

From Promise to Practice: A Cross-Country Text Analysis of Employer Branding Authenticity

Abstract

The credibility of employer branding has been increasingly questioned, particularly regarding whether recruitment messages reflect actual workplace experiences. In this study, job advertisements and employee reviews from the United States, Germany, and Ukraine were analyzed using natural language processing (NLP) techniques. Sentiment analysis, semantic similarity, and lexical patterning were applied to assess alignment between external messaging and internal feedback. Significant cross-country variation in employer branding was identified, with differences in both thematic emphasis and linguistic tone. In some cases, advertised values were confirmed by positive employee experiences, while in others, contradictions were revealed through critical internal feedback. These findings underscore the importance of cultural and communicative context in maintaining authenticity between employer promises and workplace realities.

Keywords

Employer branding, Sentiment alignment, Natural language processing, Job advertisements, Application vs Reviews, Branding mismatch, Corporate communication

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Chapter 1. Problem Statement

As global labor markets become increasingly transparent and interconnected, companies are investing more effort in shaping and managing their brand identities — not only as employers, but as organizations with distinct values, missions, and cultures. Employer branding has become a strategic priority, with firms seeking to position themselves attractively to potential candidates through job advertisements, corporate websites, and social media channels (Yu et al. 2022; van Hooijdonk, Oertzen, and Hollebeek 2021). The messaging is curated to resonate with specific talent pools while maintaining coherence with a positioning (Theurer et al. 2018).

At the same time, the rise of digital platforms such as Glassdoor has introduced a new layer of public scrutiny. Employees can now share candid reviews of their experiences, offering job seekers unfiltered perspectives that may either reinforce or contradict the brand narratives crafted by employers (Mahar 2025; Christensen et al. 2021). This increasing transparency has significant implications: when the external image a company projects does not align with the lived experiences of its employees, the result can be reputational risk, diminished trust, and challenges in both recruitment and retention (Einwiller and Carroll 2020; Wang et al. 2022).

Despite growing interest in employer branding, much of the existing research has focused either on the strategic communication side — what companies say — or on employee-generated feedback, but rarely both in an integrated way. Moreover, relatively little attention has been paid to how these dynamics unfold across different national and cultural contexts. Yet it is known that expectations about work, communication norms, and organizational cultures vary significantly between countries (Koch and Pasch 2022; Yang and Pigultong 2024). This makes it all the more important to ask whether the employer brand a company puts forward globally is not only consistent but also credible and resonant in various local settings (Campion and Campion 2025).

This study aims to address that gap by examining the relationship between corporate employer branding and employee perception across multiple countries. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which externally promoted values in job advertisements align with internal narratives emerging from employee reviews.

The study has three primary objectives. First, it identifies the core values emphasized in EY's job advertisements in different countries. Second, it assesses whether these same values are reflected positively in employee-generated reviews. Third, it explores discrepancies — situations where employee feedback does not mention these values, or actively contradicts them (Wang et al. 2022; Einwiller and Carroll 2020). These discrepancies serve as indicators of potential misalignment between projected brand and actual experience.

Methodologically, the study takes a novel approach by applying natural language processing (NLP) techniques — including sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and semantic similarity measures — to large volumes of unstructured textual data. This enables a systematic and scalable comparison of corporate branding and employee sentiment across diverse national contexts (La Bella et al. 2021; Stoehr et al. 2019).

In doing so, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how employer brands function in practice — not just in strategic communication, but in the subjective realities of employees. It adds to the literature on employer branding, organizational identity, and cross-cultural management, offering insights that are especially relevant for multinational firms. For practitioners, the findings present a data-driven approach to evaluating whether their brand positioning is resonating authentically and consistently across borders — or whether it may be undermined by internal contradictions that require strategic attention (Yu et al. 2022; Theurer et al. 2018).

Chapter 2. Data Collection and Preprocessing

2.1. Data Sources

This study uses **Ernst & Young (EY)** as a case example to examine how employer branding aligns with employee experience across different countries. EY, as a globally recognized organization with a strong reputation for promoting values like flexibility, diversity, and development, provides a useful lens through which to explore broader patterns in corporate messaging.

The analysis focuses on three distinct regions, selected for their differing labour market conditions and cultural contexts: **United States** (North America), **Germany** (Western/Central Europe), **Ukraine** (Eastern Europe).

This setup allows for comparison of both the content of job postings across countries and the degree to which advertised themes align with what employees say about working at EY. Rather than evaluating EY specifically, the goal is to demonstrate how this kind of analysis can reveal the authenticity and consistency of employer messaging in a global context.

2.2 Data Acquisition and Translation

The analysis draws on two main types of textual data: job advertisements published by the company and employee reviews posted anonymously on Glassdoor. Both sources were collected, translated where necessary, and preprocessed to enable structured, cross-country comparisons. The data was gathered and organized by country - United States, Germany, and Ukraine - and prepared for use in the text analysis pipeline.

Job Advertisements

Job postings were collected through automated web scraping from the official EY careers websites for each country. Due to the dynamic loading of content on these websites, the scraping process was handled using Selenium, which simulated human-like interaction with the page, including clicking through listings and scrolling. Once a job ad was fully loaded, BeautifulSoup was used to parse the HTML and extract relevant fields such as job title, role description, company value statements, and benefit-related content.

After collection, the raw text was cleaned to remove layout tags, navigation menus, boilerplate language, and other non-informative text. In cases where content was presented in a local language - particularly for German and Ukrainian postings - machine translation into English was applied to ensure consistency across the dataset. This ensured that all downstream analysis could be performed using a shared language model, minimizing noise introduced by language differences.

The cleaned and translated job descriptions were then stored in structured tabular format. Each record in the resulting DataFrame represented one job listing, with fields specifying the job's country of origin, role category, and the full, processed description text. These datasets were later used as input for TF-IDF keyword extraction, semantic keyword analysis (KeyBERT), sentiment scoring, and topic modeling.

Employee Reviews

Employee feedback was sourced from **Glassdoor**, where current and former employees provide anonymous evaluations of their workplace. For each country, reviews were collected and parsed into three key fields:

“Pros,” “Cons,” and “Advice to Management.” These fields offer a structured view into employee sentiment - covering both positive reflections and critical feedback.

The review data was downloaded, extracted, and preprocessed to remove empty, irrelevant, or overly short responses. In some cases, local-language entries were identified and translated into English to maintain consistency with the job advertisement dataset. The final review texts were saved in Excel files, with one file per country. Each file was imported into the analysis environment and converted into a pandas DataFrame with dedicated columns for each review type.

As with the job advertisements, the reviews were linked to country-specific codes and stored in a format compatible with the analytical pipeline. These review datasets were later used for sentiment scoring using VADER, theme-level mapping, and semantic similarity measurement against employer-promoted language.

Data Integration

Both job advertisements and employee reviews were ultimately structured into a shared analytical format. Processed results were stored in a nested dictionary, where each country served as a key and contained organized outputs for keywords, sentiment, and machine learning analysis. This structure enabled efficient access and side-by-side comparison of employer messaging and employee sentiment, forming the empirical base for the study’s findings.

