

Unveiling the Influence: Corporate Influencers and Employer Branding in the Skilled Trades Industry

Vanessa Klopf and Carolin Durst

University of Applied Sciences Ansbach, Germany

vanessaklopf@gmx.net

carolin.durst@hs-ansbach.de

Abstract: The skilled trade industry is a significant driving force for the development and prosperity of society and constitutes the backbone of the German economy with its small and medium-sized enterprises. Currently, waiting times for craftsmen stand at approximately three months. This trend is on the rise due to the continued and severe shortage of apprentices and skilled workers. Potential trainees are representatives of Generation Z and best reached through social media channels. Consequently, many companies deliberately utilize corporate influencers in employer branding efforts to win young talents. Corporate influencers have the ability to present specifically job-related content and offer more authentic insights into the daily work environment. However, do they genuinely influence the career preferences of potential trainees? The aim of this study is to investigate if and to what extent corporate influencer influence the perception of the skilled trades industry and career preferences of potential applicants. To investigate the impact of corporate influencers on the perception of the skilled trade industry and the respective career preferences of potential applicants, we conducted a study with 66 students from a secondary school in Germany. (1) First, we measured the perception of the skilled trades industry and career preferences of the participants. (2) Then we exposed them to previously selected content of two corporate influencers from the skilled trades sector. (3) After the exposure, we measured the perception of the skilled trades industry and career preferences of the participants again. For the statistical analysis we used regression analyses and T-tests. The findings of the study show that corporate influencer on social media positively influenced both, the perception of the skilled trades industry and the career preferences of potential applicants. Particularly, insights into daily work routines prove to be effective. Simultaneously, the study reveals that the employer attractiveness of the skilled trades industry in general significantly influences the perception of the industry and enhances applicants' interest in craft professions.

Keywords: Corporate influencers, Employer branding, Career preferences, Recruitment strategies, Skilled trades industry

1. Introduction

The skilled trades sector significantly contributes to society and the economy in its roles as an employer, educator, and economic driver, exerting substantial influence on daily life. Every day, millions of requests, executions, and distributions of artisanal services and products take place. The recipients of this extensive range of offerings include not only private individuals but also the public sector, commerce, and industry. (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks, o.D.).

Although the skilled trades sector is essential for every society as employer, educator, and economic contributor, it has been grappling with significant shortages of skilled workers and an image problem for years (Handwerkskammer Rheinhessen, 2021). The reasons behind the declining number of young individuals opting for an apprenticeship in the skilled trades are multifaceted: demographic shifts, prolonged emphasis in educational policy solely on academic pursuits, as well as the lack of awareness among youths regarding the opportunities within the trades. There is a general lack of appreciation for craftsman professions within society (Eberl, 2022). Zudem herrschen nach wie vor starre Vorurteile über den Sektor. Furthermore, rigid prejudices persist about the sector. Skilled trades are often associated with poor working conditions, high physical exertion, inadequate pay, and insufficient opportunities for advancement and career development, making it an unappealing choice of employment. The integration of innovative technologies in the trades, the earning potential comparable to that of a bachelor's degree holder, and the promising career paths leading to entrepreneurship remain largely unrecognized (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks, 2021).

Despite these challenges, effectively addressing the task of successful talent acquisition has yet to be adequately accomplished. Countering approaches like employer branding and digital recruitment strategies have received little consideration thus far. These factors contribute to a significant bottleneck in the apprenticeship and labor market, bearing far-reaching consequences for the country's economic growth, political climate goals, as well as its energy and mobility transition (Gutensohn & dpa, 2022).

To pursue the desired objectives and alleviate the shortage of skilled workers, it is imperative for the skilled trades to promptly respond and present themselves as attractive employers to attract apprentices. Hence, there needs to be a societal shift in mindset and a greater awareness of the actual circumstances within the

skilled trades. Potential apprentices represent Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010), a demographic best reached through social media channels (Pawlik, 2022; Maas, 2019, p. 59). Companies can employ various strategies on social media to achieve their organizational goals and portray themselves as desirable employers. As an alternative to expensive influencer campaigns, corporate influencers—employees within the company—have proven successful. In contrast to external influencers, they can offer more authentic insights into job-related content and better represent the company as they interact daily with its activities, clients, and products. Major corporations such as Otto, Daimler, or IKEA have already implemented corporate influencer programs (O’Leary, 2023). For instance, the OTTO Group, a leading online retailer, launched a successful internal job ambassador program in 2017, appointing over 100 employees as corporate influencers. After running for over two years, there has been a positive response, with corporate influencers significantly influencing applicants' decisions to pursue employment opportunities at OTTO (Weitzel et al., 2020a, p. 30).

