

Designing a Human Resource Marketing Strategies Model to Address the Challenges of Building Integrated Work Teams in Virtual Environments Using Thematic Analysis

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Abstract: This study aimed to present a complete model for designing human resource marketing strategies, taking into account the problem of making integrated work teams in virtual environments in companies that operate in Iraq. The importance of virtual work and the reliance of human capital management process on digital technologies made it necessary to create a model that can combine the essential elements of human resource marketing with the demands of virtual work. The research method used in this study was qualitative method. Themes were extracted and initial dimensions of the model were identified through thematic analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews with 14 experts, managers and members of virtual teams. The results of the qualitative component revealed that a framework of dimensions consists of digital employer brand, virtual recruitment and hiring, digital training and development, virtual work culture, virtual employee motivation and retention, digital leadership, technology infrastructure and digital access, virtual organizational communication and digital performance management creates the basis of human resource marketing strategies in virtual environments. Further, the results indicate that the development of digital infrastructure, virtual leadership, digitizing employees' recruitment and development processes, and redesigning communication and performance systems are all important factors in the formation of integrated and efficient work teams in virtual environments.

Keywords: Human resource marketing, virtual work teams, digital leadership, technology infrastructure, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

According to previous studies, one of the most important factors influencing consumer behavior is marketing plans and strategies. Implementing an internal marketing program for training, motivating, guiding, and leading the workforce contributes to higher levels of performance and satisfaction (Mishra, 2010). In internal marketing, there is the point that employees form the internal market within the organization; that is, the organization is an internal market with internal customers and suppliers, and meeting the needs of these internal customers is necessary for the success of the organization (Seyed Javadin et al., 2010). This is because meeting the needs of employees increases their motivation and, consequently, their level of satisfaction, which ultimately leads to greater loyalty to the organization and improves the quality of services provided by them (Saber, 2017). If their needs and expectations are not met and they are viewed as costly asset rather than as the organization's core capital, it will not be possible to provide suitable and valuable products and services to the customer (Hosseini and Rahmani, 2012).



Internal marketing must take precedence over external marketing; otherwise, the organization may offer a service to the customer that it is unable to provide (Davlatkhah, 2018). Narur and Slater (1990) have also stated that the development of an internal marketing approach leads to the creation of a culture that, in the most efficient and effective way, shapes behaviors that will result in the provision of superior services to the customer (Amiri et al., 2008).

From the past to the present, labor markets have undergone significant transformations due to globalization, as well as technological and demographic changes. The rise of digitalization has created new forms of business. The emergence of online platforms has led to new technologies and business models, reduced communication costs due to remote work, more flexible working hours, project-based employment contracts, and a shift in work-related priorities (Blay, et al., 2024). Offices and workplaces have also changed. Since 2008, the number of people who say they cannot concentrate on their work and need a quiet place has increased by 16 percent. Therefore, while offices are adapting to meet the needs of their employees, many individuals may prefer teleworking (Tirkkonen, 2019).

(Živković, et al., 2019) criticized teleworking as a long-term solution to the problem of concentration in the office. The challenges associated with teleworking include reduced knowledge transfer, decreased interaction, cultural disconnection, and difficulties in collaboration. Despite these challenges, the amount of teleworking is increasing. In 2019, 43 percent of employees in the United States said they had spent at least some time working remotely, which represents a four percent increase compared to 2015 (Tirkkonen, 2019). According to another study, 70% of people worldwide work remotely at least once a week, meaning that more than two-thirds of the world's workforce works at least weekly in a location other than the office (Agba, et al., 2020). According to these statistics, the amount of teleworking and working in a virtual environment is increasing.

Regarding the importance of teleworking or working in a virtual environment, it should be noted that today an employee can be hired for a project through an online platform, but often they must be able to work as part of a team, sometimes with colleagues in different countries, continents, or time zones. Therefore, the effects of technological advances on job performance have led to the emergence of virtual teams (Efimov, et al., 2024). The issue of virtual teams is very important because in the future, a larger share of work will be done virtually and through technology-assisted communication. Virtual teams can be an effective way to organize workflow through access to a global resource. Virtual teams can overcome traditional organizational barriers – whether related to costs, location, time, lack of talent, or expertise – within an organization (Raiko, et al., 2023).

Virtual teams, like any remote work, also have their own challenges. These challenges can arise from interpersonal and social aspects, such as building trust, cohesion, team identity, and overcoming feelings of isolation within the team. Since virtual environments depend on information and communication technology, the problems of virtual work teams can arise not only from interpersonal relationships but also from geographical barriers and differences in time, language, and culture (Gupta, et al., 2023). Many of these challenges are related to failures in interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the virtual aspect of work changes management practices and requires a new type of leadership. Remote work may limit the opportunities for managers in virtual environments to communicate, support, and inspire their employees because they are geographically and culturally separated (Saarinen, 2016). Khorasani et al. (2024) conducted a study titled "Investigating the Importance and Role of Organizational Design and Virtual Management in Organizational Leadership." Virtual management is the supervision, leadership, and maintenance of virtual teams. Dispersed work groups that rarely meet face-to-face. With the increase in the number of virtual teams facilitated by the Internet, globalization, outsourcing, and teleworking, the need to manage them has also increased. By providing capabilities such as online communication, remote work, and virtual collaboration, this approach enables leaders to adapt to the challenges of the work environment and to utilize the full potential of their team.