2.3. Structuring for NLP Processing

To support a systematic comparison of employer messaging across countries, a natural language processing (NLP) pipeline was implemented to extract and analyze relevant features from job advertisements. All outputs were stored in a nested dictionary structure - `results_dict` - organized by country and type of analysis.

The function `analyze_text_data_by_country` served as the core engine for this analysis. It processed job description text for each country independently, extracting features through a consistent set of NLP techniques. Each country’s job postings were first retrieved from an Excel file and passed to the function as part of a list of country-specific DataFrames. The text analysis targeted the English-language job descriptions, which were assumed to be in a column labeled “Job Description (EN).”

Term frequency–inverse document frequency

The first analytical step within the function applied TF-IDF (term frequency–inverse document frequency) to the job descriptions. This method highlighted the most statistically significant words in each country’s postings by comparing term frequencies locally and globally. The top-ranked terms were saved in the structure `results_dict[country][“Keywords”][“TF-IDF”]`.

Collocation analysis

Next, collocation analysis was performed using a bigram model. This allowed the identification of common two-word phrases (e.g., “team player”, “career development”) that appear with high frequency in the job text. The 30 most frequent bigrams for each country were extracted and stored under `results_dict[country][“Keywords”][“Collocations”]`.

KeyBERT

To capture semantically meaningful phrases beyond frequency-based measures, KeyBERT was used to extract top-ranked keywords from each job description. KeyBERT leverages contextual embeddings to find phrases most representative of the underlying meaning of the text. These results were aggregated and stored under `results_dict[country]["Keywords"]["KeyBERT"]`.

Sentiment analysis

In parallel, the pipeline included sentiment analysis using the VADER model. For each job description, overall sentiment scores (compound values) were calculated and compiled into a sentiment DataFrame. These scores were saved under `results_dict[country]["Sentiment"]["Overall"]`.

To add thematic structure to the sentiment analysis, a dictionary of predefined workplace-related themes was applied. These themes included concepts such as “leadership,” “growth,” “work-life balance,” and “teamwork,” each linked to a set of associated keywords. For every job description, the presence of theme-related terms was checked, and a VADER compound sentiment score was assigned if a match occurred. The resulting scores - covering a dozen themes - were stored in `results_dict[country]["Sentiment"]["Themes"]`.

Latent Dirichlet Allocation

Finally, a machine learning technique - Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) - was used for topic modeling. Based on the TF-IDF vectorized representations of the job descriptions, LDA identified two dominant topics for each country. Each topic consisted of the three most representative terms, and the strength of each term within the topic was also recorded. These topic models were saved under `results_dict[country]["ML"]["LDA Topics"]`.

The final `results_dict` structure thus included three major branches for each country: one for extracted keywords, one for sentiment (overall and theme-based), and one for machine-learned topic clusters. This dictionary was serialized and saved as a binary .pkl file for future analysis and visualization. The resulting structure formed the empirical foundation for all cross-country comparisons in the subsequent results chapter.

Chapter 3. Analytical Framework

This chapter presents the three core hypotheses that shaped the direction of the analysis. Each one is grounded in about how employer branding functions in a global, digital job market: whether it adapts to local cultures, whether it accurately reflects real workplace experiences, and whether it risks misalignment or contradiction.

3.1. Hypothesis 1: Regional Variation in Employer Messaging

Hypothesis: The thematic focus of job advertisements varies systematically across countries in response to regional labor market conditions, cultural values, and audience expectations.

This hypothesis suggests that multinational employers do not apply a one-size-fits-all approach to employer branding. Instead, they strategically adjust which values and priorities are emphasized in different countries - tailoring their messaging to appeal to local audiences. These differences may reflect varying expectations around leadership, job security, professional growth, or flexibility, shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors. The goal is to test whether such thematic variation exists and whether it follows recognizable, context-driven patterns.

The value of this hypothesis lies in its relevance to global communication strategy. If the thematic focus of job postings is shown to vary across countries, it implies that branding is not just centrally managed, but actively localized - designed to match the interests, concerns, and aspirations of different labor markets. This has practical implications for recruitment effectiveness, as culturally resonant messaging is more likely to attract and retain talent. On the other hand, if no meaningful variation is found, it may suggest a more uniform approach that risks overlooking the importance of regional sensitivity in employer communication.

To examine this hypothesis, a multi-method NLP approach was selected specifically for its ability to uncover both surface-level and latent differences in employer messaging across regions. Each method contributed uniquely to capturing variation:

- **VADER sentiment-based theme detection** was used for identifying the presence and relative prominence of pre-defined workplace themes (e.g., leadership, flexibility, growth). By applying a consistent keyword framework across all countries, this method allowed direct comparison of how frequently each theme was emphasized, offering clear signals of strategic localization.
- **TF-IDF keyword scoring** highlighted statistically distinctive vocabulary within each country's job ads. This technique is well suited to identifying terms that carry disproportionate weight in local messaging, revealing what is being uniquely emphasized to attract talent in a specific region.
- **Collocation analysis** extended the keyword view by focusing on commonly occurring two-word phrases. This was crucial in capturing cultural nuances and communicative styles - for example, whether certain benefits were framed in more collaborative or individualistic terms - supporting the hypothesis from a linguistic structuring perspective.

By integrating these complementary approaches - from rule-based sentiment tagging to probabilistic topic modeling - the analysis was able to capture both explicit and implicit differences in employer branding. The methods together provided a robust foundation for detecting whether, and how, EY's messaging varied across countries, thereby directly supporting the core hypothesis of strategic regional adaptation.

3.2. Hypothesis 2: Alignment Between External Messaging and Positive Employee Feedback

Hypothesis: The themes emphasized in job advertisements align with the positively framed experiences shared by employees.

This hypothesis explores the relationship between external branding and internal perception. If job advertisements accurately reflect the strengths of a company's culture, then similar themes should appear in the way employees describe their positive experiences. In other words, effective and authentic branding should be reinforced by praise from within the organization.

The broader importance of this hypothesis lies in its role as a test of employer branding credibility. When employees echo the same values promoted in job advertisements - such as career growth, flexibility, or supportive leadership - it reinforces the idea that the branding reflects real strengths, not just aspirational messaging. For prospective applicants, this alignment signals transparency and reliability. For companies, it validates that their communication strategy is aligned with their actual organizational culture. Inconsistent or weak alignment, by contrast, might suggest gaps in how internal strengths are communicated externally or even reveal branding that is out of sync with workplace reality.

To explore this alignment, a blend of sentiment analysis, semantic similarity measurement, and linguistic frequency analysis was employed - each method chosen for its ability to bridge the external messaging in job ads with internal perceptions expressed by employees.

