the qualitative research methods. Discourse analysis is generally defined as "the examination of language in use; the analysis of the expression of a thought, concept, idea, or action" (Günay, 2018, p. 20). This analysis reveals who says what to whom, how, when, and where, and for what purpose. Discourse analysis is also described as the analysis of utterances—composed of linguistic and non-linguistic elements—spoken by a speaker at a specific time and place, which contain the speaker's cognitive attitudes and may sometimes constitute units beyond the sentence level (Güngör, 2020, p. 2). In its simplest terms, discourse analysis is the study of language. However, this examination is not merely a simple analysis of the linguistic elements expressed; it requires going beyond the syntactic and semantic boundaries of the utterances and examining the underlying meaning and content (Çelik & Ekşi, 2008, p. 105). According to Van Dijk (1997), discourse analysis does not concern itself solely with the formal (phonological or syntactic) aspects of discourse or language use. Rather, it shifts its focus to the social events created by language users communicating within a social and cultural context (Barker and Galasinski, 2001).

In order to make the discourse analysis process more systematic, this study also benefited from Van Dijk's discourse analytical perspective. Ac-

cordingly, the posts were examined not only according to the four dimensions of brand authenticity, but also in terms of actor positioning, lexical choices, semantic strategies, and recurring discursive patterns. Actor positioning refers to how the brand, employees, candidates, teams, and the organization are represented in the discourse. Lexical choices refer to the words and expressions used to construct meanings such as trust, sincerity, continuity, innovation, and naturalness. Semantic strategies refer to the ways in which meanings are organized through emphasis, comparison, personalization, institutionalization, and emotionalization. Discursive patterns refer to recurring forms of representation through which authenticity is constructed across posts. In this way, the authenticity dimensions were used as the main analytical framework, while Van Dijk's discourse analysis elements provided a deeper interpretive layer for examining how these dimensions were discursively produced. Potter & Wetherell (1994) emphasize three characteristics that make discourse analysis suitable for qualitative research (Punch, 2005, p. 216):

"First, discourse analysis concerns speech and texts as social practices. Consequently, in its traditional form, it pays particular attention to features that can be classified as linguistic content—such as meanings and themes—and linguistic form, such as grammar and cohesion. Second, discourse analysis has a three-way relationship with action, construction, and mutability. People engage in various types of actions through what they say and write, and they complete the nature of these actions—at least in part—by constructing their discourses beyond mere styles, linguistic resources, and rhetorical devices. Finally, discourse analysis concerns the rhetorical or argumentative organization of speech and texts. Rhetorical analysis is particularly useful for highlighting how discursive versions are designed in relation to actual or potential alternatives."

In this study, Instagram posts were analyzed as multimodal digital texts. Accordingly, the analysis was not limited to written captions alone. For Instagram posts, textual components such as captions,

hashtags, and written expressions embedded in the posts, as well as visual and audiovisual components such as images, Reels, employee representations, workplace scenes, team interactions, and visual composition were included in the analysis. However, the focus was not on the technical features of visual design, but on how textual and visual elements contributed to the discursive construction of authenticity. In this regard, Instagram data were evaluated through both linguistic and representational indicators. LinkedIn posts, on the other hand, were analyzed mainly through written texts, institutional narratives, employee stories, and accompanying visual representations when available.

As this study does not seek to test causal relationships, the research questions were formulated within the framework of discourse analysis. Since the study includes both two different sectors and two different digital platforms, the comparative design was not intended to isolate sectoral effects from platform-specific effects in a causal manner. Rather, the study aims to examine how authenticity indicators are discursively constructed at the intersection of sectoral context and platform affordances. In this respect, the findings should be interpreted as comparative discursive patterns emerging within specific brand-sector-platform combinations, rather than as generalizable sectoral or platform-based conclusions. This methodological positioning is consistent with the qualitative and interpretive nature of discourse analysis. Drawing on the dimensions of brand authenticity identified by Bruhn et al. (2012)—consistency/continuity, originality/creativity/innovation, reliability/honesty, and reality/naturalness—the findings were interpreted in line with these dimensions.