According to the research, it was found that both of these key factors, namely organizational design and virtual management, play a very important role in organizational leadership. These two factors enable leaders to deal with everyday challenges in the best possible way and achieve greater efficiency. Roshandel Arbati et al. (2023) conducted

a study entitled "Designing a Model for the Alignment of 34,000 Human Resources Processes with Marketing Strategies." This research is of an applied nature, and the strategy considered in the research is a multiple case study. The data were examined and analyzed using techniques of thematic analysis and triple coding. A semi-structured interview tool was used to collect data. The population studied in this research includes all banks that have used the 34000 human resources model to implement human resources processes in their organizations. The sample selection method was purposive sampling, based on which four banks, Refah, Day, Karafarin, and Sina, were selected due to their successful experience in using the 34000 model. The results showed that alignment in some areas of human resources and marketing processes is in good shape; however, in other areas, more planning and alignment is needed.

Karimi and Rosta (2022) conducted a study titled "The Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management and Internal Marketing on Human Resource Development Policies with the Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Trust in Knowledge-Based Companies." The research method is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of data collection method. The statistical population of the study is all employees of knowledge-based companies located in the Tehran Technology Park in 2022. In addition, 384 individuals were selected as a sample using the Cochran formula method, and 415 questionnaires were distributed using the convenience sampling method, with 387 questionnaires collected. The results of examining the research hypotheses indicate that internal marketing and strategic human resource management have an impact on employee job satisfaction, and the role of organizational justice and procedural justice on employee organizational trust was confirmed. Furthermore, organizational trust has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and organizational trust have a positive impact on human resource development.

(Chaubey, et al., 2024) conducted a study titled "Redefining the Relationship between Internal Labor Market and Human Resource Management: A Comprehensive Framework for Organizational Alignment in the Digital Age." This study employed a mixed research strategy, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The structural equation modeling method was used to test the hypotheses related to the relationships between internal labor market, human resource management, and organizational performance. The results showed a significant positive correlation between the internal labor market, human resource management, and organizational performance.

(Joyce, et al., 2024) conducted a study titled "Examining the Role of the Labor Market in Human Resource Management." This article examined the relationship between the labor market and human resource management and highlighted the important role that the labor market plays in influencing human resource strategies and practices. The results showed that the labor market and human resource management play an important role in shaping a company's culture, attracting top talent, and promoting a positive employer brand. Labor market strategies, such as advertising, public relations, and social media campaigns, play a significant role in shaping how the workforce perceives an organization. Consistent messaging that aligns with the company's values and culture helps create a positive employer brand. When human resource management aligns its methods with the messages of the labor market, it creates an environment where employees are proud of their association with the organization.

(Blay, et al., 2024) conducted a study titled "Collegial Convergence in Virtual Teams: The Role of External Crises and Performance Outcomes." This study was conducted to determine whether the teamwork of authorized teams, when affected by an external crisis such as COVID-19, experiences consensus or not. In addition, they examined how collegial consensus is related to the performance of authorized teams. The results showed that members of authorized teams converge in their collaborative behavior over time, indicating their consensus in collaboration. Furthermore, the results showed that collaborative behavior consensus (i.e., coordinated consensus) is somewhat positively related to the performance of authorized teams.

(Efimov, et al., 2024) conducted a study titled "Experiences, Prerequisites, and Future Actions of Health-Oriented Leaders in Authorized Teams." Using a qualitative study, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with 16 authorized leaders in Germany between May and June 2021. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted inductively using qualitative content analysis. The results showed that leaders, regardless of their prior experience with authorized leadership, faced diverse challenges in exercising leadership in the work of authorized

teams during the COVID-19 pandemic. Authorized leaders identified individual prerequisites (e.g., leaders' characteristics or behaviors) organizational prerequisites (management support or an open-minded company culture), social prerequisites (e.g., social support from the team), and technical prerequisites (e.g., adequate technical equipment) as leadership prerequisites.

(Raiko, et al., 2023) conducted a study titled "Development of an Incentive System in the Company's Water Market Sector for Employees to Promote Products Using a Space-Based Information Interaction Tool in a Virtual Environment." In this study, approaches were proposed to improve the company's management system and increase business activity. These included developing a system for evaluating the market in promoting products based on market sentiment and recommendations for product promotion by the market in a virtual space to increase the company's business activity. All factors are under the control of the team leader, and all participants cannot receive rewards, creating an incentive for more productive work among each other.

(Gupta, et al., 2023) conducted a study titled "The Role of Conflict Management and Psychological Empowerment in Virtual Teams." The authors collected survey data from 315 individuals working in authorized teams within the information technology sector in India, using both offline and online questionnaires. They then conducted the analysis using a partial least squares structural equation modeling approach. The results showed that psychological empowerment and conflict management are significant in the management of empowered teams. Furthermore, perceived empowerment affects team outcomes, including perceived team performance, team satisfaction, and mental well-being .

(Cai, 2023) conducted a study titled "Strengthening Perceptions of Cohesion and Effectiveness in Empowered Teams Using the Transpersonal Communication Theory Perspective." Using 549 valid responses, the results showed how mutual help, as a routine interaction among team members, fosters benevolent norms and facilitates members' perceptions of team cohesion and effectiveness. Most importantly, team management interventions can help increase team cohesion and effectiveness at the individual perception level.

From Thompson's (2002) perspective, due to the challenges organizations face in today's competitive world, forming and maintaining effective work teams is necessary and essential. Effective work teams utilize the full potential and talents of their members, make the organization more adaptable to environmental changes compared to other organizations, increase employee engagement and participation in team and organizational activities, and ultimately enhance the overall performance and efficiency of the organization (West & Markiewicz, 2004). Studies have shown that one of the key factors in determining the effectiveness of work teams is the level of trust among team members (Alsharo et al., 2017). On the other hand, given the currently accelerating changes in the environment and the complexity of organizational decision-making, the need to implement a comprehensive program to address such issues is more evident than ever. This program is nothing but a strategic plan. A human resources strategy, based on a forward-thinking, comprehensive, and adaptive mindset, is the solution to many of the problems faced by today's organizations. Human resource strategy is based on the level of understanding that managers have of competing companies, markets, prices, raw material suppliers, distributors, governments, creditors, shareholders, and customers around the world, and these factors determine business success in today's world. Therefore, one of the most important tools that organizations can use to achieve success in the future will be "human resource strategy" (Parsaian and Arabi, cited in Fard R., 2012).

