

The Effect of Employer Branding on Employee Retention of Technical Support Employees in Internet Service Provider (ISP) Companies (ION Network Case Study)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of employer branding on employee retention among Technical Support staff at ION Network, a leading Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and company document analysis. The study involved three key informants: a Technical Support employee, the Vice President of Technical Support, and an HRD specialist. The findings reveal that ION Network's employer branding anchored in national project participation, practical technical training, and family focused benefits fosters emotional and professional engagement, thereby enhancing employee loyalty. Training initiatives and public recognition of high performing staff further strengthen job satisfaction. However, the study also highlights retention challenges, particularly the gap between the hierarchical structure and the high mobility expectations of young employees, as well as salary competition from rival firms. These challenges indicate the need for more adaptive branding strategies that align with generational preferences and market dynamics. The study concludes that employer branding at ION Network operates as both a recruitment and retention tool, effectively combining external corporate image with internal employee value. The implications underscore the importance of purpose driven work environments, continuous learning systems, and flexible career pathways in maintaining a stable and committed workforce in the ISP sector.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh *employer branding* terhadap retensi karyawan di divisi *Technical Support* pada ION Network, salah satu perusahaan penyedia layanan internet (ISP) terkemuka di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen perusahaan. Tiga informan kunci terlibat dalam studi ini: seorang karyawan *Technical Support*, Wakil Presiden divisi *Technical Support*, dan seorang spesialis HRD. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *employer branding* ION Network yang didasarkan pada partisipasi dalam proyek nasional, pelatihan teknis yang aplikatif, serta *benefit* keluarga mendorong keterikatan emosional dan profesional yang memperkuat loyalitas karyawan. Program pelatihan dan pengakuan publik terhadap karyawan berprestasi turut meningkatkan kepuasan kerja. Namun, studi ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan retensi, khususnya kesenjangan antara struktur organisasi yang hierarkis dan ekspektasi mobilitas karier dari karyawan muda, serta tekanan dari kompetitor yang menawarkan gaji lebih tinggi. Temuan ini menunjukkan perlunya strategi *branding* yang lebih adaptif terhadap preferensi generasi muda dan dinamika pasar tenaga kerja. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *employer branding* di ION Network berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai alat rekrutmen tetapi juga sebagai strategi retensi, dengan menggabungkan citra perusahaan eksternal dan nilai internal karyawan.

1. Introduction

In the highly competitive landscape of the Internet Service Provider (ISP) industry, the ability to attract and retain competent employees, particularly in technical support roles, has become increasingly critical. With the rise in customer demand for uninterrupted digital connectivity and high service

quality, employee retention has emerged as a key performance indicator for organizational sustainability. High turnover not only disrupts service consistency but also increases operational costs due to the need for continual recruitment and training processes.

Employer branding has gained prominence as a strategic tool to enhance employee retention by

cultivating a strong organizational image and internal value alignment. Employer branding involves a dual strategy of projecting an attractive external image to prospective employees while simultaneously fostering an internal culture that promotes loyalty and engagement [1]. Within the ISP sector, where the talent market is saturated and skilled workers often switch employers for marginal financial gains, effective employer branding can differentiate an organization by offering a compelling employee experience.

Prior studies suggest that a well-executed employer branding strategy can have significant implications not only for attracting new talent but also for reinforcing long-term employee commitment [2], [3]. Organizations that are perceived as supportive, progressive, and employee centric tend to enjoy stronger emotional bonds with their workforce. This sense of alignment fosters a culture of retention, which is particularly crucial in operational roles that directly impact service reliability, such as technical support.

Moreover, in the context of generational shifts in the labor market, younger employees often prioritize intangible factors such as growth opportunities, workplace values, and work life balance over salary alone [4]. As such, employer branding must adapt to these evolving expectations by emphasizing career development, inclusivity, and purposeful work. ISP companies, particularly in developing economies like Indonesia, must strategically position themselves to remain competitive amidst this shift in workforce priorities.

Despite the increasing importance of employer branding, the majority of empirical research has centered on large multinational corporations or industries such as finance and hospitality. Limited attention has been given to the ISP sector, especially regarding non managerial operational roles. There is also a notable scarcity of qualitative insights that explore the lived experiences of employees in assessing how employer branding elements influence their decision to stay or leave.