The research questions are as follows: How is the discourse of authenticity constructed in digital employer brand posts?

- How are the dimensions of authenticity defined by Bruhn et al. (2012) represented through discursive practices on LinkedIn and Instagram?
- In what ways does the discourse of authenticity converge and diverge across the banking and technology sectors?

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of corporate brands operating in Turkey that actively maintain their employer brand communication through digital platforms. As digital channels have become a primary source of information for both candidates and current employees, brands are now compelled to build strong employer brands through digital platforms. In this context, limiting the study population to digital content is one of the study's limitations. For this study, brands with high visibility and regular content production in digital employer brand communication were selected as the sample. Sample size is not a significant issue in discourse analysis, as what matters in the analysis is the extensive linguistic material derived from a small number of individuals/organizations/institutions. A sample consisting of a large number of individuals not only makes analysis impossible but also does not contribute to the research findings (Elliot, 1996). Consequently, the study was structured using a "purposive sampling" approach aimed at deeply analyzing discourse diversity and authenticity rather than seeking quantitative representativeness. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique widely used in qualitative research (Adeoye, 2023). This method involves the deliberate inclusion of specific units from the population in the sample, based on the assumption that the researcher's knowledge of the population can be used to select units deemed representative of that population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). In this context, to strengthen the comparative structure of the study, the "banking" and "technology" sectors—which differ in terms of information richness, organizational structures, work cultures, and digital communication practices—were selected for the study. While the banking sector stands out for its emphasis on high levels of regulation, stability, and institutionalization to ensure the stability of the financial system, the technology sector draws attention for its innovation, flexibility, and the intensity of individual experience sharing. Such structural and cultural differences create a suitable

foundation for a comparative analysis of how authenticity is established in digital employer brand narratives. Turkey İş Bankası from the banking sector and Trendyol from the technology sector are the brands comprising the sample of this study. According to the 2024 "Banking 500" report by Brand Finance, an international brand valuation and strategy consulting firm, which ranks the most valuable brands in the banking sector, Turkey İş Bankası holds the top position among Turkish banks (Bloomberght, 2024). Turkey İş Bankası was selected for this study because the evaluation was based not only on financial results but also on reputation and brand value among all stakeholders. The inclusion of Trendyol, a company in the technology sector, stems from its recognition as having the best brand reputation in the e-commerce sector at the 11th edition of "The One Awards Integrated Marketing Awards," an event widely regarded as one of the most important benchmarks of success in the marketing industry (Marketing Turkey, 2025). Both brands actively use LinkedIn and Instagram platforms in their digital employer brand communication and regularly feature content that highlights employee experiences. This situation reflects cross-sectoral discursive differences and authenticity.

The dataset of this study consists of 74 digital employer branding posts shared by Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol on their official LinkedIn and Instagram accounts between January 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025. The data collection process was carried out between April 1, 2025 and April 15, 2025 through a manual review of the brands' official social media accounts. To define the temporal boundaries of the research, only posts published within this specified period were included in the analysis. Posts were selected based on their relevance to employer branding, employee experience, organizational culture, career opportunities, workplace representation, and corporate values.

Research Findings

This section presents findings regarding indicators of authenticity in the digital employer brand posts

shared by Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol on LinkedIn and Instagram. The table below lists the brand, platform, and number of posts.

In the interpretation of Instagram posts, captions and hashtags were considered together with visual and audio-visual representations, such as Reels, employee images, workplace scenes, and team interactions. Thus, Instagram posts were treated as multimodal employer branding texts rather than solely written captions.