- **Themed sentiment analysis (VADER)** was used to quantify how both job postings and employee "Pros" reviews reflect sentiment across shared workplace themes (e.g., growth, flexibility, leadership). This approach was well-suited for this task because it offered a standardized sentiment scale (compound score from -1 to +1) across both datasets, allowing for direct cross-source comparisons. The alignment of sentiment across these themes helped determine if employees positively echo the same values promoted externally.
- **Pearson correlation analysis** was applied to assess how closely job ad sentiment and employee sentiment align numerically across themes. This statistical check served as an objective indicator of coherence between what companies promote and what employees praise, which is central to the hypothesis.
- **Semantic similarity analysis using BERT embeddings (KeyBERT ↔ Pros)** introduced a deeper linguistic layer. It tested whether the actual language used in job ads semantically resembled employee feedback. This is critical for detecting alignment even when wording differs (e.g., "growth opportunities" vs. "career development"). BERT's contextual understanding made it ideal for uncovering this latent similarity.
- **Collocation analysis in reviews** helped determine whether specific promotional phrases from job ads (e.g., "flexible work," "career path") actually reappeared in employee reviews. Frequent reappearance of these phrases in positive contexts reinforced claims of consistency and authenticity in branding.

Together, these methods formed a comprehensive alignment check - quantitative, semantic, and linguistic - between employer-promoted messaging and the lived experiences employees reported. This multi-method strategy strengthened the credibility of the hypothesis evaluation and ensured that both overt and subtle forms of alignment were captured effectively.

3.3. Hypothesis 3: Contradictions Between Employer Branding and Internal Criticism

Hypothesis: Certain themes promoted in job advertisements are contradicted by employee reviews expressing dissatisfaction or concern.

This hypothesis focuses on dissonance - cases where the values or benefits advertised externally are challenged by internal feedback. Such contradictions may emerge when companies publicly emphasize themes like flexibility or inclusion that are not consistently experienced by employees. These mismatches are especially relevant in the context of employer trust, transparency, and retention.

The value of this hypothesis comes from its ability to expose potential credibility risks. When branding promises do not match internal experiences, especially in areas involving well-being, leadership, or work-life balance, it may create frustration among employees and distrust among candidates. Identifying these contradictions is crucial for diagnosing where branding may be overly optimistic, selectively framed, or even misleading. From a strategic perspective, this type of analysis allows organizations to understand where their messaging may require adjustment - or where deeper cultural or structural improvements may be needed to close the gap between promise and practice.

To test this hypothesis of contradiction between employer branding and internal criticism, a combination of sentiment analysis, mismatch detection, and semantic similarity methods was used. These methods were chosen specifically for their ability to uncover not just alignment but **tension** between external claims and internal realities.

- **Themed sentiment analysis using VADER** was applied to both job ads and employee “Cons” reviews to evaluate sentiment scores across shared workplace themes. This enabled direct comparison of how positively (or negatively) each theme was framed in official communications versus employee experiences. Low sentiment scores on themes in the “Cons” reviews that were promoted positively in job ads served as direct indicators of contradiction.
- **Mismatch detection logic** was introduced to systematically flag discrepancies: when job ads strongly promoted a theme (above a predefined sentiment threshold) and employee reviews expressed negative sentiment on the same theme (below a threshold), the result was labeled a **“potential mismatch.”** This rule-based identification allowed for transparent, replicable detection of contradiction - essential for diagnosing where branding may misrepresent reality.
- **BERT-based semantic similarity analysis** was employed to measure the conceptual overlap between job ad language and employee complaints (Cons). A low cosine similarity between embeddings of employer-promoted phrases and employee criticism indicated semantic distance - i.e., employees were not merely disagreeing emotionally, but **talking about different realities altogether**. This deepened the insight beyond surface sentiment, validating cases where branding language and lived experience diverged meaningfully.

Altogether, this multi-method approach offered both quantitative and semantic evidence of employer branding contradictions. It not only identified mismatches but also provided context and scale, helping to assess whether they were isolated cases or systemic issues affecting organizational credibility and trust.

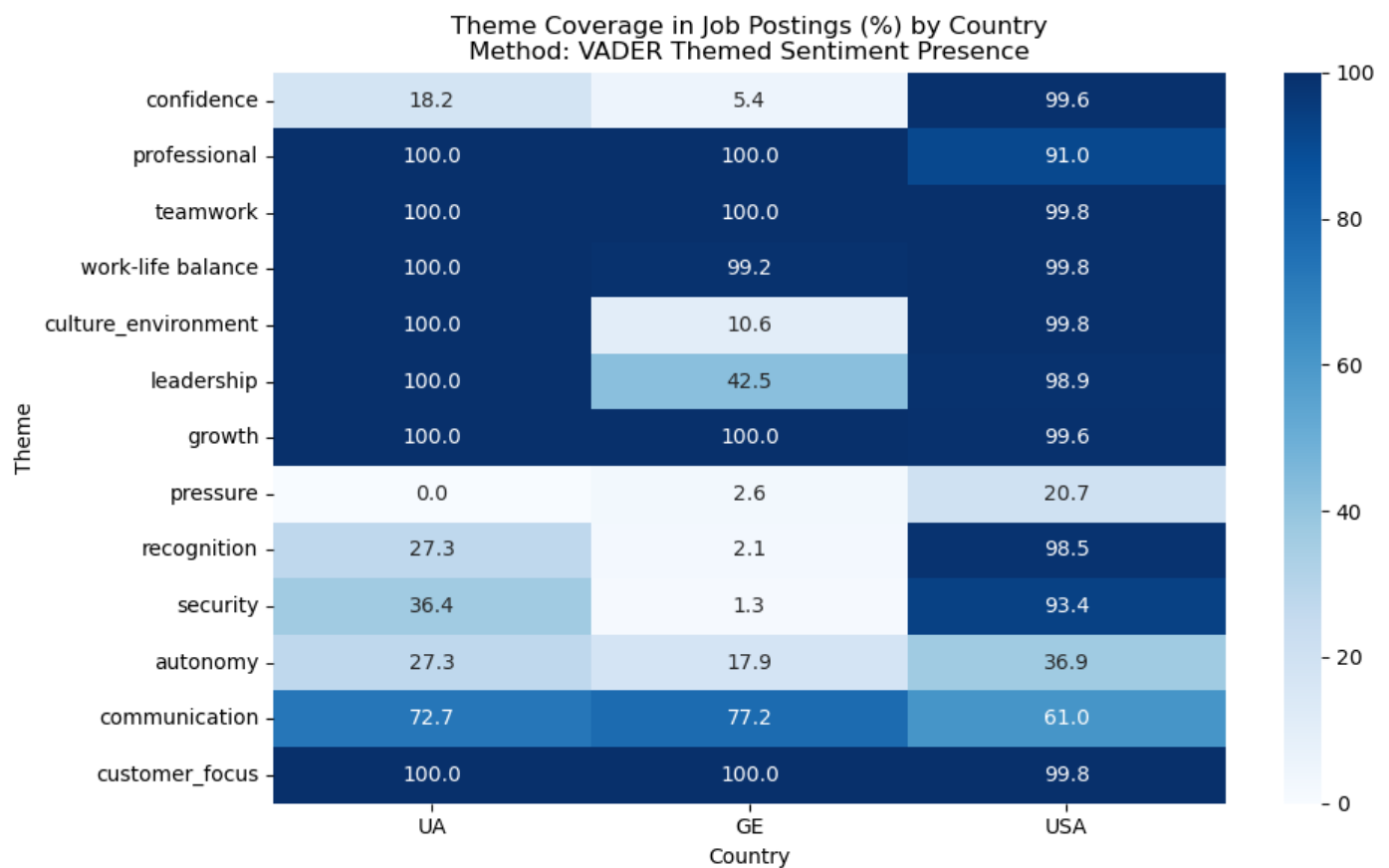
Chapter 4: Empirical Findings by Hypothesis

4.1. Findings for Hypothesis 1: Regional Variation in Employer Messaging

This hypothesis posits that multinational employers adapt the thematic focus of their job advertisements to align with regional labor markets and cultural expectations. The analysis across countries—focusing in particular on Ukraine, Germany, and the United States—aims to provide clear support for this claim. Evidence drawn from multiple layers of textual analysis reveals distinct national patterns and broader thematic trends.