Historically, the primary benefit of human resource strategy has been that it helps the organization to choose more systematic, rational, and logical methods or strategic options, thereby developing better strategies. There is no doubt that this is one of the main benefits of strategic management, but the results of current research indicate that this process can play a more important role in human resource strategy. By engaging in this process, managers and employees commit themselves to supporting the organization. Another key benefit of strategic management is that it fosters greater understanding and commitment among managers and employees. One of the major benefits of strategic management is that it creates opportunities to delegate authority to employees. Delegation of authority is a practice that encourages and motivates employees to participate in decision-making processes, exercise creativity, innovation,

and imagination, thereby increasing their effectiveness (Parsaian and Araby, citing Ford, 2012). In light of the above, the objective of this research is to design a strategic model for the market or human resources, addressing the challenge of creating cohesive work teams within a permitted environment, using thematic analysis. The research questions are as follows:

- 1) What dimensions and indicators in the market or human resources strategy model are influential with regard to the challenge of creating integrated work teams in a permitted environment?
- 2) What is the significance of the indicators extracted in the market or human resources strategy model with regard to the challenge of integrated work teams in a permitted environment?

2. Research Methodology

In terms of purpose, this research is considered an applied-developmental study conducted using a qualitative-quantitative method. The strategy used for this type of research method is also sequential-exploratory. The statistical population of the research, in the qualitative section, includes all experts, specialists, and managers of virtual teams in companies located in Iraq, who were selected using the purposive sampling method. Therefore, in this study, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were collected by inviting interviewees. In the present study, considering the subject and objectives of the research, the semi-structured interview method was used, the process of which is designed and implemented in the following four stages:

1. Planning the initial steps for the necessary arrangements for the interview.
2. Beginning the interview by providing a general overview of the research topic and objectives through the researcher.
3. Designing interview questions based on the research objectives and the results of previous interviews.
4. Summarizing and analyzing the interview data.

In the present study, interviews were conducted in person or via telephone and email with note-taking, and some were also recorded (with the interviewees' permission). After conducting interviews with experts and specialists, the interviews were transcribed, and then the collected data were analyzed and synthesized. In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. In the thematic analysis method, information is obtained through coding. Coding is the assignment of numbers and digits (codes) to themes based on the guidelines and the unit of analysis. In other words, coding is a process in which the research text is reviewed or reread, and the theme number (code) is entered into the coding sheet according to the coding instructions. Coding has also been defined as placing an analysis unit in one of the theme categories (Weimer, 2006, 162). In this study, two methods are used: manual coding and coding by computer software. Computer software plays a significant role in qualitative research, including thematic analysis. Among qualitative analysis software, NVivo and MAXQDA are more widely used in thematic analysis. These software programs generally have the ability to encode text, assign codes to themes, link the researcher's notes to the encodings, and perform advanced search and retrieval operations on the encoded data. After careful evaluation, the MAXQDA11 software was selected for this study to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of the thematic analysis process.

Data Collection

Following the qualitative analysis, a questionnaire was developed based on the identified dimensions and indicators. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was distributed to 30 experts and managers of virtual teams in Iraqi companies, who were selected using purposive sampling based on their expertise and experience in virtual work environments. Participants were asked to rate the importance of each identified indicator. The questionnaire demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89).

Data Analysis

Shannon entropy method was used to determine the significance coefficient of each indicator. This method calculates the information content of each indicator by measuring its dispersion. The steps include:

1. **Normalization of data:** Values are normalized to ensure comparability
2. **Calculation of entropy:** The entropy value for each indicator is calculated using the formula:

$$E_j = -k \sum (p_{ij} \times \ln p_{ij})$$

where p_{ij} is the probability of occurrence, and k is a constant ($k = 1/\ln n$)

3. **Calculation of significance coefficient:** The significance coefficient (W_j) is calculated as:

$$W_j = (1 - E_j) / \sum (1 - E_j)$$

4. **Interpretation:** Higher significance coefficients indicate greater importance of the indicator in the model.

3. Findings

In this section, the results of the qualitative analyses are presented, and it is explained how the textual and narrative data have helped to discover the main concepts and patterns of the research.

What dimensions and indicators in the market strategy model for human resources are influential in the legal environment, given the innovation challenge of work teams?

After conducting the research interviews, a total of 56 codes were identified. Table (1) shows the results related to these codes.

Table (1) Results of open coding in the qualitative section

Row	Extracted codes	Frequency
1	Digital reputation of the organization	7.
2	Transparency of online messages	7.
3	Trust in young professionals	8.
4	Alignmentwith Iraqi culture	9.
5	Professionalism of the online recruitment process	7.
6	Reputation of the organization in the virtual space	8.
7	Ease of the online recruitment process	9.
8	Validity of authorized tests	10.
9	Quality of video interviews	7.
10	Transparency of recruitment criteria	7.
11	Use of domestic/international platforms	8.
12	Accuracy of the digital screening system	8.
13	Positive experience of applicants	9.
14	Accessto online courses	10.
15	Adapting content to the Iraqi audience	6.
16	Upgrading of technological skills	7.
17	Strengthening inter-provincial cooperation	7.
18	Incentives for authorized training	8.