This study addresses that gap by focusing on ION Network, a leading Indonesian ISP known for its involvement in national infrastructure projects and its commitment to employee welfare. By examining the perceptions of technical support staff toward the company's employer branding initiatives, this research aims to uncover the specific organizational practices that drive employee retention.

Although extensive research has explored the relationship between employer branding and employee retention across various sectors such as banking technology and manufacturing studies focusing specifically on the Internet Service Provider (ISP) sector remain limited [1], [2], [3]. Most existing literature draws from contexts in developed nations,

making their findings less applicable to emerging markets like Indonesia [4]. Additionally, these studies often adopt quantitative methodologies and fail to capture the nuanced, lived experiences of frontline technical staff who directly influence service reliability and customer satisfaction [5], [6]. As frontline employees often face high pressure, technical challenges, and limited upward mobility, understanding their perspective is critical to improving organizational performance. However, minimal attention has been given to how internal employer branding strategies such as professional growth, value alignment, and workplace identity are perceived and internalized by operational employees in ISPs [7], [8].

Prior studies have yet to comprehensively integrate cultural and psychological dimensions into the assessment of employee loyalty within the ISP sector. Younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are reported to prioritize meaningful work, career clarity, and personal development over salary, yet most findings stem from startup or high-tech environments rather than infrastructure-based service firms [9], [10]. There is also a lack of context specific insights from Indonesia, where workplace values often emphasize familial culture and long-term security [11]. This research addresses these gaps by applying a qualitative methodology to explore how technical support staff at ION Network perceive and respond to employer branding efforts. The novelty of this study lies in its sector specific and culture sensitive approach, offering a localized framework of employer branding that accounts for both the operational realities of ISP work and the sociocultural expectations of Indonesian employees [12], [13].

2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to gain an in depth understanding of how employer branding influences employee retention within the context of a leading Internet Service Provider (ISP) company in Indonesia, namely ION Network. The case study methodology was selected for its strength in uncovering complex social phenomena within real life settings, especially when the boundaries between context and phenomenon are not clearly evident [1], [14]. Qualitative methods were deemed appropriate given the study's aim to explore employees' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings attached to organizational practices, which cannot be effectively captured through quantitative instruments.

The research site, ION Network, was strategically chosen due to its distinctive involvement in national strategic projects, strong internal branding initiatives, and its operational challenges in retaining frontline technical staff. The Technical Support division was selected as the focal point of analysis because it plays a pivotal role in maintaining service continuity and customer satisfaction, making it critical to

organizational performance. The study involved three key informants selected through purposive sampling: a Technical Support staff member with two years of experience, the Vice President of Technical Support, and a Human Resources Development (HRD) specialist. Each informant was selected based on their direct engagement with employer branding activities and retention policies, ensuring relevance and depth in data collection.

Data were collected through three primary qualitative techniques: in depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi structured interviews were conducted to elicit rich narratives and individual interpretations regarding employer branding and retention experiences. The interviews were guided by open ended questions designed to explore the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of employee perceptions. To complement the interviews, participant observation was undertaken within the Technical Support environment. This enabled the researcher to observe the daily interactions, rituals, and informal practices that shape organizational culture and employee loyalty. Additionally, company documents such as internal HR reports, training program materials, employee engagement surveys, and performance review notes were analyzed to provide contextual background and validate interview findings.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, categories, and themes across the data sources. This involved coding the interview transcripts, observation notes, and document content to uncover dominant ideas and their interrelationships. Furthermore, narrative analysis was applied to examine how informants construct meaning and coherence around their experiences with employer branding strategies. These dual techniques provided both a macro level overview of key issues and a micro level insight into individual perspectives [2], [15]. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied, involving the comparison and integration of data from multiple sources and methods. This strategy ensured that the conclusions were not solely reliant on any one form of evidence and helped mitigate researcher bias [3].

The qualitative research process in this study was iterative and reflexive, allowing for continuous refinement of data collection and interpretation. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time. This methodological rigor strengthens the study's reliability and offers a valuable foundation for understanding how employer branding practices impact employee retention in high pressure service roles such as technical support within the ISP industry.