In existing literature, corporate influencers have only been discussed in general or within the context of business-to-business (B2B) scenarios. Specifically, regarding corporate influencers within the skilled trades sector, their influence, and how potential employees perceive them, there is a lack of scientific insights. The same applies to employer branding; while there is existing literature covering the fundamentals and strategies in employer branding, there hasn't been a direct link established to the skilled trades industry. Given this lack of knowledge and the shortage of apprentices in the skilled trades, this study explored how recruiting apprentices from Generation Z in the skilled trades could be successfully executed. In this context, factors influencing how this demographic can be motivated towards trades-based apprenticeships were identified. Furthermore, recommendations for trades-based enterprises were derived from both theoretical insights and practical findings. Consequently, the following research question emerged: *How do corporate influencers influence the perception of the skilled trades sector and the career preferences of potential applicants from Generation Z?*

2. Employer Branding and Corporate Influencer

Employer Branding encompasses all strategies and actions that a company undertakes to position itself as an attractive, credible, and preferred employer, targeting both existing employees and potential applicants (Fournier et al., 2019, p. 22). The objectives of Employer Branding extend beyond recruitment and retention of personnel. Its aim is to construct an employer brand that distinguishes and renders the company an appealing employment option (Meffert, Burmann, & Koers, 2002; Petkovic, 2004 as cited in Wilden et al., 2010, p. 58). A robust employer brand leads to differentiation from competitors and shapes preferences among target audiences (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, S. 502; Fournier et al., 2019, p. 24). Additionally, financial advantages such as reduced recruiting expenses and lower turnover and absenteeism rates due to heightened employee loyalty are among the positive effects (Figurska & Matuska, 2013, S. 39; Fournier et al., 2019, p. 25; Sünderhauf, 2022, p. 14). Social media plays a pivotal role in Employer Branding, particularly in engaging young target demographics. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram offer ideal avenues to reach potential applicants and directly engage with them (Kunst, 2023; Lohmeier, 2023; Luoma-aho & Badham, 2023, S. 255). The quality and credibility of the content provided are pivotal in this regard (Meffert et al. 2008, S. 108 as cited in Büttgen & Kissel, 2013, p. 112).

Within the context of Employer Branding and recruiting, employees can serve as brand ambassadors and authentic representatives of the employer brand (Huotari et al., 2015 as cited in Nestler et al., 2021, S. 3). Known as corporate influencers, these individuals are contented employees who share their affiliation with the company on social media platforms, injecting a personal touch (Sünderhauf, 2022, p. 25; Weinländer, 2021, p. 558). In contrast to external social media influencers, corporate influencers are distinguished by their internal position within the company and specific expertise (Enke & Borchers, 2019, p. 267; Schach, 2018, p. 31). Through credible communication about their work routine and employer, corporate influencers contribute to bolstering the employer brand. They expand the company's reach, generate attention, and strengthen employee retention, which positively impacts brand development and overall corporate perception (Sünderhauf, 2022, p. 26; Weinländer, 2021, p. 558).

Selecting and nurturing corporate influencers necessitates clear frameworks, organizational support, and deliberate investments in the knowledge, commitment, and skills of employees (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Personalführung, 2012, p. 111). To effectively engage Generation Z through corporate influencer programs, the content and its messaging must align with their values (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021, S. 497; Hesse et al., 2019, p. 75). Generation Z values job satisfaction, social responsibility, individuality, and a positive application experience (OC&C, 2019, pp. 16 & 20; Weitzel et al., 2020b, pp. 12 & 19). Extensive use of social media grants

companies the opportunity to deploy targeted influencer marketing strategies to reach Generation Z. Authenticity and credibility stand as key values that corporate influencers should convey (Kapitan et al., 2022, S. 342; Kleinjohann & Reinecke, 2020, pp. 18).

3. Research Model and Hypothesis

Employer Branding is a concept closely associated with employer attractiveness. Rohrlack (2019) defines employer attractiveness as the evaluative perception held by employees and external individuals regarding perceived attractive factors (p. 132). Various models have been discussed in the literature, with Ambler and Barrow's (1996) model being frequently cited. Their model applies marketing principles to the merits of employment (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 185) and forms the basis for further developments, such as the model introduced by Berthon et al. (2005) and their scale for determining and operationalizing employer attractiveness (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 474).

Nugroho and Liswandi (2018) build upon the model from Berthon et al. (2005) and investigated the impact of employer attractiveness, company reputation, and the use of social media on the intention to apply to a specific company (Nugroho & Liswandi, 2018, p. 553). We used Nugroho and Liswandi's (2018) model as a starting point and adapted it for the skilled trades sector in Germany. In the modified model, the variables are adjusted to examine the influence of employer attractiveness within the skilled trades and corporate influencers on the perception of the skilled trades and the career preferences of potential applicants (see figure 1).

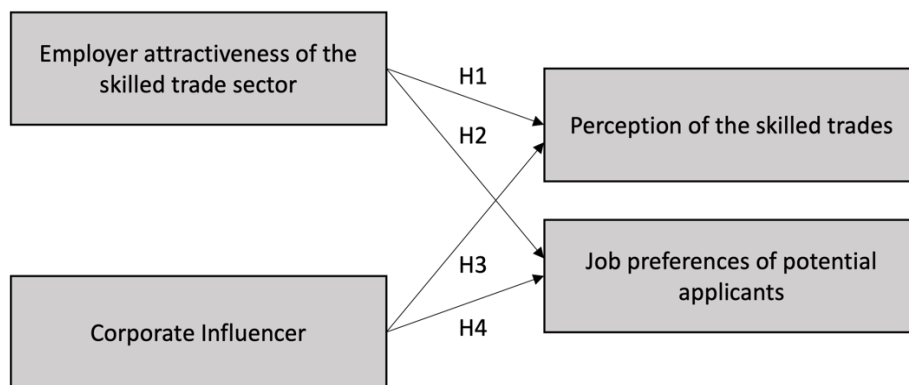


Figure 1: Modified theoretical framework; own illustration based on Nugroho & Liswandi (2018, p. 558)

In the following empirical study, we investigate the following hypotheses:

H1: The employer attractiveness of the skilled trades significantly influences the perception of the skilled trades.