19	Digital Career Development	6.
20	Strengthening shared values	6.
21	Proper use of communication tools	7.
22	Activities to strengthen cooperation	8.
23	Observing professional conduct online	8.
24	Observance of Digital Ethics Principles	7.
25	Strengthening the shared organizational identity	7.
26	Online appreciation system	6.
27	Digital Participation Index	9.
28	Sense of belonging in virtual teams	9.
29	Opportunity for growth and advancement	9.
30	Reduction in intention to leave the job	6.
31	Work-life balance	7.
32	Remote leadership skills	8.
33	Transparent communication of managers	6.
34	Effective online feedback	6.
35	Quick decision-making in the online space	8.
36	Teamwork facilitator	8.
37	Online Performance Dashboard	9.
38	Stable access to the Internet	7.
39	Quality of organizational systems	7.
40	Accessibility of tools in the provinces	8.
41	Competence of the digital team	8.
42	Adequate mobile accessibility	11.
43	Low-cost solutions	6.
44	Speed of information flow	6.
45	Transparency of internal messages	7.
46	Reduction of misunderstandings	8.
47	Ability to document conversations	7.
48	Order in online meetings	7.
49	Clarity of roles and responsibilities	8.
50	Transparent performance indicators	9.
51	Fair online evaluation	6.
52	Continuous digital feedback	6.
53	Setting team goals	7.

54	Performance measurement tools	7.
55	Paying attention to the results of absenteeism	8.
56	Improving team productivity	9.
57	Digital collaboration platform usage	7
58	Virtual team building activities	6
59	Online conflict resolution mechanisms	5
60	Digital employee wellness programs	6
61	Remote mentoring and coaching	5
62	Virtual social events and gatherings	4
63	Digital knowledge sharing platforms	7
64	Online brainstorming tools	5
65	Virtual team agreements and charters	4
66	Digital feedback culture	6
67	Remote psychological safety	5
68	Virtual team autonomy	4
69	Digital employee voice channels	5
70	Online creative collaboration	4
71	Digital trust-building mechanisms	6
72	Virtual team rituals and routines	5
73	Remote work-life integration	6
74	Digital organizational citizenship	4
75	Online cultural intelligence	5
76	Virtual meeting effectiveness	6
77	Digital change management	4
78	Remote resource allocation	3
79	Digital talent analytics	5
80	Virtual workforce planning	4
81	Online employee assistance	3
82	Digital organizational learning	6
83	Remote team composition	4
84	Virtual crisis management	3
85	Online professional networking	5
86	Digital succession planning	3
87	Remote innovation facilitation	4
88	Virtual stakeholder engagement	4

In the next part of the qualitative section, while categorizing the extracted codes, axial coding was performed. The following tables show the results of axial coding in each section. Table (2) shows the results of axial coding related to the dimensions and indicators in the market-based human resource strategy model, considering the challenge of creating integrated work teams in a permissible environment.

Table (2) Axial coding results

Component	Item
Digital employer brand	Digital reputation of the organization
	Transparency of online messages
	Trust in young employees
	Alignment with Iraqi culture
	Professionalism of the online recruitment process
	Reputation of the organization in the legal space
Authorized recruitment and employment	Ease of the online recruitment process
	Validity of authorized tests
	Quality of video interviews
	Transparency of recruitment criteria
	Use of domestic/international platforms
	Accuracy of the digital screening system
Digital training and development	Positive experience of applicants
	Access to online courses
	Adapting content to the Iraqi audience
	Upgrading of technological skills
	Strengthening inter-provincial cooperation
	Incentives for authorized training
Authorized work culture	Digital professional growth
	Strengthening shared values
	Proper use of communication tools
	Team-building activities
	Adherence to professional online conduct
	Observance of digital ethics principles
Motivation and retention of authorized employees	Strengthening the shared organizational identity
	Online recognition system
	Encouraging digital participation
	Sense of belonging in authorized teams
	Opportunity for growth and advancement
	Reduced intention to leave the job
Digital leadership	Work-life balance
	Remote leadership skills
	Transparent communication with managers
	Effective online feedback
	Quick decision-making in the online environment
	Facilitator of team collaboration
Technological infrastructure and digital accessibility	Improved online performance
	Stable internet access
	Quality of organizational systems
	Availability of tools in the provinces
	Digital team capability
	Adequate mobile access
Authorized organizational communications	Low-cost solutions
	Speed of information flow
	Transparency of internal messages
	Reduction of misunderstandings

Component	Item
Performance management in a controlled environment	Ability to document conversations
	Order in online meetings
	Clarity of roles and responsibilities
	Transparent performance indicators
	Fair online evaluation
	Continuous digital feedback
	Achievement of team goals
	Performance measurement tools
	Focus on results, not presence
	Improving team productivity

Based on the results of the present study, it was determined that the dimensions and indicators in the human resource market strategy model , considering the innovation challenge of work teams, are integrated in the digital environment, including the digital employer brand, digital recruitment and hiring, digital training and development , digital work culture, digital employee evaluation and retention, digital leadership, digital technology infrastructure and accessibility , digital organizational communication, and digital performance management in the digital environment. Figure (1) shows these dimensions and indicators.



Figure (1) Axial coding

What is the significance of the indicators extracted in the market-based human resource strategy model with regard to the challenge of creating integrated work teams in a digital environment?

After conducting the research interviews, a total of 56 codes were identified. Table (3) shows the results related to these codes.

The qualitative data were analyzed using MAXQDA 11, and selected outputs from the software are incorporated directly into the open-coding and axial-coding tables. Representative interview excerpts are presented alongside the corresponding codes to provide direct evidence for the coding process and to demonstrate how participants' responses were systematically transformed into initial codes and higher-order categories. This approach integrates the MAXQDA outputs with the coding results and avoids presenting the highlighted interview excerpts as a separate section.