Table 1. Brand - Platform - Number of Posts

Brand	Platform	Number of Posts Analyzed	Post Types (Summary)
Türkiye İş Bankası	LinkedIn	18	Employee stories, career programs, corporate culture, talent development
Türkiye İş Bankası	Instagram	14	Office life, team events, employee representatives
Trendyol	LinkedIn	20	Employee experiences, individual career stories, team culture
Trendyol	Instagram	22	Daily work life, team interactions, experience- and emotion-focused content
Total		74 posts	

It was observed that data saturation was reached at the point where discursive patterns became evident and no new codes emerged during the analysis process. Although this study does not aim to conduct a temporal comparison, the publication dates of the analyzed posts were specified in order to clarify the temporal boundaries of the dataset. Representative examples that most clearly reflect the relevant discursive patterns were selected from the dataset with the aim of revealing through which dimensions and how brands construct the perception of authenticity.

On the other hand, each brand's post has been coded under a single prominent corporate dimension. Coding involves subjecting the data to content analysis—that is, assigning names to meaningful segments within the data (such as a word, sentence, or paragraph) and a successful content analysis is significantly dependent on the coding process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). According to Strauss & Corbin (1990), there are three types of

coding methods: coding based on predefined concepts, coding based on concepts derived from the data during the process and analysis, and a mixed method (initial + process) coding approach. In this study, since the coding process was conducted in accordance with a predefined theoretical framework, the “coding based on predefined concepts” and “guided” approach were preferred (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Even if a single instance contained multiple indicators, the dominant one was used to ensure analytical consistency.

For example, a post emphasizing long-term institutional history, employee loyalty, and continuity of corporate values was coded under the continuity/stability dimension. In the discourse analysis, this type of post was also examined in terms of actor positioning, such as the representation of the organization as a stable and reliable employer; lexical choices, such as the use of expressions related to trust, rootedness, experience, and commitment; and semantic strategies, such as constructing authenticity through institutional memory and continuity. Similarly, posts highlighting employee experiences, team interactions, workplace atmosphere, or everyday work life were evaluated under the naturalness/reality dimension and interpreted through the representation of employees as authentic organizational actors.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings in this study, the fundamental principles recommended for qualitative research were taken into account. First, the purpose of the study and the research questions were clearly defined; accordingly, the data collection and analysis process was structured in alignment with the theoretical framework. All 74 posts analyzed were evaluated within a predefined and clearly defined coding system; researcher consistency was maintained throughout the coding process. To strengthen the validity of the findings, discursive patterns were interpreted not based on individual posts but through recurring discourses across the entire dataset; the quotations presented in the text were selected as representative examples that most clearly reflect these patterns. Additionally, the findings were diversified through the comparative

analysis of data obtained from different platforms (LinkedIn and Instagram) and two distinct sectors (banking and technology), thereby validating the findings from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, the study was conducted differently from a thematic analysis approach; codes were not derived from the data to produce themes, but were structured as analytical categories used to examine how the dimensions defined in the brand authenticity theory are represented in digital employer brand discourse. Therefore, the codes aimed to capture discursive patterns that replace themes. The discourse analysis conducted based on this information is presented in Table 2.

Therefore, Table 2 presents both the authenticity dimensions and the linguistic, visual, and representational cues through which these dimensions were discursively constructed.

As shown in Table 2, the discursive indicators observed in the digital employer brand posts analyzed within the scope of the research are presented within the framework of the dimensions defined in the brand authenticity theory and the analytical codes associated with these dimensions. The findings were obtained by classifying recurring linguistic, semantic, and representational forms in the analyzed posts. Each code was defined based on the discursive indicators observed in the posts.