3. Result and Discussion

The results of this qualitative case study underscore the critical influence of employer branding on employee retention within the Technical Support division at ION Network, a prominent Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Indonesia. Thematic analysis revealed that employees' decisions to remain with the organization are shaped by three major dimensions: external organizational reputation, internal development initiatives, and employee centered benefits. Notably, ION Network's role in nationally strategic projects, such as the infrastructure setup for the 2019 Indonesian General Election, instills a sense of pride and prestige among employees. These sentiments align with the model proposed certain researchers, which emphasizes that employer branding must harmonize outward corporate image with inward employee value propositions [1], [16]. Interviewees expressed that participation in meaningful national endeavors enhanced their emotional commitment to the company. Additionally, structured training programs focusing on technical upskilling such as fiber optic installation and leadership development have been instrumental in employee growth, affirming that investment in human capital development is a decisive factor in organizational loyalty [2]. Observational data corroborated these perspectives, as employees were regularly engaged in hands on workshops and mentoring initiatives that promoted competency and collaborative culture.

Beyond skill development, comprehensive benefit schemes emerged as another vital element in fostering retention. The company's provision of family health insurance, covering up to three dependents, was frequently highlighted by respondents as a form of organizational care that transcends monetary compensation. This approach supports findings from prior studies which demonstrate that employees are more likely to remain with companies that offer holistic support, both professionally and personally [3]. However, challenges persist. The most pressing issue identified was the dissonance between high career advancement expectations among young employees particularly those with only secondary education and the rigid, hierarchical structure of ION Network. As younger generations seek rapid professional growth and role mobility, the organization is urged to develop more transparent and flexible career pathways. Moreover, the lure of competitors offering higher base salaries continues to challenge employee retention efforts, especially in an industry characterized by high mobility and wage competition [4]. To counteract this, ION Network has focused on enhancing its non-financial value proposition, including emotional and professional recognition. For example, annual corporate events like the "Employee Gathering" not only reward top performers but also strengthen interpersonal bonds and team identity. Internal surveys

from 2022 showed a 15% increase in employee engagement following these initiatives. Nonetheless, the study uncovered limitations, such as inadequate preparedness among staff for digital transformation and technological disruptions. These findings suggest that while employer branding strategies at ION Network are effective in strengthening retention through emotional connection and organizational culture, there is a need for greater emphasis on continuous learning and agility to ensure long term sustainability.

3.1. Branding Impact

This study found that employer branding significantly influences the emotional and professional engagement of Technical Support employees at ION Network. The company's strategic participation in high-profile national initiatives, such as the 2019 General Election infrastructure project, has bolstered its public image while fostering internal pride. Employees reported feeling a strong sense of purpose and belonging when involved in such projects, indicating that meaningful work can drive long term retention. These findings affirm certain theory, which emphasizes that effective employer branding must integrate outward reputation with inward employee value propositions [1]. The study revealed that ION Network's branding does not end with external communications; it extends into internal narratives that reinforce employee identity and loyalty. Messaging such as "Internet for Democracy" was internalized by staff as a reflection of their contribution to national development. This emotional branding approach was particularly appealing to younger employees, who are motivated by work with social relevance rather than salary alone.

The company's image as a socially responsible employer thus becomes a key driver in retention, creating a workforce that stays not just for the job, but for the mission. This aligns with certain researchers' observation that employer branding which resonates with personal values enhances organizational attachment [3]. In sum, branding at ION Network operates as more than recruitment it is a sustained cultural narrative that binds employees to the company's vision. Certain study also demonstrated how a company's reputation on online platforms such as Glassdoor can shape internal and external branding perceptions that influence loyalty [17]. In addition, organizational support for work-life balance is a key predictor of emotional engagement that increases retention, especially in the service and tourism sectors [18], [19].