Table (3) Results of open coding in the qualitative section

Row	Extracted codes	Frequency	Entropy value	Significance coefficient
1	Digital reputation of the organization	7.	0.519481	0.061419
2	Transparency of online messages	7.	519481/0	0/061419
3	Etemad Niroo Kar Javan	8.	586191/0	069984/0
4	Alignment with Iraqi culture	9.	685190/0	078541/0
5	Professionalism of online recruitment process	7.	519481/0	0.061419
6	Reputation of the organization in the authorized space	8.	586191/0	0.069984
7	Ease of the online recruitment process	9.	685190/0	078541/0
8	Validation of authorized tests	10.	754915/0	085481/0
9	Quality of video interviews	7.	519481/0	0.061419
10	Transparency of recruitment criteria	7.	519481/0	061419/0
11	Use of domestic/international platforms	8.	586191/0	0.069984
12	Digital screening system accuracy	8.	586191/0	0.069984
13	Positive experience of applicants	9.	685190/0	0.078541
14	Access to online courses	10.	754915/0	085481/0
15	Adapting content to Iraqi standards	6.	461910/0	0544681/0
16	Upgrading of technological skills	7.	519481/0	061419/0
17	Strengthening inter-provincial cooperation	7.	519481/0	061419/0
18	Authorized training incentives	8.	586191/0	069984/0
19	Digital Professional Development	6.	461910/0	0544681/0
20	Strengthening shared values	6.	461910/0	0544681/0

21	Proper use of communication tools	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
22	Activities to strengthen cooperation	8.	586191/ 0	069984/0
23	Online Professional Conduct Compliance	8.	586191/ 0	069984/0
24	Observance of Digital Ethics Principles	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
25	Strengthening the shared organizational identity	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
26	Online Appreciation System	6.	461910/ 0	0544681/0
27	Digital Participation Index	9.	685190/ 0	078541/0
28	Sense of belonging in authorized teams	9.	685190/ 0	0.078541
29	Opportunity for growth and advancement	9.	685190/ 0	0.078541
30	Reduced intention to leave the job	6.	461910/ 0	0544681/0
31	Work-life balance	7.	519481/ 0	0.061419
32	Remote leadership skills	8.	586191/ 0	069984/0
33	Transparent communication of managers	6.	461910/ 0	0544681/0
34	Effective online feedback	6.	461910/ 0	0/0544681
35	Quick decision-making in the online space	8.	586191/ 0	0.069984
36	Team Collaboration Facilitator	8.	586191/ 0	0.069984
37	Online Performance Portal	9.	685190/ 0	078541/0
38	Stable Internet Access	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
39	Quality of organizational systems	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
40	Availability of tools in the provinces	8.	586191/ 0	069984/0
41	Digital team capability	8.	586191/ 0	069984/0

42	Adequate mobile access	11.	814189/ 0	0895183/0
43	Low-cost solutions	6.	461910/ 0	0544681/0
44	Speed of information flow	6.	461910/ 0	0.0544681
45	Transparency of internal messages	7.	519481/ 0	0.061419
46	Reducing misunderstandings	8.	586191/ 0	0.069984
47	Ability to document conversations	7.	519481/ 0	0.061419
48	Order in online meetings	7.	519481/ 0	0.061419
49	Clarity of roles and responsibilities	8.	586191/ 0	0.069984
50	Transparent performance indicators	9.	685190/ 0	078541/0
51	Fair online evaluation	6.	461910/ 0	0544681/0
52	Continuous Digital Feedback	6.	461910/ 0	0544681/0
53	Team Goal Progress	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
54	Performance measurement tools	7.	519481/ 0	061419/0
55	Paying attention to the results of non-attendance	8.	586191/ 0	0.069984
56	Team Productivity Improvement	9.	685190. 0	0.078541

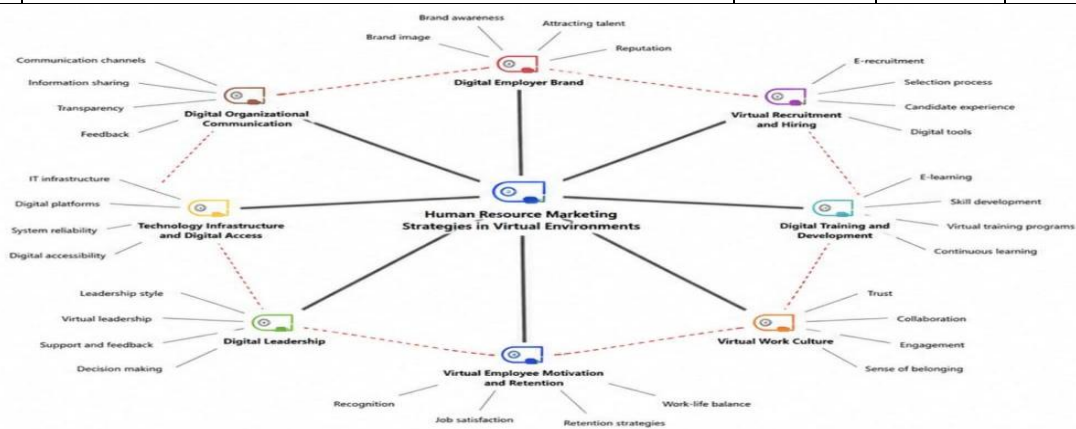


Figure (1): Axial Coding Results of the Human Resource Marketing Strategies Model in Virtual Environments

Based on the research results, it was determined that the item of appropriate mobile accessibility, with a Shannon entropy value of 0.814189 and a significance coefficient of 0.0895183, is the most important index extracted in the model of human resource market strategies in response to the challenge of creating integrated work teams in a virtual environment.