H2: The employer attractiveness of the skilled trades significantly influences the career preferences of applicants.

H3: Corporate influencers significantly influence the perception of the skilled trades.

H4: Corporate influencers significantly influence the career preferences of applicants.

4. Methodology

We conducted a study with 66 students from a secondary school in Germany to investigate the the influence of employer attractiveness within the skilled trades and corporate influencers on the perception of the skilled trade industry and the career preferences of potential applicants. (1) First, we measured the participants' perceptions of the skilled trade industry and their career preferences. (2) We then exposed them to pre-selected content from two corporate influencers in the skilled trades. (3) After the exposure, we measured the participants' perceptions of the skilled trades industry and their career preferences again.

4.1 Selection Process of Corporate Influencers

The identification and selection of corporate influencers in the skilled trade industry were conducted through meticulous internet research, identifying 15 influential personalities from the craft sector on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The selection criteria were based on the top three Google search results from reputable sources such as the Handwerksmagazin (Craftsmanship Magazine), the Handwerksblatt

(Craftsmanship Journal), and Online Marketing Rockstars. A detailed table was created, presenting information on the professions, utilized platforms, and the number of subscribers of these influencers. Subsequently, only those influencers were considered as corporate influencers who either tagged or mentioned their employers in their profiles. Following this exclusion process, eight corporate influencers remained, selected for further analysis in the study due to their close association with the company as authentic representatives (see table 1).

Table 1: Overview of the most successful corporate influencers in the skilled trade industry in Germany

Influencer	Profession	Platforms & number of subscribers		
		Instagram	TikTok	YouTube
malermeisterandy	Self-employed master painter & varnisher (Website tagged in Insta-Bio)	104.000	98.500	63.600
dh_ trockenbau	Self-employed drywall installer (Company tagged in Instagram Linktree)	62.300	58.000	126.000
dachdeckerin_chiara	Employed roofer (Company in Insta-Bio tagged)	124.000	123.900	No Account
sandra_hunke	Employed plant mechanic SHK (Company named in Insta-Bio)	146.000	285.100	1740
tschulique	Employed master bricklayer (Company tagged in Insta-Bio tagged)	576.000	902.500	4610
jenni_vom_dach	Employed master plumber (Company tagged in Insta-Bio tagged)	74.500	93	No Account
cenkinz	Self-employed master hairdresser (Company tagged in Insta-Bio tagged)	235.000	152.000	20.200
brotprofi	Self-employed master baker (Website tagged in Insta-Bio)	99.400	402.300	57.000

The selection of corporate influencers was based on clear criteria to identify two representative individuals from a total group of eight corporate influencers. The established selection objectives encompassed choosing one male and one female corporate influencer actively present on the Instagram and TikTok platforms. This gender-based selection aimed to ensure gender-inclusive and representative portrayal and overcome stereotypical biases within the skilled trade sector. The decision to opt for Instagram and TikTok as platforms for the corporate influencers was rooted in their popularity among the Generation Z target audience and their visual orientation, enabling an engaging and informative presentation of the craft sector. While YouTube was initially considered for identification purposes, it was not further considered due to disparities in usage between male and female corporate influencers.

The final selection of the two pivotal corporate influencers for the survey was conducted based on quantitative and qualitative criteria. The following factors were taken into account:

- Average Engagement Rate of the last ten posts (as of June 15, 2023)
- Average views of the last ten videos (as of June 15, 2023)
- Average posting frequency per month (from January 1 to June 1, 2023)
- Diversity of content within the last 15 posts on Instagram and TikTok (as of June 15, 2023)

Following the evaluation of these criteria, the selected corporate influencers for the survey were Dachdeckerin_Chiera (roofer) and the Brotprofi (baker). Dachdeckerin_Chiera Monteton from Bochum offers an authentic portrayal of construction site realities on her social media channels, showcasing both weaknesses and entertaining aspects. Despite having fewer followers compared to other influencers, her high engagement rate and average views on Instagram demonstrate a strong connection and interest from her target audience. As a roofer, she also acts as a spokesperson for industry-related companies.

The Brotprofi, Ricardo Fischer from Leipzig, is an active master baker and bread sommelier. His videos on Instagram and TikTok aim to enhance appreciation for bread and traditional baking craftsmanship. His high number of TikTok subscribers and active role as an instructor at the Federal Academy of the Bakery Trade reflect his expertise and influence within the industry.