Thematic Emphasis: Varying Priorities Across Countries

Across all three countries, a shared foundation of workplace themes emerges. Professionalism, teamwork, work-life balance, and growth are near-universally present in job advertisements, suggesting a global consensus on the core attributes of desirable employment. These themes appear in nearly 100% of postings from each country, indicating that despite contextual differences, certain values are now firmly embedded in the language of employer branding. Communication and customer focus also show consistently high presence, though with slight variation in emphasis, pointing to a shared but flexible standard around interpersonal and client-facing competencies.



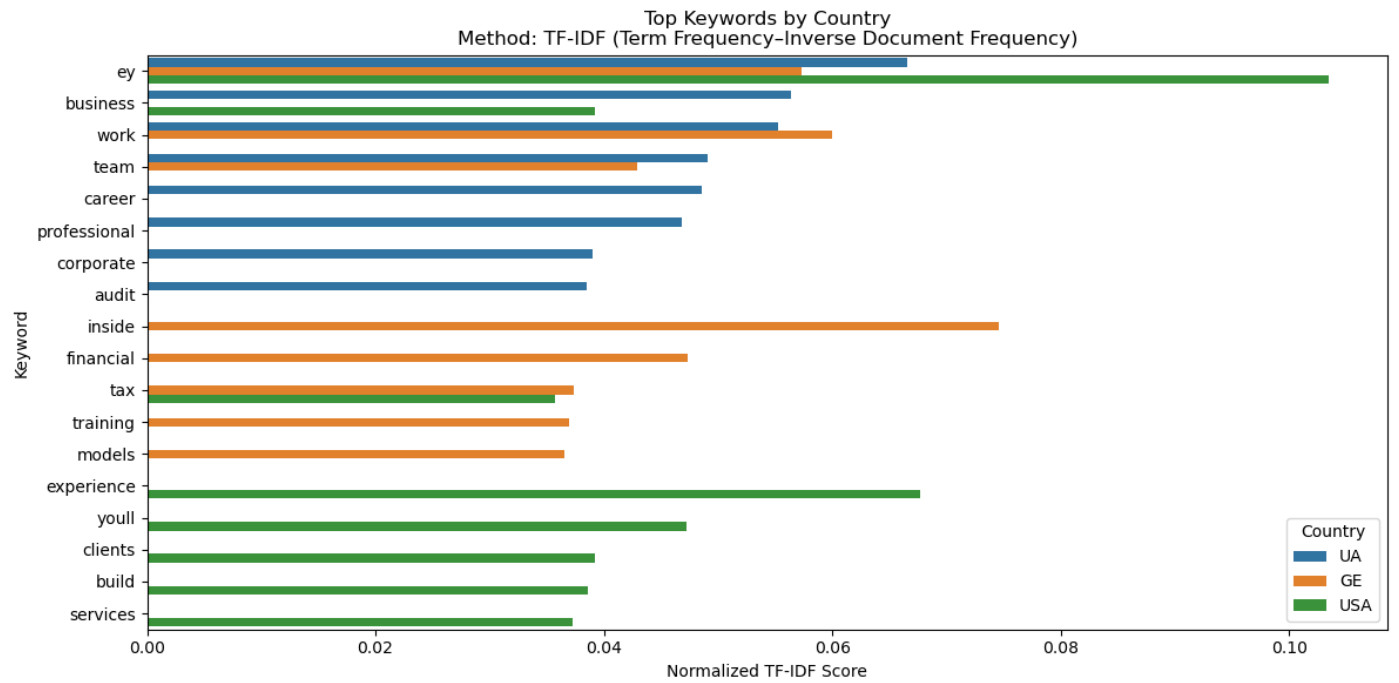
Beyond this common core, however, distinct regional priorities become apparent. In the United States, job advertisements also place particularly strong emphasis on confidence, recognition, leadership, and job security. Confidence is present in almost all postings (99.6%), and recognition appears in 98.5%—a level far above that seen in Germany or Ukraine. Leadership is another key theme, present in nearly 99% of U.S. postings, reinforcing a cultural narrative around initiative, self-direction, and ambition. The prominence of job security (93.4%) likely reflects a practical concern in a competitive labour market, where reassurance about stability may serve as an important attractor for candidates.

In contrast, German postings show a markedly different profile. While professionalism, teamwork, and growth are similarly emphasized, themes such as leadership, confidence, and recognition appear much less frequently. Leadership is mentioned in only 42.5% of postings, confidence in just 5.4%, and recognition in a mere 2.1%. These figures suggest a more restrained and perhaps institutionally focused form of employer communication. German postings place stronger relative emphasis on communication (77.2%) and tend to reflect a more structured and pragmatic view of the workplace. Interestingly, job security—despite being a common assumption in the German labor market—is explicitly referenced in only 1.3% of postings, perhaps because it is viewed as an inherent aspect of employment, rather than an advantage requiring emphasis.

Ukraine presents a hybrid profile. Like Germany and the United States, Ukrainian job postings universally stress professionalism, growth, teamwork, and customer focus. However, unlike Germany, Ukrainian postings place strong emphasis on leadership, which appears in 100% of the analysed ads. Confidence, autonomy, and recognition are also present in a notable share of postings—higher than in Germany, though lower than in the U.S. Security is explicitly mentioned in 36.4% of Ukrainian postings, a level that suggests this is both a concern and a competitive feature in employer messaging. Ukrainian employer branding thus reflects a mix of stability-oriented values and aspirational messaging, possibly influenced by global recruitment standards, digital sector growth, and the structural uncertainty in the domestic labor market.

Lexical Signals: Regionally Salient Keywords

In addition to thematic variation, job postings across countries also exhibit meaningful lexical differences—subtle signals in word choice that reflect local priorities and communication styles. The TF-IDF analysis reveals both a shared vocabulary across all countries and regionally specific branding strategies.



In Ukraine, the most prominent keywords include “business”, “work”, “team”, “career”, “professional”. These terms suggest an emphasis on formal organizational structures, technical competence, and upward mobility. The frequent reference to “EY”—as both brand and employer identity—reinforces the importance of institutional affiliation and name recognition in Ukrainian job advertisements. Ukrainian messaging appears focused on positioning employment as a pathway for advancement within reputable organizations.