Examples of Interview Responses and Code Extraction

The following examples illustrate how codes were extracted from interview transcripts:

Example 1: Digital Employer Brand

Interview Excerpt (P1 - HR Director):

"One of the most critical challenges we face is building a digital employer brand that resonates with potential employees. When I look at our organization's presence on professional platforms like LinkedIn, we need to present not just job opportunities but a compelling vision of what it means to work virtually with us. The transparency of our online messages, how we showcase our culture, and the trust we build with young professionals - these elements determine whether top talent will even consider us."

Codes Extracted:

- Digital reputation of the organization
- Transparency of online messages
- Trust in young professionals
- Digital employer brand

Example 2: Virtual Recruitment

Interview Excerpt (P4 - Project Manager):

"The recruitment process itself has become completely digital, and I think that's both a challenge and an opportunity. We use video interviews, online testing platforms, and digital screening tools. But what I've noticed is that candidates value transparency in our recruitment criteria. They want to know exactly how they're being evaluated. Also, the overall experience of the application process matters tremendously - if it's cumbersome or unclear, we lose good candidates."

Codes Extracted:

- Professionalism of online recruitment process
- Quality of video interviews
- Transparency of recruitment criteria
- Accuracy of digital screening system
- Positive experience of applicants
- Ease of online recruitment process

Example 3: Technology Infrastructure

Interview Excerpt (P8 - IT Manager):

"I cannot emphasize enough how critical mobile accessibility is for our virtual teams. Many of our employees work from different provinces where fixed internet isn't always reliable. They depend on their mobile phones for communication, accessing systems, and collaborating with colleagues. When we upgraded our platforms to be fully

mobile-responsive, we saw immediate improvements in team communication and productivity. It's not just about having access - it's about having adequate, reliable mobile access."

Codes Extracted:

- Adequate mobile accessibility
- Quality of organizational systems
- Accessibility of tools in provinces
- Stable internet access
- Mobile workforce enablement

Example 4: Virtual Work Culture

Interview Excerpt (P11 - HR Director, Oil and Gas):

"The cultural alignment is crucial in our context. Iraq has a unique culture, and when we design our virtual work environment, we need to ensure that our digital practices and expectations align with Iraqi cultural values. The way we communicate, the importance we place on personal relationships, and our approach to hierarchy - these cultural elements need to be reflected in our virtual work culture, not ignored. We've learned that a one-size-fits-all approach from Western organizations doesn't work here."

Codes Extracted:

- Alignment with Iraqi culture
- Virtual work culture
- Strengthening shared values
- Virtual team identity

Example 5: Digital Leadership

Interview Excerpt (P6 - HR Consultant):

"Leadership in virtual environments requires a completely different skill set. You can't just walk by someone's desk to check on their progress. You need to be intentional about communication, provide clear expectations, and create opportunities for team members to connect with each other. I've seen many managers struggle because they try to apply traditional leadership approaches in virtual settings. The most effective virtual leaders I've observed are those who are transparent, accessible, and skilled at using digital tools to facilitate collaboration."

Codes Extracted:

- Remote leadership skills
- Transparent communication with managers
- Effective online feedback
- Quick decision-making in online environment
- Teamwork facilitator

Example 6: Virtual Organizational Communication

Interview Excerpt (P2 - Virtual Team Manager):

"Communication in virtual teams is both easier and harder. It's easier because we have multiple channels - chat, email, video calls. But it's harder because we lose non-verbal cues and have to be much more intentional about

clarity. I've found that documenting conversations is essential because team members in different time zones often miss real-time discussions. We also need to be very clear about roles and responsibilities because assumptions that would naturally happen in an office setting don't happen automatically in virtual environments."

Codes Extracted:

- Transparency of internal messages
- Reduction of misunderstandings
- Ability to document conversations
- Order in online meetings
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities

2. **Add an Appendix C** for the interview protocol. Copy and paste this:

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. **Introduction and Background**

Can you describe your role and experience in virtual team management?

What types of virtual teams have you worked with?

2. **Digital Employer Brand**

How does your organization present itself to potential employees in virtual spaces?

What role does digital reputation play in attracting talent?

3. **Virtual Recruitment**

What recruitment processes have you implemented for virtual teams?

What challenges have you faced in virtual hiring?

4. **Digital Training**

What training programs support your virtual team members?

How do you develop digital skills within your organization?

5. **Virtual Work Culture**

How would you describe your organization's virtual work culture?

What factors contribute to or hinder virtual team cohesion?

6. **Employee Motivation**

How do you motivate and retain virtual employees?

What recognition systems have you implemented?

7. **Digital Leadership**

What leadership skills are essential for virtual teams?

How does leadership differ in virtual versus traditional settings?

8. **Technology Infrastructure**

What technology challenges affect your virtual teams?

How does mobile access affect team performance?

9. Virtual Communication

What communication strategies work best in virtual teams?

What communication challenges have you encountered?

10. Performance Management

How do you evaluate and manage virtual team performance?

What performance management tools do you use?

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results of the present study, it was determined that the dimensions and indicators in the human resource marketing strategy model, considering the challenge of creating integrated work teams in virtual environments, include digital employer brand, virtual recruitment and hiring, digital training and development, virtual work culture, virtual employee motivation and retention, digital leadership, digital technology infrastructure and accessibility, virtual organizational communication, and virtual performance management. In explaining the results obtained regarding the identification of dimensions and indicators influencing the human resource marketing strategy model, considering the challenge of creating integrated work teams in virtual environments, it can be said that the findings of the present study provide a coherent and multifaceted picture of the factors that, in the current conditions of organizations, especially in contexts where work structures are based on technology, remote interactions, and network collaboration, play a fundamental role in the success of human resource strategies.