In selecting content for the survey, the focus lies on providing insights into various aspects of the workday. Themes such as daily routines, workspace setup, challenging tasks, and achieved successes are considered. The professional perspective is completed by highlighting craftsmanship skills, expert tips, training opportunities, and current trends. Instagram and TikTok were chosen as ideal platforms, with a deliberate preference for video formats to facilitate a visual understanding. Four videos were chosen per corporate influencer, including two showcasing workday routines, one focusing on professional knowledge, and a specific video for each influencer, with the total length restricted to five minutes to accommodate the survey's timeframe and maintain participants' attention.

4.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Statistical data from 2021 indicates that 42.3 percent of newly signed apprenticeship contracts in the skilled trade sector originate from students in secondary schools, underscoring their significance as the largest group among apprentices (Rimpler, 2021). Therefore, we selected ninth-grade students aged 14 to 16 from secondary schools for our study. Due to their impending decision regarding further educational or career paths, they serve as central recipients for employer advertising and recruitment campaigns. Choosing this target group allows for the early cultivation of awareness regarding the diversity within the craftsmanship sector and the provision of targeted information to support their career orientation. The study took place on June 29th and 30th, 2023, on-site with three ninth-grade classes, accompanied by teachers. Out of a total of 70 students, 66 individuals between the ages of 14 and 17 actively participated in the study and completed the survey (52% female, 47% male, 2% diverse).

The survey design was guided by the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model (Schaper, 2014, p. 322–323). Within the study, the SOR model was utilized by posing *questions to students before and after* their exposure to corporate influencer videos. This approach aimed to capture changes in their attitudes as a response to the external stimulus, where internal factors (Organism) such as perception, attitudes, and emotions play a role.

The variables were operationalized as follows:

Employer attractiveness of the skilled trade sector (answer on a likert scale)

- How appealing do you find craftsmanship as a potential employer? (very unappealing – very appealing)
- How do you perceive craftsmanship in general? (very negative – very positive)
- How attractive do you find the following two professions (roofer/baker) in general? (very unattractive – very attractive)
- To what extent do the following characteristics apply to jobs in the skilled trades in general? (Does not apply at all – Does fully apply)
- *Skilled trades are generally very attractive.*
- *Skilled trades offer the prospect of a high salary.*
- *Skilled trades have a high social standing.*
- *Skilled trades offer good chances of obtaining an apprenticeship.*
- *Skilled trades offer good training opportunities.*
- *Skilled trades offer good opportunities for career advancement.*
- Please rate the following statements about the skilled trades sector (Do not agree at all – Totally agree)
- *The skilled trades give something back to society.*
- *Working in the skilled trades makes you feel good about yourself.*
- *You have a secure job within the skilled crafts sector.*
- *In the skilled crafts sector, you work with supportive and encouraging colleagues.*
- *The skilled crafts sector values creativity and utilizes the creativity of its employees.*

Perception of the skilled trades (answer on a likert scale)

- How do you perceive the profession of a roofer/baker? (completely disagree – completely agree)

- I find the profession interesting.
- I am interested in training as a roofer/baker.
- I can imagine what the daily routine looks like.

Job preferences of potential applicants (answer on a likert skale)

- I am interested in an apprenticeship in the skilled trade sector. (completely disagree – completely agree)
- I am interested in an internship in the skilled trades sector. (completely disagree – completely agree)
- I would recommend an apprenticeship or internship in craftsmanship to a friend. (completely disagree – completely agree)

Additionally, questions were posed regarding the influencers' social media presence, evaluation of characteristics related to craft professions, and factors influencing career choice. The questionnaire concluded with demographic information, future plans after completing secondary education, and details about prior experiences in craftsmanship.

4.3 Data Analysis and Results

For hypotheses H1 and H2, separate regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between the attractiveness of craftsmanship as an employer and the perception of craftsmanship, as well as the job preferences of applicants. The normal distribution of the data was confirmed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

H1: The employer attractiveness of the skilled trades significantly influences the perception of the skilled trades.

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	4,101323733	4,1013237	18,314421	6,38886E-05
Residue	64	14,33213329	0,2239396		
Total	65	18,43345702			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	tStat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95,0%	Upper 95,0%
Intercept	1,719419894	0,274431736	6,2653829	3,545E-08	1,171179477	2,2676603	1,1711795	2,2676603
X Variable	0,352410037	0,082347738	4,2795351	6,389E-05	0,187901518	0,5169186	0,1879015	0,5169186

Figure 2: Regression analysis for hypothesis 1

The results for H1 indicate a *significant influence of the attractiveness of craftsmanship as an employer on the perception of craftsmanship*. The significance value (p-value) in the ANOVA table (6.38886E-05) is well below the conventional significance level of 0.05. The multiple correlation coefficient of 0.47169213 suggests a moderate positive correlation (see Fig. 2). An increase in the attractiveness of craftsmanship as an employer leads to a more positive perception of craftsmanship.

H2: The employer attractiveness of the skilled trades significantly influences the career preferences of applicants.