Table 2. Discourse Analysis

Theoretical Dimension	Code (Analytical Category)	Code Definition	Discursive Indicator (What Was Sought?)	Observable Linguistic/Visual Cues
Consistency / Continuity	Value Consistency	Repeated presentation of organizational values	Emphasizing the same values in different contexts	"Every year," "long-term," "our culture," organizational belonging
	Corporate Continuity	Establishing the connection between past, present, and future	Narratives of continuity, references to corporate history	"For years," "building the future together," emphasis on deep-rootedness
Originality / Innovation	Creative Narration	The formal/linguistic originality of the content	Non-standard narratives and formats	Reels, original visuals, creative text composition
	Learning & Development	The rhetorical representation of innovation and development	Emphasis on continuous learning, competence, and development	"We're learning," "growth," "new skills"
Reliability / Integrity	Transparent Communication	Clear, measured, and realistic communication	Unembellished language, clear presentation of information	Concrete statements, process explanations
	Employee-Centric Approach	Putting the employee at the center	Affirming the employee experience	"Our employees," "our team," supportive tone
Authenticity / Naturalness	Everyday Language	Avoiding corporate jargon	Use of sincere and personal language	First-person singular/plural, everyday expressions
	Sharing Experiences	Unfiltered work experiences	Sharing daily work life	Moments in the office, team interaction, emotional narratives

In presenting the findings, the four dimensions of brand authenticity were used as the main analytical categories. However, the analysis was not limited to classifying posts under these dimensions. Each category was also interpreted through discourse analytical elements such as actor positioning, lexical choices, semantic strategies, and recurring discursive patterns. Since Instagram is a visual-oriented platform, the observable cues in the table include not only linguistic indicators but also visual and audiovisual indicators such as Reels, original visuals, workplace representations, and team interactions. These elements were evaluated only insofar as they contributed to the discursive and representational construction of authenticity.

In the posts falling under the stability/continuity dimension, discursive indicators pointing to the continuity of corporate values and organizational structure were identified. While discursive indicators such as the repeated emphasis on corporate values and the repetition of the same value statements across different posts were observed, expressions implying temporal continuity—such as "every year," "long-term," and "well-established structure" were also noted. Within the Originality/Innovation dimension, indicators were identified regarding how the themes of innovation and originality are represented in the digital employer brand discourse.

Table 3. Discourse Analysis of Codes by Brand

Theoretical Dimension	Code	Discursive Forms Observed at Türkiye İş Bankası	Discursive Forms Observed at Trendyol
Stability / Continuity	Value Consistency	• The repetition of corporate values using similar expressions across different communications • Fixed concepts such as “corporate culture,” “shared values,” and “corporate approach” • A measured and formal narrative that preserves the corporate language • Linking values to organizational structures and processes	• Conveying culture through team dynamics and work styles • Use of collective language such as “In our culture...” or “As a team...” • Presenting values using shorter, everyday expressions • Emphasis on the experiential aspect of culture
	Organizational Continuity	• Time markers such as “every year,” “for many years,” and “well-established structure” • Indirect references to corporate history and continuity • Emphasis on long-term careers and employment	• Establishing continuity through programs and cycles • Phrases such as “every term,” “with new graduates,” and “constantly evolving” • Emphasis on forward-looking dynamism
Originality / Innovation	Creative Narrative	• Narrative supported by visual diversity while maintaining the institutional framework • A structure based on text-visual harmony • A measured presentation of the innovation narrative	• Dynamic and concise text structures • Reels, series posts, and campaign-based narratives • Use of energetic and motivational language • Emphasis on visual and textual creativity
	Learning & Development	• Training programs, organizational development frameworks, and a focus on competencies • Presenting development within an organizational framework • Formal and explanatory language	• Presenting learning as an individual experience • Phrases such as “self-development” and “we grow through learning” • Language of empowerment and ownership
Reliability / Integrity	Transparent Communication	• Narratives based on concrete achievements, rewards, and external references • Clear and measured presentation of information • A formal tone that reinforces institutional trust	• Brief explanations regarding processes and teamwork • Highlighting internal experiences • A more direct and sincere narrative
	Employee-Centricity	• Representing employees as an integral part of the organization • Inclusive phrases such as “our employees” and “our team” • Organization-centered language that highlights employees	• Positioning the employee as the subject • Use of “I” and “we” language • Highlighting employee experiences
Authenticity / Naturalness	Everyday Language	• Expressions that maintain corporate language while softening formality • A limited degree of informality • Controlled everyday language	• Direct language, free from formal jargon • Emotional and motivational expressions • Conversational language tailored to digital platforms
		• Limited but carefully selected references to the office environment and team interactions • Everyday moments within a corporate framework	• Frequent emphasis on daily work life, team dynamics, and the work environment • Posts that convey a sense of “insider” experience