The results indicated that digital employer brand, virtual recruitment and hiring, digital training and development, virtual work culture, virtual employee motivation and retention, digital leadership, technological infrastructure and digital accessibility, virtual organizational communication, and virtual performance management are nine main dimensions that would form an effective and efficient framework for human resource marketing strategies in virtual environments. Based on these results, it can be concluded that organizations should be more innovative in their internal marketing techniques and make their digital human resource systems more cohesive and coordinated so that they can build a sense of belonging and coordination among the members of an organization with dispersed locations.

The similarity of the identified dimensions with the theoretical dimensions and empirical literature also validates the model. In terms of the digital employer brand, the conclusions of the present study are consistent with the conclusions derived by Joyce et al. (2024) from their study, which indicated that the organization's marketing messages and communication practices in the virtual space make a significant impact on the potential and current employees' perceptions. They stressed the importance of messages' coherence and linking with the values of the organization, which increases the attractiveness of the organization to the employers, especially in virtual teams where communication is more important than face to face. The results are also similar to the results of the study conducted by Chaoubi et al. (2024) in the field of virtual recruitment and hiring. They said that alignment of HR processes with marketing strategies can influence the performance of the organization and digital recruitment systems play a significant role in it. The findings of the present study support that user experience of the candidates, transparency of the online processes and the application of virtual assessment tools can have a great influence in the formation of integrated teams within digital platforms. This was also supported by Triginen's research (2019), who claimed that internal marketing can minimize the communication gap and psychological distance between the members of distributed teams.

The results of this research also coincide with the relevant literature in the field of digital training and development. Prerequisites for success in virtual teams according to the study of Efimov et al. 2024 are technical

readiness, access to appropriate equipment, and effective training programs. Thus, the results of the study on the significance of digital training show that organisations need to improve their employees' virtual working competences, digital working relations and communication competence with regard to the use of communication tools in order to contribute to cohesion, collaboration and high performance. The results of the study on virtual work culture are also similar to the study carried out by Salimi et al. (2021). In their study, they demonstrated the cultural and behavioral aspects of virtual teams and the importance of fostering a participatory environment, common objectives, and the right communication skills for effective team performance. The findings of this research also confirm that in a digital workplace cultural richness, trust and communication norms are important factors that can influence team cohesion, and their lack can cause conflicts and poor quality of cooperation.

Regarding the motivation and retention of VI, the results are also consistent with that of Raiko et al. (2023). They said that to enhance productivity and motivate the employees, digital incentive systems, structured rewards, and supportive communications among members need to be established. The present study also validates this approach and demonstrates that employee motivation cannot be enhanced exclusively through employees' traditional way of working, but the design of digital incentives, online feedback systems and technology-based support programs are necessary. The results also match with the study of Daneshvar Dilami et al. (2018) and the study of Abed Jafari et al. (2011) in the dimension of digital leadership. The role of the leader in virtual teams is increasingly dynamic because of communication limitations, lack of physical presence and dependence on digital tools, and the need to have enhanced communication, leadership and support skills. The results of the current study also suggest that digital leaders are the connection between technology, individuals and organizational processes, and when digital leadership is inadequate, organizational team participation, role ambiguity and lack of trust in virtual teams may decline.

The size of the technological and digital environment is also of particular importance, as shown in the research results by Efimov et al. (2024). They noted that the key points for successful digital teams are the technical conditions, quality of connections, information security, and availability of communication tools. The findings of the present study also underscore this problem and reveal that the inability to have good communication systems in place can have detrimental effects on the functioning of virtual teams and can impede the design of efficient human resource strategies within the organization. The results of the virtual organizational communication are in line with the research conducted by Tyrikonen (2019). Language differences, time zone differences and the absence of face to face contact can make it difficult to create a sense of belonging and cohesion, he said. This current study also reveals that two-way, transparent communication through the use of proper technology is an important factor in developing constructive cooperation and avoiding misunderstandings in organisations.

Finally, performance management in a virtual environment was also considered one of the influential dimensions in the model, which is consistent with the results of the research by Pelyan et al. (2020) as well as the research by Goita et al. (2023). These studies have indicated that a virtual team's performance is enhanced by the availability of a clear evaluation system, continuous feedback, and online measurement tools. The results presented in this study further reveal that the focus of virtual team performance management should be on results and outputs, and that digital tools should be employed to monitor, evaluate and guide employee performance within virtual teams in organizations. Based on the results of the present study, theoretical and empirical literature, the model of human resource marketing strategies in virtual environments is found to be a multidimensional model that relies on the communication between technology, human skills, leadership and internal marketing simultaneously. The identified dimensions are not only consistent with the conditions of the Iranian and international organizations but they can also serve as a guideline for the design of human resource policies for contexts like Iraq where structural changes arise, technology is in development and virtual work is being expanded.

Based on the results of the research, it is found that the item of adequate mobile access with Shannon entropy value of 0.814189 and importance coefficient of 0.0895183 is the most important index extracted in the model of human resource marketing strategies, especially when faced with the challenge of making integrated work teams in a virtual environment. The results on the importance of the indicators extracted in the human resource marketing strategies model, taking into account the challenge of creating integrated work teams in a virtual environment, indicate

that all of the indicators identified have a significant weight and importance in the formation, strengthening and sustainability of virtual teams, but some of them have more weight and importance in the model structure. Based on the results of the Shannon entropy method, it was found that in the model the item adequate mobile access has the highest value of importance among all the remaining items, and this is not only statistically significant, but also in line with the fundamental change of virtual work nature. The indicator that has the highest level of significance coefficient shows that the quality and accessibility of employees' mobile tools is not just an easy technological solution, but also one of the key requirements for establishing team cohesion and effective communication in digital environments. When much of communication, task management, everyday interactions, information sharing, and even organizational oversight is mediated by mobile devices, it is hardly surprising that this aspect will become important, and the results of the current study have confirmed this.