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	15,10025539	15,10025539	269,720167	1,234E-24
Residue	64	3,583033322	0,055984896		
Total	65	18,68328871			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	tStat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95,0%	Upper 95,0%
Intercept	0,859709947	0,137215868	6,265382852	3,545E-08	0,5855897	1,1338302	0,5855897	1,1338302
X Variable	0,676205018	0,041173869	16,42315946	1,2341E-24	0,5939508	0,7584593	0,5939508	0,7584593

Figure 3: Regression analysis for hypothesis 2

The regression analysis for H2 also demonstrates *significant influence of the attractiveness of craftsmanship as an employer on the job preferences of potential applicants*. The very low p-value in the ANOVA table (1.23413E-24) is well below the significance level of 0.05. The multiple correlation coefficient of 0.89901199 indicates a strong positive correlation, and the coefficient of determination of 0.808 suggests that the attractiveness of craftsmanship as an employer significantly impacts the job preference of applicants (see Fig. 3).

Both hypotheses are confirmed, with H2 showing a notably stronger correlation. This emphasizes the particular significance of the attractiveness of craftsmanship as an employer for the job preferences of applicants.

Hypotheses H3 and H4 are evaluated using dependent sample t-tests, as they involve the same subjects before and after the influence of corporate influencers. The corresponding questions from the questionnaire are reassigned, comparing the questions before and after the influence of corporate influencers.

H3: Corporate influencers significantly influence the perception of the skilled trades.

	Without CI	With CI
Mean	2,879545455	3,236363636
Variance	0,264229021	0,309118881
Observations	66	66
Pearson correlation	0,685221541	
Hypothetical difference of means	0	
df	65	
t Stat	-6,800817496	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1,95E-09	
t Critical one-tail	1,668635976	
P(T<=t) two-tail	3,895E-09	
t Critical two-tail	1,997137908	

Figure 4: T-test for hypothesis 3

We observed a *significant difference in the perception of the skilled trade sector before and after the influence of corporate influencers*. This is evidenced by a clear increase in the mean from 2.87 to 3.23, supported by a t-statistic of 6.80 and a p-value of 1.95E-09 (see Fig. 4). This indicates a significant change, *suggesting that corporate influencers have a notable impact on the perception of craftsmanship*.

H4: Corporate influencers significantly influence the career preferences of applicants.

	Without CI	With CI
Mean	2,444444444	2,570707071
Variance	1,146438746	0,860735561
Observations	66	66
Pearson correlation	0,845493089	
Hypothetical difference of means	0	
df	65	
t Stat	-1,792693201	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,038837565	
t Critical one-tail	1,668635976	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,077675129	
t Critical two-tail	1,997137908	

Figure 5: T-test for hypothesis 4

The t-test results for H4 also show a significant difference in the job preferences of applicants before and after the influence of corporate influencers. The mean increased from 2.44 to 2.57, accompanied by a t-statistic of 1.79 and a p-value of 0.03 (see Fig. 4). This change is also significant, indicating that *corporate influencers have a discernible influence on the job preferences of applicants*, albeit with less significance compared to H3.

Our study also provides additional insightful into the factors influencing the career choices of Generation Z. An information day at the respective company, discussions with parents or insights from apprentices on social networks have a strong impact on the individual job decision (see Fig. 6). Thus, these results underscore the importance of authentic insights and personal experiences in the decision-making process regarding a career in the skilled trade sector.

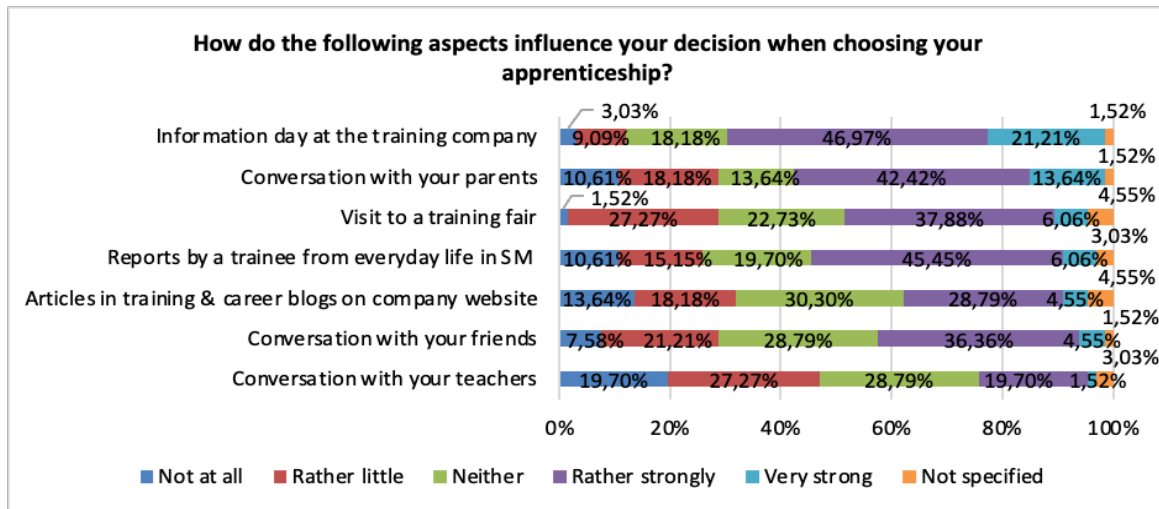


Figure 6: Factors influencing the career choices of Generation Z

Furthermore, we asked the participants to evaluate the importance of following criteria when considering an apprenticeship in the skilled trades sector. The results show that financial aspects, diverse career and training opportunities, as well as a pleasant work atmosphere, are central for this generation. Regarding corporate influencers, it is evident that students are primarily interested in glimpses into their everyday work life. Additionally, they are inclined to watch mainly artisanal projects and information about training and career opportunities, while product presentations and recommendations are less sought after (see Fig. 7).