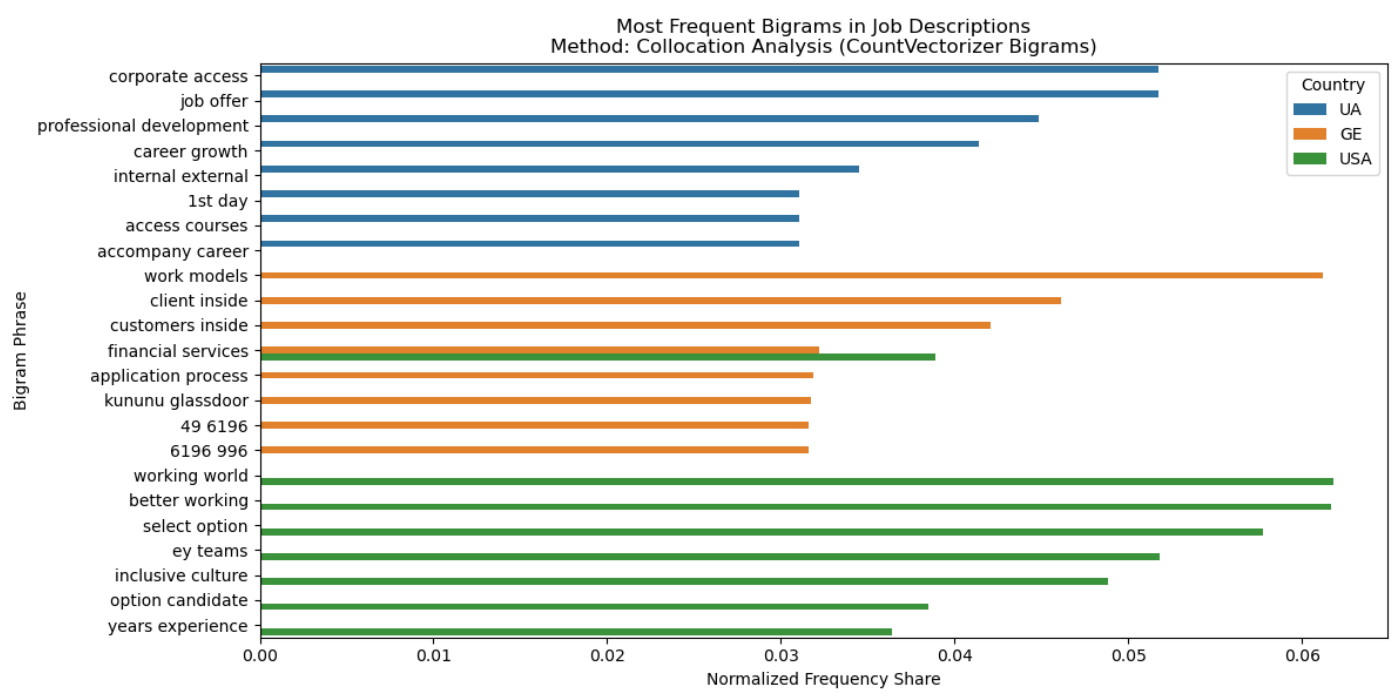
In Germany, the lexical focus shifts toward more technical and structured language. Top keywords such as “work”, “team”, “financial,” “tax,” “models” point to an emphasis on domain expertise and operational detail, particularly within finance and consulting contexts. These terms suggest a messaging strategy rooted in process, specialization, and institutional clarity. While “training” also appears among the top terms, it is framed within a more formal, skills-based development context.

In the United States, the top keywords reflect a more dynamic and personalized tone. Terms like “business”, “tax”, “you’ll”, “clients”, “experience”, “build” dominate, indicating an action-oriented, candidate-focused narrative. The conversational use of “you’ll” stands out as distinctly American in tone, aiming to engage the reader directly. The presence of “clients” and “build” underscores an entrepreneurial, and externally-facing focus, emphasizing contribution, innovation, and impact.

Notably, there are few truly overlapping keywords within top ones in each country. While “business”, “work”, and “team” appear in multiple contexts, the majority of high-ranking terms are country-specific, reinforcing the argument that lexical choices are strategically localized.

Phrasing Patterns: Cultural Framing Through Language

While individual keywords highlight what employers emphasize, the structure of their most frequent bigrams reveals how these priorities are linguistically framed. Since the most frequent bigrams were extracted separately within each national dataset, the differences in phrasing reflect not only content variation, but also culturally specific patterns of communication.



In Ukraine, the most prominent bigrams—such as “career growth,” “professional development,” “corporate access,” and “job offer”—frame employment as a formal and aspirational journey. Phrases like “internal external,” “1st day,” and “access courses” point to structured onboarding processes and training opportunities. Altogether, this language suggests a communicative style that emphasizes procedural clarity, institutional opportunity, and progression within the professional hierarchy. The framing positions the employer as a gateway to structured success and upward mobility.

Germany's phrasing patterns highlight internal process and operational precision. Dominant bigrams include *"client inside," "customers inside," "application process,"* and *"financial services."* The recurrence of these terms reflects an inward-facing, procedural tone in which the company structure, client systems, and formal application channels are central. The overall tone is institutional and detail-oriented, positioning the job as a clearly defined role within an existing structure.

By contrast, the United States leans toward a more expressive and inclusive register. Top bigrams such as *"working world," "better working," "inclusive culture,"* and *"ey teams"* emphasize values, experience, and organizational identity. Additional phrases like *"option candidate,"* and *"years experience"* reflect a personalized, choice-driven framing—placing the candidate at the center of the opportunity. The tone is distinctly promotional, emphasizing individual fit, and belonging as core dimensions of the employment offer.

Summary and Evaluation: Hypothesis 1

The comparative analysis of job advertisements from Ukraine, Germany, and the United States provides robust evidence in support of Hypothesis 1, which proposed that the thematic focus of job advertisements varies systematically across countries in response to regional labor market conditions, cultural values, expectations.

Findings across all three analytical layers—thematic coverage, keyword distinctiveness, and collocational phrasing—consistently point to **strategic localization** in employer messaging. While certain workplace themes such as professionalism, teamwork, and growth are nearly universal, their framing and the specific attributes emphasized vary significantly by country. For example, U.S. postings strongly highlight individual confidence, leadership, and recognition, whereas German postings adopt a more restrained, process-driven tone focused on communication and institutional structure. Ukrainian job ads, by contrast, blend aspirational and formal signals, reflecting both global influence and local economic dynamics.

Lexical analysis further confirms these differences, with each country favoring a distinct vocabulary. The United States employs direct and personalized language oriented around agency and client interaction. Germany emphasizes technical precision and domain expertise. Ukraine focuses on career-building within formal corporate contexts, with particular reference to the employer brand. These preferences are mirrored in how ideas are linguistically framed: U.S. postings use inclusive and promotional language, German ads favor administrative clarity, and Ukrainian texts emphasize structured progression and onboarding.

Together, these findings indicate that employer branding is not uniformly applied across international markets. Instead, companies appear to adapt their messaging to align with local expectations—reflecting different assumptions about what constitutes an attractive, credible, or aspirational job offer. This localized variation is not incidental but systematic, appearing consistently across different types of linguistic evidence.

Hypothesis 1 is accepted. The thematic content and linguistic structure of job advertisements do vary systematically across countries, and this variation aligns with regional cultural norms, labor conditions, and communicative styles. The evidence supports the view that multinational employers engage in deliberate, context-sensitive adaptation of their recruitment messaging.