Reading the results together with the theoretical background will create a better understanding of the relevance of this indicator. Ifimov et al. (2024) noted that having suitable technical infrastructure and trustworthy tools for employees is a key factor in the success of virtual teams. They said that communication is very often absent due to poor access to communication tools, which results in loss of trust and problems with leading virtual teams. This is where the result of the present study, which has identified adequate mobile access as the most important indicator, can be understood. This is because mobile devices, which are portable, can connect anywhere, are compatible with communication platforms, and provide greater continuity of organisational communication than other devices, and accelerate message transmission in dispersed environments.

This is also in line with findings from Blay et al. (2024) who conducted a research on the convergence of collaboration in virtual teams, noting that communication tools have a facilitating role in consensus building and in behavioral coordination, and that a lack of technological tool access makes coordination less. From the internal marketing point of view, the need for sufficient mobile availability can also be explored. According to Joyce et al. (2024), the digital experience employees have during their interactions with an employer can have a significant impact on their perception of the employer brand, and companies that offer the right tools, platforms and infrastructure can improve employee trust and loyalty. In a sense, the ability to provide adequate mobile access reflects the attitude of the organization towards the communication needs of its employees, and demonstrates the value the organization places on the flow of communication between itself, its employees and the rest of the world. This helps to boost employees' sense of support and their willingness to embrace virtual work.

However, the results of the present research also have significant findings for the research results of Goita et al. (2023). They demonstrated that the use of technological tools plays a key role in the performance of virtual teams, and that people who do not have easy access to digital tools or are not constantly connected have lower levels of satisfaction, mental well-being, and team performance. The outcome of this study also clearly emphasizes the importance of appropriate mobile access, and it can be stated that mobile access, apart from being a technological factor, has also proved to be a psychological stimulus for the feeling of belongingness of employees. The results of the present study are also consistent with Salimi et al. (2021) research from the point of view of the internal views. The research showed that there are certain technological needs and prerequisites for a virtual research team and if any of the communication tools is lacking, there is a negative attitude towards participation and the overall efficiency of the virtual research team is decreased. The most critical indicator in this case is in fact one of the ways in which this 'bad climate' is prevented and 'good climate' is created: adequate mobile access is granted, even if access to fixed Internet or personal computer is limited.

The findings of the present study are also discussed with the findings of Dehghanan and Pourmaghsian (2015). The presence of knowledge-sharing in a virtual team was successful if the communication tools used for sharing knowledge are quick, accessible, and direct, they said. Members can share information, documents, and messages with each other in real time, without compromising the velocity of knowledge transfer, by using the proper mobile access. Thus, this indicator is logical for inclusion in the research model. The other important aspect is that the importance of this indicator is also in line with organizational and social conditions of developing countries like Iraq. When fixed Internet is not always reliable or reliable throughout provinces, smartphones and mobile Internet become

the backbone of digital communication in countries. Hence, it's logical that in these settings, the metric of good mobile access is more significant than other metrics. The organizations in Iraq need to pay special concern on the mobile features of their workforces, mobile web coverage and mobile accessibility of organisations' platforms to make their virtual teams more effective. The high importance of the adequate mobile access indicates that technology tools in the human resource marketing strategies model not just support human resource activities, but also are also a crucial element in building cohesion, coordination, motivation, and team communication. The weight of this indicator reflects the evolving nature of work in the digital age, and the fact that, to foster effective, integrated teams in a virtual workspace, organizations need to build mobile communication capabilities and factor in mobile tools as part of the employee experience when developing their strategies.

According to the findings of the first research question that identified digital employer branding, virtual recruitment and hiring, digital training, virtual communication, digital leadership and technology infrastructure as the most important dimensions that affect the model of human resource marketing, it is recommended that organisations change their human resource marketing strategy from traditional recruitment and organization promotion to integrated digital branding. To make this happen they can boost their profile on professional platforms, publish authentic employee experiences, create content to introduce the workplace and establish active communication channels with future workers. This will help the company attract more employees and build a better professional image to both the internal and the external employees.

Based on the results of the first question on the significance of the online recruitment and hiring process, organizations should also fully digitalize their recruitment processes, thereby leveraging intelligent screening tools, structured video interviews, and recruitment platforms over the web. Moreover, user experiences that are enjoyable for the applicant, prompt feedback and transparency over the recruitment process can build trust with new employees from the outset and enhance the unity of the team at the beginning of the process helping to create better virtual teams.

The findings from the second research question, that the most important indicator of the human resource marketing strategies model in virtual environments is the adequate mobile access, recommend that the internal systems, communication systems and digital collaboration tools developed by organizations should be fully compatible with mobile phones. Accessibility to the employees who are in different locations can be increased by ensuring availability on mobile versions of the platforms, remote access to platforms, minimizing data usage, and creating a simple user interface; all of which are a game-changer in developing the cohesion and connectivity of dispersed teams in places like Iraq. Some research proposals are presented based on the results:

- Building an integrated model of assessing the components of digital leadership in virtual work teams.
- Researching how AI can enhance the recruitment and marketing practices of human resources in telecommuting organizations.
- Smart organizational communication model and its impact on psychological unity of virtual teams.

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