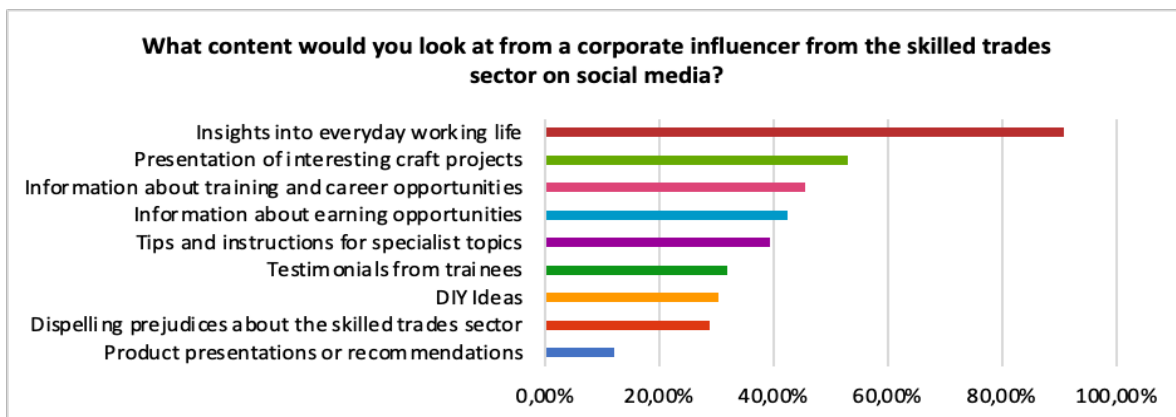


Figure 7: Preferences regarding corporate influencer content

5. Discussion, Limitations and Implications

The findings of our study show that corporate influencer on social media positively influenced both, the perception of the skilled trades industry and the career preferences of potential applicants. Particularly, insights into daily work routines prove to be effective. Simultaneously, the study reveals that the employer attractiveness of the skilled trades industry in general significantly influences the perception of the industry and enhances applicants' interest in craft professions.

This research presents some limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the examination of corporate influencers occurred within an artificially constructed setting, where participants were actively prompted to engage with the influencers and their content. This could potentially distort natural interactions and influence the authenticity of the responses. Secondly, the study was limited to two selected corporate influencers and specific craft professions (roofer and baker), limiting the potential diversity and generalizability of the results

across the broad spectrum of craftsmanship. Furthermore, the diversity in presentation styles of the influencers posed challenges in result comparison, as varying content strategies, styles, and tones could affect individual perceptions and reactions of the participants. Thirdly, the participants were exclusively recruited from a specific school (secondary school), potentially limiting the generalizability of the results to other schools or educational institutions. Lastly, the influence of social background and parental educational expectations on the affinity toward craftsmanship remains unaccounted for. These limitations emphasize the necessity for a cautious interpretation of research findings and highlight areas that could be further investigated in future studies.

Despite the limitations, this study presents significant insights and derives the following key recommendations for craftsmanship enterprises:

- **Employer branding and positioning:** A clear employer positioning is essential for positive employer branding. Developing a distinct Employer Value Proposition supports this by highlighting the uniqueness of the company and the benefits offered to employees. Particularly relevant are attractive earning opportunities, diverse career and training options, and a positive work atmosphere.
- **Presence on social media:** The results underscore the significance of a strong presence on social media, especially on platforms like Instagram, to effectively reach the adolescent target audience. Emphasizing specific craft career prospects and providing authentic insights into the everyday work life are pivotal elements.
- **Corporate influencers for employer branding:** The study emphasizes the importance of corporate influencer marketing as an effective tool to enhance employer attractiveness and attract young potential applicants to craftsmanship. Their role as ambassadors for craft businesses can positively impact apprentice recruitment. Specifically, apprentices can serve as influential corporate influencers by providing authentic insights into their training and daily work routines.
- **Actively engage parents:** The role of parents in the career orientation process is significant. Craft businesses should develop targeted measures to actively involve parents in the recruiting process. Information sessions and parent evenings can help address concerns and convey the benefits of a craft apprenticeship.
- **Support from governing bodies:** Due to the limited experience of many craft businesses in relevant areas (employer branding, social media, corporate influencer marketing), support from governing institutions such as trade chambers is crucial. Training programs and workshops can impart the necessary knowledge and practical skills to implement successful strategies and enhance the presence as an attractive employer.