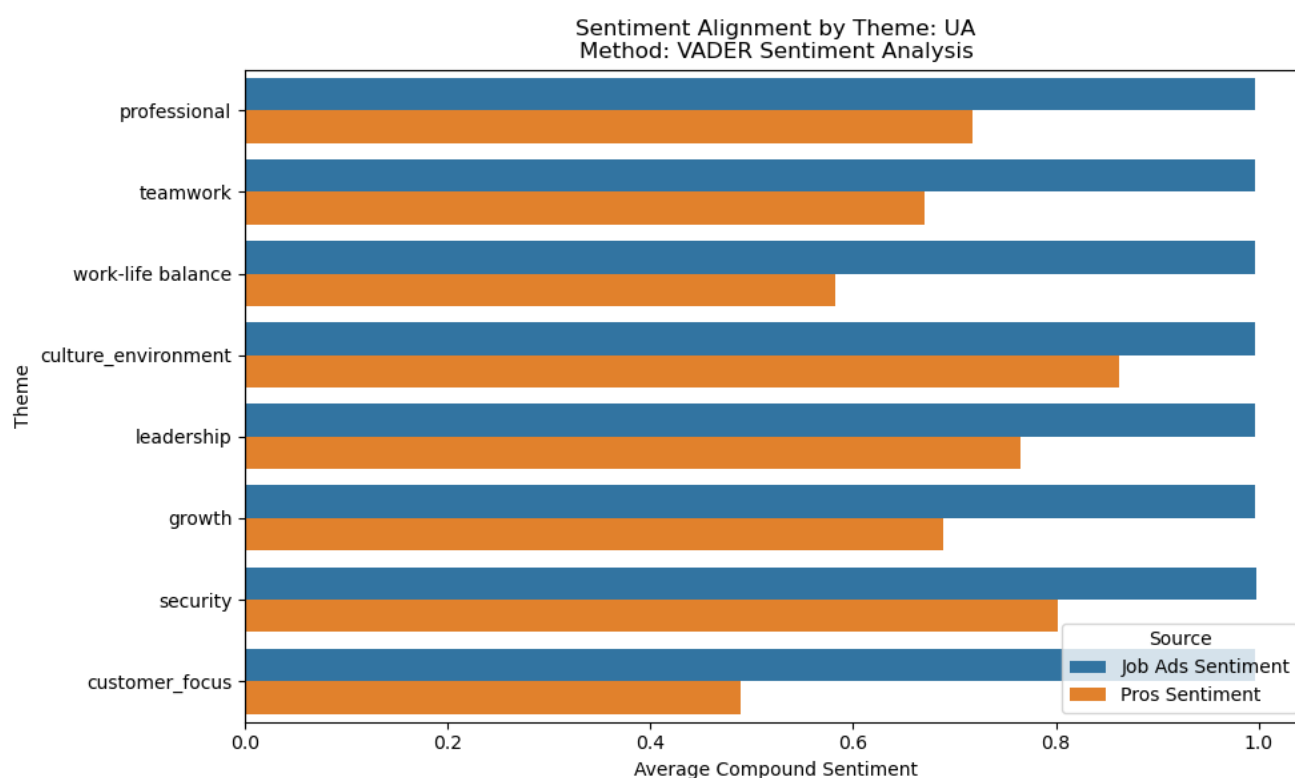
4.2. Findings for Hypothesis 2: Alignment Between External Messaging and Positive Employee Feedback

This hypothesis posits that the themes emphasized in job advertisements align with the positively framed experiences shared by employees. Effective employer branding should reflect the lived strengths of workplace culture, as recognized by employees themselves. The analysis—centered on data from Ukraine, Germany, and the United States—provides nuanced evidence in support of this claim. The analysis aims to explore varying degrees of alignment between external messaging and internal perception across national contexts.

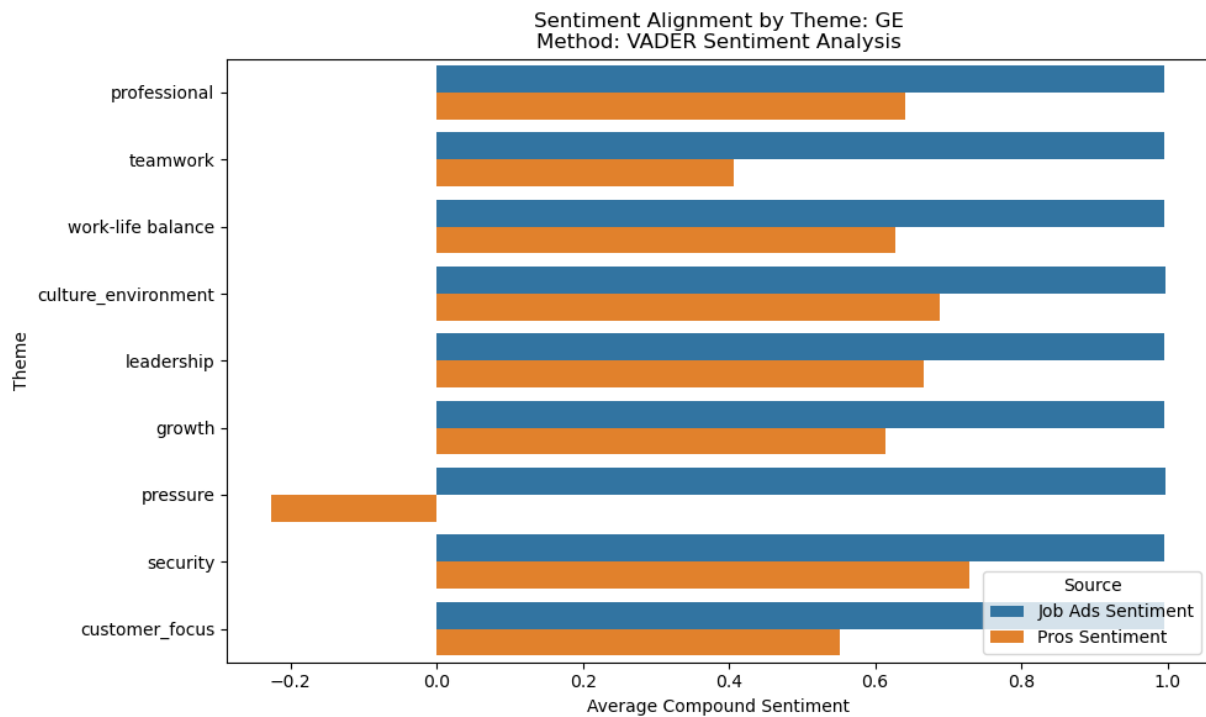
Sentiment Alignment by Theme

In Ukraine, there is a strong overall alignment in sentiment between job advertisements and employee reviews, with both sources presenting consistently positive assessments across most workplace themes. “Professionalism” stands out as a core point of agreement, with nearly identical high sentiment scores in both ads and reviews, highlighting a shared understanding of expectations and conduct. Similarly, themes like “security,” “leadership,” and “culture_environment” show closely matched sentiment, suggesting that these elements of workplace identity are both promoted externally and validated internally.