In the Creative Narrative category, the formal/linguistic originality of the content, non-standard narratives, and formats are reflected as discursive indicators; these include non-standard narrative forms, visual diversity, short and dynamic text structures, and Reels. In the Learning & Development category, the content includes phrases such as “we’re learning,” “development,” and “new skills,” which reflect an emphasis on continuous learning, competence, and growth. Under the Security/Integrity dimension, discursive indicators aimed at fostering trust and credibility are present; in the Transparent Communication category, the use of clear and measured language represents discursive indicators.

In the posts, explanatory phrases such as “Within the scope of this program...,” “Throughout the process...,” and “Participants in the following areas...” which clarify why and how awards, events, or programs are conducted—were observed, along with sentence structures that are explanatory and descriptive, avoiding exaggerated adjectives. In the employee-centric category, placing employees at the center was identified as a discursive indicator.

The presentation of employees as subjects (“our team,” “our colleagues,” “we create together”), the direct or indirect narration of employee experiences, the emphasis on team interaction, collaboration, and solidarity, narratives referencing the employee’s development, contribution,

or daily experience, and the association of organizational successes with employees (“thanks to our team’s contribution...,” “through the efforts of our employees...”) have been concretized as authentic indicators. Within the reality/naturalness dimension, discursive indicators free from corporate jargon were shared using expressions close to spoken language, such as everyday time and place markers like “together,” “today,” “as a team,” and “at the office,” along with the use of first-person singular or plural pronouns (“we,” “our team”). Regarding experience sharing, the focus is on direct visual and verbal descriptions of the work environment, moments within the office, team interactions, or references to daily routines; contexts such as pre- and post-event activities, meetings, and team gatherings; and narratives that emphasize the lived moment rather than the process itself—highlighting details that make the daily work experience visible rather than corporate success.

In this context, the codes developed in line with the dimensions defined in the theory of brand authenticity, along with the discursive indicators corresponding to these codes in digital employer brand posts, are systematically presented in the table. The table aims to demonstrate the coding structure used in the analysis process and how abstract theoretical concepts are transformed into observable linguistic and representational forms in the posts. In this context, each code was defined based on recurring expression patterns, narrative forms, and representational strategies in the posts; the table ensures that the analytical framework used in conducting the discourse analysis is presented in a transparent and traceable manner.

Table 3 provides a comparative overview of the discursive forms through which codes associated with the dimensions defined within the framework of brand authenticity manifest in the digital employer branding communications of Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol.

Table 3 presents a comparative analysis of the codes presented in the discourse analysis for Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol. The indicators and discursive forms through which the dimensions of

brand authenticity are established have been described at a descriptive level. It systematically demonstrates how codes linked to theoretical dimensions materialize in the digital employer brand posts of both brands through specific linguistic structures, narrative forms, and representational practices. Within this framework, the dimensions of consistency, innovation, reliability, and authenticity find expression in the brands’ employer brand communication through discursive indicators such as value emphasis, employee representations, everyday language use, experience sharing, and corporate narrative forms. Furthermore, it reveals how the relationship between brand authenticity and employer branding is structured not at the level of abstract concepts but through observable discursive practices on digital platforms; in this regard, it enables the findings obtained during the analysis process to be presented in a comparative manner.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aims to examine how the perception of authenticity is created in brands’ employer branding posts on digital platforms and to identify the indicators of authenticity used in these posts through a comparative discourse analysis. Based on this objective, the digital employer branding content shared by Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol on LinkedIn and Instagram was analyzed using the dimensions of brand authenticity defined by Bruhn et al. (2012), which are widely used in the literature. Findings obtained in response to the research question “*How is the discourse of authenticity constructed in digital employer brand posts?*” indicate that the discourse of authenticity in these posts is constructed through a multi-layered discursive structure that simultaneously utilizes multiple dimensions, rather than a singular narrative. Direct claims such as “authenticity” or “being authentic” are not present in the relevant posts. However, the brand’s authenticity is attempted to be reflected through indirect discursive strategies such as highlighting employee experiences, reflecting a shared value system in many posts, the use of everyday