3.2. Training and Recognition

The second major finding underscores the importance of training and recognition in strengthening employee retention. At ION Network, technical training programs are structured and designed to be directly applicable to employees' daily tasks. New hires and

existing staff undergo regular sessions that focus on critical competencies such as network diagnostics, fiber optic handling, and digital troubleshooting. Participants in the study consistently mentioned the value of hands-on learning, noting that it empowered them to perform more confidently and efficiently. This finding supports prior research who argue that tangible skill development increases organizational loyalty by enhancing job mastery and self-efficacy [2]. Beyond technical skills, leadership training modules are also offered to identify and nurture potential future supervisors, providing a clear trajectory for internal career growth. This aligns with the expectations of younger workers, who often seek structured opportunities for progression.

In parallel, recognition plays a vital role in reinforcing employees' sense of value and contribution. ION Network conducts annual events like the "Employee Gathering," where outstanding performers are formally acknowledged in front of their peers. This public form of recognition enhances employee morale and creates a culture where excellence is visible and rewarded. One employee described the event as a moment that "validates not only our performance but our place in the company." Such initiatives correspond with the insights of who observed that symbolic rewards, when aligned with performance, foster emotional engagement and reduce attrition [3]. The synergy between training and recognition at ION Network illustrates a comprehensive employer branding strategy that goes beyond compensation by investing in personal development and acknowledgment. This dual emphasis not only cultivates a skilled workforce but also nurtures long term commitment among employees.

Recent research highlights the importance of ongoing training as an effective retention strategy in the private sector in the Middle East and North Africa region [6], [15]. In the context of long-term brand value, a study also emphasizes the link between training and internal branding perceptions among employees [16].

3.3. Retention Challenges

Despite the strengths of ION Network's employer branding, the study identified several challenges that threaten employee retention, particularly among the younger workforce. A key issue lies in the mismatch between organizational hierarchy and the expectations of entry level technical staff. The majority of Technical Support employees are recent high school graduates who exhibit high aspirations for rapid career progression. However, the company's hierarchical structure offers limited opportunities for quick promotion or lateral movement. This gap creates frustration and leads some employees to consider external opportunities with more flexible career pathways. These findings resonate with researchers who observed that unmet expectations regarding professional growth are among the leading causes of

early resignation, particularly among younger generations [4].

In addition to internal structural constraints, ION Network faces competitive pressure from rival ISPs offering higher base salaries. While the company emphasizes non-financial benefits such as family insurance and training, monetary compensation remains a decisive factor for some employees. The Vice President of Technical Support acknowledged that retaining talent often requires more than internal branding: “We need to continually innovate our benefits package or risk losing our best people.” This competitive salary environment is consistent with data from Indonesia’s telecommunications sector, which highlights intense wage competition as a primary retention barrier [5]. Another concern is the limited preparedness of staff to navigate digital disruption. As new technologies are introduced, employees reported anxiety about their ability to keep up, especially when training resources are not promptly updated. Without continuous learning opportunities, the risk of skill obsolescence could reduce employee confidence and increase turnover. Addressing these challenges requires a more adaptive employer branding strategy one that integrates agile career paths, competitive benefits, and robust digital upskilling programs to align with the evolving expectations of today’s workforce.

Furthermore, the need for adaptive branding becomes crucial to sustain engagement in the long term, as suggested by certain researchers in their longitudinal study in the Indian IT sector which showed that employer branding has a temporal impact on employee engagement and retention [14]. It is also important to consider branding strategies that are financially and culturally competitive as demonstrated by a recent study in the startup sector in the Southeast Asian region [20].

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that employer branding plays a significant role in enhancing employee retention within the technical support division of ION Network. The company’s ability to link its corporate identity with national projects has created a sense of pride and purpose among employees, which strengthens emotional attachment and reduces turnover. Moreover, practical training and public recognition of employee achievements contribute to increased job satisfaction and loyalty, particularly among young workers who value development and affirmation. However, several retention challenges remain. Younger employees often express a desire for faster career progression, which is not always compatible with the organization’s hierarchical structure. Additionally, while non-financial benefits are appreciated, salary competition from rival ISPs remains a threat to workforce stability. Furthermore, a lack of consistent upskilling support in the face of technological change may affect long term

retention. To address these issues, ION Network and similar firms are encouraged to implement adaptive employer branding strategies that integrate clear career pathways, competitive benefits, and continuous learning systems. Future research could explore comparative models across other ISP companies or adopt longitudinal approaches to assess the sustained impact of branding efforts on employee retention.

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