Overall, these recommendations indicate that targeted implementation can strengthen not only individual enterprises but also sustainably enhance the image of the skilled trade sector as a whole.

For future research in the domain of corporate influencers and their influence, extensions to different age groups, integration of diverse student groups, and a long-term analysis could offer relevant research perspectives. Additionally, focusing on specific target groups, such as women and foreign professionals in craftsmanship, and considering the role of female corporate influencers as promotional instruments in investigations, could be considered.

References

- Ambler, Tim und Barrow, Simon (1996): „The employer brand“ *Journal of Brand Management*. (4) (1996), 185–206. doi:10.1057/bm.1996.42
- Backhaus, Kristin und Tikoo, Surinder (2004): „Conceptualizing and researching employer branding“ *Career Development International*. (9)Nr. 5 (2004), 501–517. Emerald Group Publishing Limited doi:10.1108/13620430410550754
- Büttgen, Marion und Kissel, Patrick (2013): Der Einsatz von Social Media als Instrument des Employer Branding. In R. Stock-Homburg (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Strategisches Personalmanagement*. (S. 107–124). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-00431-6_7
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Personalführung (Hrsg.) (2012): *Employer Branding: die Arbeitgebermarke gestalten und im Personalmarketing umsetzen*. Reihe: DGFP-PraxisEdition (2. Aufl.). Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.
- Eberl, Jens (02.03.2022): „Wie das Handwerk um Personal kämpft“ *tagesschau.de*. Verfügbar unter: <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/konjunktur/handwerk-arbeitsmarkt-101.html> [08.02.2023].
- Enke, Nadja und Borchers, Nils S. (2019): „Social Media Influencers in Strategic Communication: A Conceptual Framework for Strategic Social Media Influencer Communication“ *International Journal of Strategic Communication*. (13)Nr. 4 (2019), 261–277. doi:10.1080/1553118X.2019.1620234

- Figurska, Irena und Matuska, Ewa (2013): „Employer branding as a human resources management strategy“ *Human Resources Management*. Nr. 7 (2013), 35–51.
- Fournier, Jana, Dürig, Uta-Micaela, Peters, Kai und Weers, Jan-Philipp (2019): Marke und Branding. In G. Hesse & R. Mattmüller (Hrsg.), *Perspektivwechsel im Employer Branding*. (S. 19–54). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-26208-2_2
- Gabrielova, Karina und Buchko, Aaron A. (2021): „Here comes Generation Z: Millennials as managers“ *Business Horizons*. (64)Nr. 4 (2021), 489–499. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.013
- Gutensohn, David und dpa (03.07.2022): „Fachkräftemangel: Sechsstellige Zahl an Handwerkern fehlt“ *Die Zeit*. Verfügbar unter: <https://www.zeit.de/arbeit/2022-07/fachkraeftemangel-handwerk-baubranche-ausbildungen> [08.02.2023].
- Handwerkskammer Rheinhessen (03.05.2021): Studie zu Fachkräftemangel im Handwerk. *Handwerkskammer Rheinhessen*. Verfügbar unter: <https://www.hwk.de/studie-zu-fachkraeftemangel-im-handwerk/> [23.09.2023].
- Hesse, Gero, Mayer, Katja, Rose, Nico und Fellingner, Christoph (2019): Herausforderungen für das Employer Branding und deren Kompetenzen. In G. Hesse & R. Mattmüller (Hrsg.), *Perspektivwechsel im Employer Branding*. (S. 55–104). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-26208-2_3
- Kapitan, Sommer, Van Esch, Patrick, Soma, Vrinda und Kietzmann, Jan (2022): „Influencer Marketing and Authenticity in Content Creation“ *Australasian Marketing Journal*. (30)Nr. 4 (2022), 342–351. doi:10.1177/18393349211011171
- Kleinjohann, Michael und Reinecke, Victoria (2020): *Marketingkommunikation mit der Generation Z: Erfolgsfaktoren für das Marketing mit Digital Natives*. Reihe: essentials. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-30822-3
- Kunst, Alexander (2023): „Soziale Netzwerke in Deutschland 2022“ *Statista*. Verfügbar unter: <https://de.statista.com/prognosen/999733/deutschland-beliebteste-soziale-netzwerke> [13.05.2023].
- Luoma-aho, Vilma und Badham, Mark (2023): *Handbook on Digital Corporate Communication*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Lohmeier, L. (2023): „Social-Media-Plattformen - Anteil der Nutzer nach Altersgruppen in Deutschland 2022“ *Statista*. Verfügbar unter: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/543605/umfrage/verteilung-der-nutzer-von-social-media-plattformen-nach-altersgruppen-in-deutschland/> [13.09.2023].
- Maas, Rüdiger (2019): *Generation Z für Personal, Führungskräfte und jeden der die Jungen verstehen muss: Ergebnisse der Generation-Thinking-Studie*. München: Hanser.
- Nestler, Lisa, Hoffmann, Clara und Poeppelbuss, Jens (2021): „Understanding and defining the corporate influencer in business-to-business sales – first insights from an interview study“ *European Conference on Information Systems*. (2021). Research-in-Progress Papers. 26.
- Nugroho, A. und Liswandi, L. (2018): „The Influence of Employer Attractiveness, Corporate Reputation and the Use of Social Media towards Intention to Apply for a Job“ *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*. (5)Nr. 7 (2018), 553–565.
- O’Leary, Emily (20.01.2023): „Corporate Influencer: Best Practices und Beispiele“ *HubSpot*. Verfügbar unter: <https://blog.hubspot.de/marketing/corporate-influencer> [08.02.2023].
- OC&C (2019): „Eine Generation ohne Grenzen: Generation Z wird erwachsen.“ Verfügbar unter: <https://www.ocstrategy.com/media/1904/eine-generation-ohne-grenzen.pdf> [10.06.2023].
- Pawlik, V. (07.12.2022): „Generationen - Häufigkeit der Nutzung von Social Media (z.B. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) 2020“ *Statista*. Verfügbar unter: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1137640/umfrage/umfrage-zur-haeufigkeit-der-nutzung-von-social-media-nach-generationen/> [08.02.2023].
- Rimpler, René (2021): „Wirtschaftlicher Stellenwert des Handwerks 2021“ Verfügbar unter: <https://www.zdh.de/daten-und-fakten/kennzahlen-des-handwerks/wirtschaftlicher-stellenwert-des-handwerks-2021/> [08.02.2023].
- Rohrlack, Kirsten (2019): Wie erhöhen Sie Ihre Chancen, geeignete Mitarbeiter zu gewinnen? *Lösungsorientierte Mitarbeitergewinnung*. (S. 131–170). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-24084-4_4
- Schach, Annika (2018): Botschafter, Blogger, Influencer: Eine definitorische Einordnung aus der Perspektive der Public Relations. In A. Schach & T. Lommatzsch (Hrsg.), *Influencer Relations*. (S. 27–47). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-21188-2_3
- Schaper, Niclas (2014): Theoretische Modelle des Arbeitshandelns. In: Springer-Lehrbuch *Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie*. (S. 321–345). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. doi:10.1007/978-3-642-41130-4_20
- Sivertzen, Anne-Mette, Nilsen, Eddy Ragnhild und Olafsen, Anja H. (2013): „Employer branding: employer attractiveness and the use of social media“ (D.L.V. de C. Dr Stuart Roper Dr Francisco Guzman, Hrsg.) *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. (22)Nr. 7 (2013), 473–483. Emerald Group Publishing Limited doi:10.1108/JPBM-09-2013-0393
- Sünderhauf, Vincent (2022): *Employer Branding für KMUs: Wie Sie als Arbeitgeber zu einer attraktiven Marke werden*. Reihe: essentials. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-38853-9
- Weinländer, Markus (2021): Corporate Influencing in B2B – Die eigenen Mitarbeiter als Markenbotschafter in sozialen Medien einsetzen. In U. Seebacher (Hrsg.), *Praxishandbuch B2B-Marketing*. (S. 557–576). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-31651-8_21
- Weitzel, Dr Tim, Maier, Dr Christian, Weinert, Dr Christoph, Pflügner, Katharina, Oehlhorn, Caroline, Wirth, Jakob et al. (2020a): „Recruiting Trends 2020: Employer Branding“ (2020). Verfügbar unter: <https://www.uni->

[bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/wiai_lehrstuehle/isdl/Recruiting Trends 2020/Studien 2020_03 Employer Branding Web.pdf](https://www.uni-bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/wiai_lehrstuehle/isdl/Recruiting_Trends_2020/Studien_2020_03_Employer_Branding_Web.pdf)

Weitzel, Dr Tim, Maier, Dr Christian, Weinert, Dr Christoph, Pflügner, Katharina, Oehlhorn, Caroline, Wirth, Jakob et al.

(2020b): „Generation Z - die Arbeitnehmer von morgen“ (2020). Verfügbar unter: [https://www.uni-](https://www.uni-bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/wiai_lehrstuehle/isdl/Recruiting_Trends_2020/Studien_2020_05_Generation_Z_Web.pdf)

[bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/wiai_lehrstuehle/isdl/Recruiting Trends 2020/Studien 2020_05 Generation Z_Web.pdf](https://www.uni-bamberg.de/fileadmin/uni/fakultaeten/wiai_lehrstuehle/isdl/Recruiting Trends 2020/Studien 2020_05 Generation Z_Web.pdf)

Wilden, Ralf, Gudergan, Siegfried und Lings, Ian (2010): „Employer branding: strategic implications for staff recruitment“

Journal of Marketing Management. (26)Nr. 1–2 (2010), 56–73. . Routledge doi:10.1080/02672570903577091

Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (13.01.2021): „„Die Wahrnehmung des Handwerks hat sich massiv gesteigert.““

Verfügbar unter: <https://www.zdh.de/presse/veroeffentlichungen/interviews-und-statements/die-wahrnehmung-des-handwerks-hat-sich-massiv-gesteigert/> [08.02.2023].

Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (o.D.): „Das Handwerk in Deutschland“ Verfügbar unter:

<https://www.zdh.de/daten-und-fakten/das-handwerk/> [08.02.2023].