language, and the continuity of corporate narratives. This aligns with approaches in the literature on brand authenticity that view authenticity not as a fixed trait but as a phenomenon constructed contextually and discursively (Bruhn et al., 2012).

When examining the findings obtained within the scope of the research question, *"How are the dimensions of authenticity defined by Bruhn et al. represented through discursive practices on LinkedIn and Instagram?"* it is revealed that the dimensions of authenticity defined by Bruhn et al. (2012) are represented through different discursive practices on these platforms. This differentiation can be linked to both the technical and cultural characteristics of the platforms as well as the brands' sectoral positions. It is worth noting that the examples of Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol make these multi-layered forms of representation visible.

It should be noted that this study does not claim that the observed differences are caused solely by sectoral characteristics or solely by platform-specific dynamics. Since the analysis includes both sectoral diversity and platform diversity, the findings should be read as the result of the interaction between sectoral communication cultures and the affordances of digital platforms. For instance, the more dynamic and experience-oriented tone observed in Trendyol's Instagram posts may be related both to the flexible and innovation-oriented communication style associated with the technology sector and to Instagram's visual, informal, and interaction-oriented nature. Similarly, the more institutional and formal tone observed in Türkiye İş Bankası's LinkedIn posts may reflect both the regulated and trust-based structure of the banking sector and LinkedIn's professional communication environment. Therefore, this study interprets these differences as intersectional discursive tendencies rather than as effects attributable to a single variable.

The stability/continuity dimension finds a particularly distinct discursive counterpart on the LinkedIn platform. In Türkiye İş Bankası's LinkedIn posts, the presentation of corporate values

through recurring narratives, along with an emphasis on long-term organizational culture and continuity, stand out as key indicators of this dimension. The reproduction of the same values at different times and in different contexts using similar expressions points to the discursive construction of stability. In Trendyol's LinkedIn posts, however, continuity is represented not through direct references to corporate history, but rather through recurring programs, talent cycles, and development processes. This demonstrates that while continuity is present in both brands, it is established through different narrative forms. The dimension of innovation is visible on both platforms, but on Instagram, it is represented through more dynamic and visually-driven discursive practices. In Trendyol's Instagram posts, short texts, energetic language, and visual diversity demonstrate that innovation is conveyed through the employee experience and daily work practices. At Türkiye İş Bankası, however, the discourse on innovation is presented within a controlled and corporate framework on Instagram; themes of learning and development are conveyed through structured narratives. The reliability/integrity dimension is also drawn from different discursive sources on LinkedIn and Instagram. In Türkiye İş Bankası's LinkedIn posts, reliability is built through concrete achievements, awards, and external references, using a measured and informative tone. In Trendyol's LinkedIn posts, reliability is made visible through an emphasis on employee contributions and teamwork. On Instagram, reliability is represented for both brands by highlighting employee experiences and internal team interactions. Finally, the reality/naturalness dimension finds a more dominant discursive expression, particularly on the Instagram platform. In Trendyol's Instagram posts, the use of everyday language, office moments, and team interactions demonstrate that naturalness is established through the conveyance of lived experiences. At Türkiye İş Bankası, however, naturalness is limited on Instagram. On the LinkedIn platform, the reality and naturalness dimensions are represented through more controlled and indirect

discursive practices for both brands. Consequently, while the LinkedIn platform offers a representational space for authenticity dimensions primarily centered on corporate identity, reliability, and continuity; Instagram produces discourses focused on immediacy, everyday life, experiential sharing, and naturalness. The examples of Türkiye İş Bankası and Trendyol demonstrate that the distinct contexts offered by these platforms play a decisive role in the discursive construction of brand authenticity dimensions.