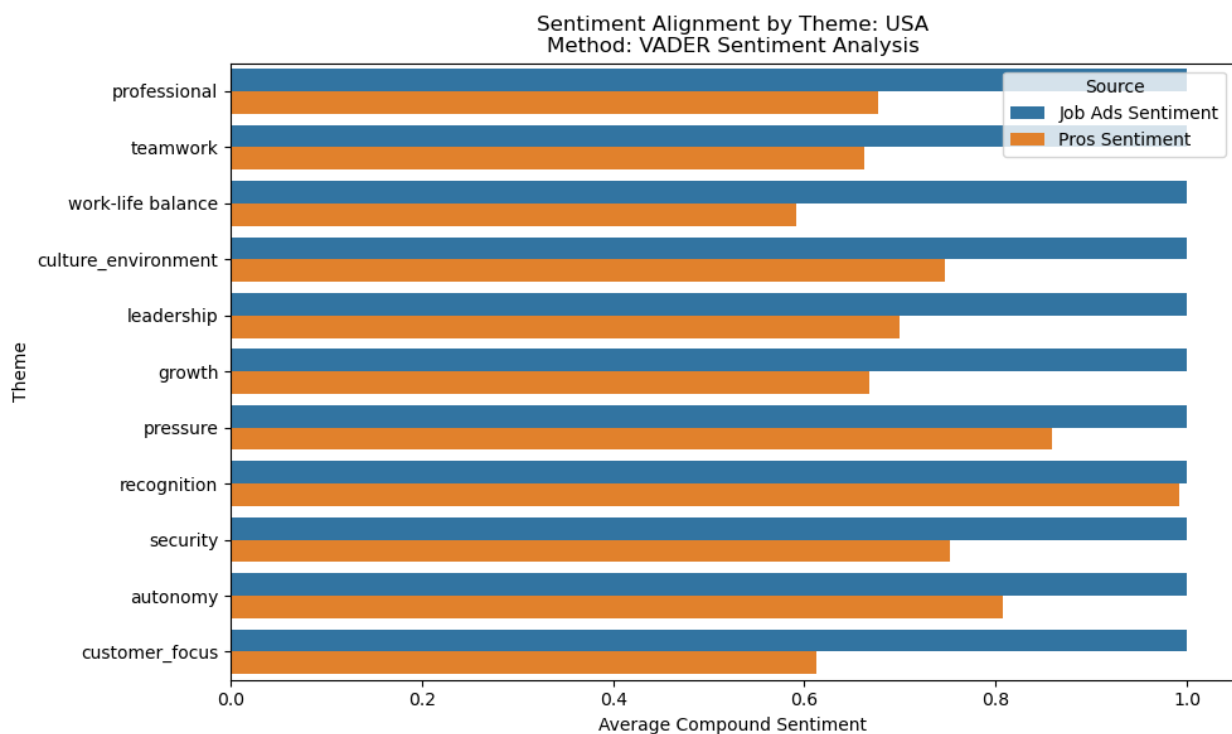
While sentiment in job postings remains uniformly high, some differences emerge around “work-life balance” and especially “customer focus,” where employee sentiment is lower. Still, these gaps are relatively minor and do not significantly undermine the general pattern of coherence.



In the German data, sentiment alignment is more modest. Employee reviews show more muted tones, especially in areas like “teamwork,” “growth,” and “customer_focus.” The discrepancy is most notable in the “pressure” theme, where employee sentiment is negative (below 0) while job ads ignore or neutralize it. This gap suggests a potential misalignment: German job ads may emphasize optimism or formality that does not fully resonate with internal perceptions. Nevertheless, themes like “culture_environment” and “security” do show similar sentiment levels between sources, pointing to some degree of alignment in core strengths.



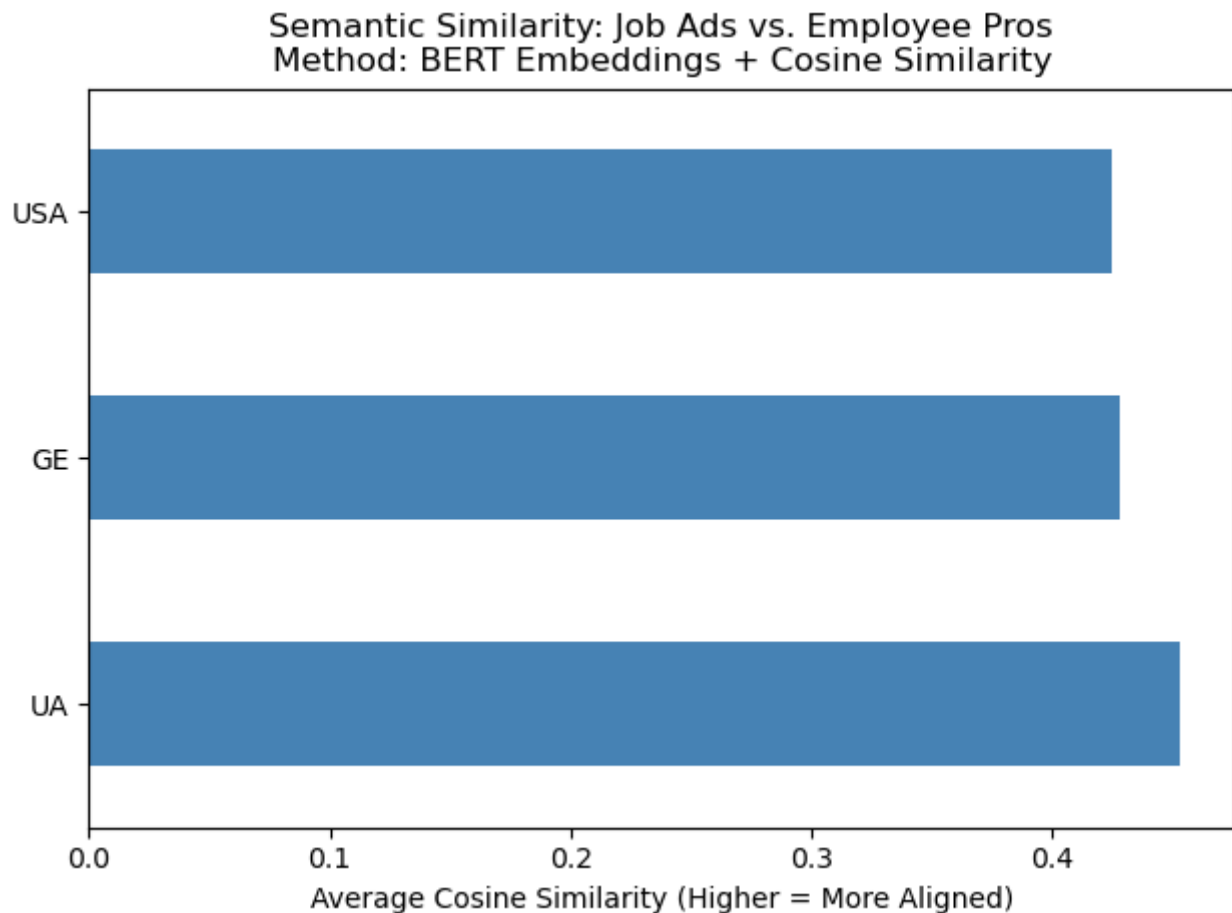
The U.S. results show the highest overall alignment. Employee reviews consistently present strong positive sentiment across nearly all themes, including “recognition”, “leadership,” “culture,” and “security.” Differences are relatively small, and the tone of both sources converges closely. Particularly telling is the strong employee sentiment toward “recognition” and “autonomy,” which are also central themes in job postings. Even potentially challenging areas like “pressure” are handled similarly in both sources, reflecting a more transparent and emotionally resonant messaging culture. This high alignment suggests that U.S. employer branding is both aspirational and perceived as credible by internal stakeholders.