“In what ways do the discourses on authenticity in the banking and technology sectors converge and diverge?” The findings from this final research question indicate that the discourse on authenticity in both sectors is grounded in a common theoretical framework. In both sectors, the discourse on authenticity is primarily constructed through employee experience and the employer-employee relationship. In both sectors, employees are positioned not merely as components of the organizational structure but as key actors in the discourse on authenticity within digital employer branding communications. In this context, employee-centricity emerges as a common intersection with the dimension of trustworthiness/integrity. Similarly, in both sectors, the dimensions of originality and innovation are represented not through technical or product-focused narratives, but rather around themes of learning, development, and skill acquisition. This indicates that, within the context of the digital employer brand, innovation is understood not through corporate claims but through the development opportunities employees can experience. Consequently, in both sectors, the authenticity narrative is shaped not around the question “What is being produced?” but rather around “What kind of work experience is being offered?” Additionally, it has been observed that on digital platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram, both sectors construct their authenticity discourse not through direct claims but via indirect rhetorical strategies (emphasis on values, team representations, use of everyday language). In this regard, au-

thenticity emerges not as an explicitly declared feature but as a meaning conveyed within the discourse.

Despite this shared foundational framework, distinct differences have been observed regarding the dimensions through which the authenticity discourse is concentrated and how it is represented between the banking and technology sectors. In the banking sector, the authenticity discourse is primarily structured around the dimensions of stability/continuity and reliability/integrity; this demonstrates that expectations of trust, continuity, and institutional stability are directly reflected in the employer brand discourse. In the technology sector, however, the authenticity discourse is constructed through more dynamic, experience-based, and everyday narratives; the corporate framework is represented within a more flexible discursive structure. Consequently, the authenticity discourse is primarily addressed through the dimensions of originality/innovation and reality/naturalness. Another sector-specific difference emerges through the discursive representation of the perception of time. While continuity in the banking sector is constructed through a corporate timeline within the past-present-future context, in the technology sector, continuity is represented through recurring programs and emphases on future-oriented dynamism.

All findings derived from the research questions demonstrate that the dimensions of brand authenticity do not exhibit a uniform or homogeneous structure in digital employer brand discourse; on the contrary, they are represented in different discursive forms depending on the sector, platform, and corporate communication norms. This study demonstrates that authenticity in digital employer brand communication is related not only to what is said but also to how it is said and in what context it is presented. Consequently, it is anticipated that this research will serve as a guide for organizations, professionals, and researchers in developing strategies that account for this multidimensional structure. Additionally, it is anticipated that the findings of this research will serve as a guide for future mixed-methods studies—combining quantitative

and qualitative approaches—aimed at testing the relationships between authenticity discourse and job application intent, organizational attractiveness, or perceived trust.

Finally, this study has some limitations. Although the total dataset consists of 74 posts, the number of posts in each brand–platform subset is relatively limited. Therefore, the findings should not be considered statistically representative or generalizable. Instead, they provide an interpretive and exploratory understanding of how authenticity indicators are constructed in selected digital employer branding posts. Future studies may expand the dataset by including more brands, longer time periods, and a larger number of posts in each sector–platform category.

Declarations

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Ethical Approval: Ethical committee approval was not required for this study because No data were collected from human participants, and no surveys, interviews, experiments, or interventions were conducted. As the study is based solely on the document review and discourse analysis of publicly available corporate social media content, ethics committee approval was not required.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Disclosure: ChatGPT (GPT-5.5) was used for Artificial intelligence tools were used solely to improve grammar, clarity, fluency, and the quality of English expression. Artificial intelligence was not used to generate or analyze research data, interpret the findings, or produce the academic content of the study. The authors are fully responsible for the scientific content, analyses, interpretations,

and final version of the manuscript. The author reviewed, edited, and verified all AI-assisted outputs and takes full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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