Together, these sentiment alignment charts support the hypothesis to varying degrees across countries. The U.S. exhibits the strongest internal-external coherence, Ukraine shows consistent but slightly tempered agreement, and Germany presents more discrepancy, particularly around workplace stress. These findings highlight the importance of cultural context in how authentically it is perceived by those within.

Semantic Similarity Across Countries

The semantic similarity analysis provides a deeper test by examining whether the conceptual content of job advertisements aligns with how employees positively describe their workplace experiences. Using BERT embeddings and cosine similarity, the analysis captures alignment not only through shared vocabulary but also through underlying meaning, even when different words are used. This method allows us to assess whether external messaging reflects internal realities in a substantively meaningful way across countries.



The results confirm strong alignment in all three countries, though with variation in intensity:

- Ukraine shows the highest semantic similarity score, indicating that the language used in job ads closely mirrors the language of employees' positive feedback. This suggests highly authentic branding and possibly a tighter integration between HR messaging and actual workplace experience.
- Germany follows closely, although the similarity is slightly lower. This may reflect more formal or restrained corporate language in job postings, which diverges modestly from how employees describe their work experiences—even if they refer to similar themes.
- United States presents strong semantic alignment, slightly below Ukraine but still above Germany. Given the promotional and direct tone of U.S. job ads, the similarity score suggests that messaging is not only aspirational but also substantively grounded in employee experience.

These findings lend support to the hypothesis by showing that across all three countries, job ad language bears meaningful resemblance to internal narratives—especially in Ukraine and the U.S., where external and internal communication appear most in sync.

Matched Collocations from Applications, and Reviews

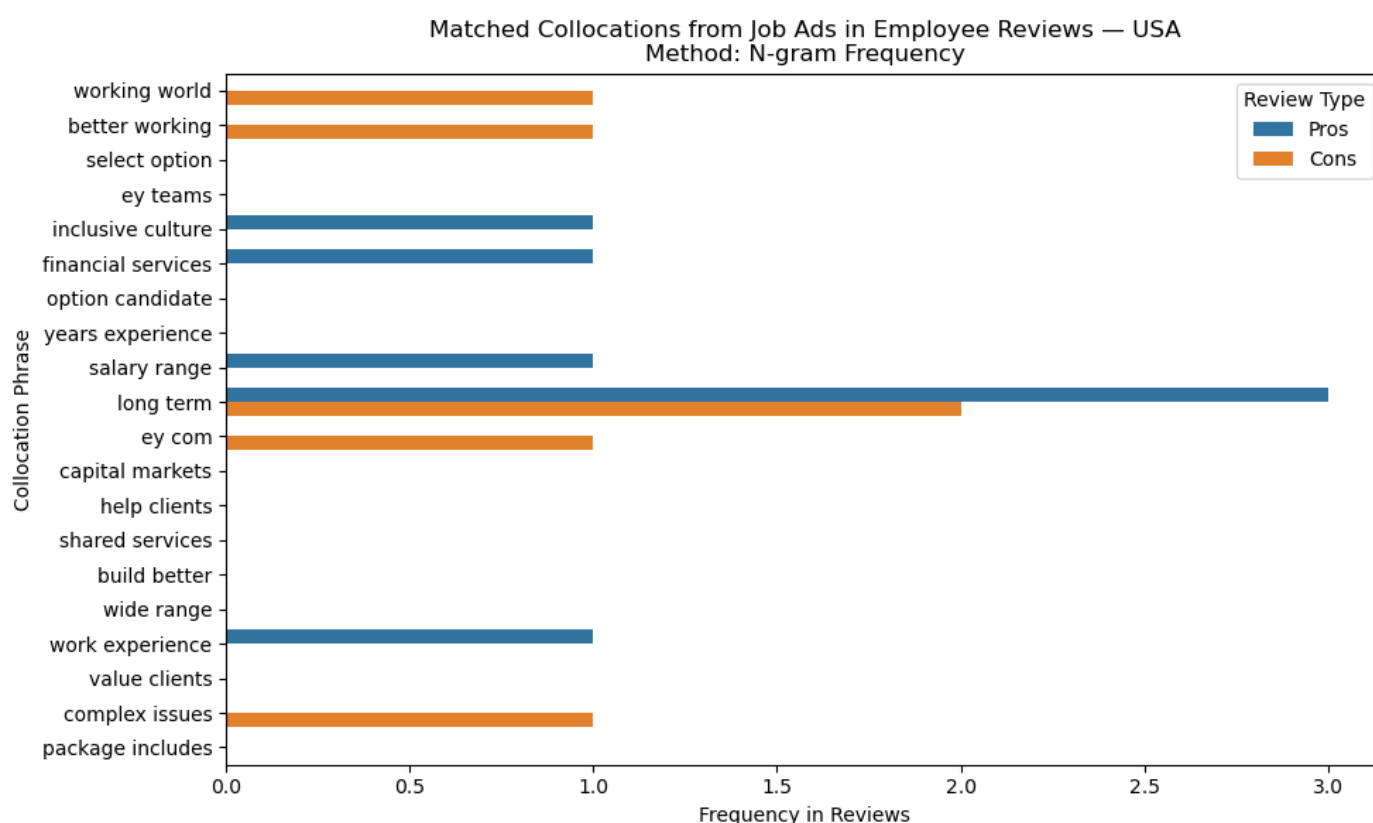
This hypothesis posits that job advertisements reflect the internal realities of the workplace as described by employees. The comparison of bigram collocations between job ads and employee reviews reveals differing levels of alignment across countries.

In Ukraine, only three job ad collocations—such as “*career growth*” and “*professional development*”—were echoed in employee “pros” reviews, indicating limited lexical alignment. This low overlap may be partly explained by the smaller number of job ads analyzed and the possibility that materials were translated or adapted centrally rather than locally.

In Germany, there was no detectable overlap between the language of job ads and employee reviews. This lack of alignment could reflect a more procedural or internally standardized communication style.

In contrast, the United States showed substantial overlap. Many phrases from job ads—such as “*inclusive culture*,” “*years experience*,” and “*financial services*”—also appeared in reviews, suggesting stronger alignment between branding and employee perception. However, several collocations appeared in both “pros” and “cons,” highlighting the importance of not just message consistency, but perceived authenticity.

These patterns suggest that while alignment is strongest in the U.S., it is weaker or more fragmented in Germany and Ukraine - partly due to structural factors like localization, sample size, or messaging strategy.



Summary and Evaluation: Hypothesis 2

The analysis of employer messaging and employee feedback from Ukraine, Germany, and the United States provides nuanced but credible support for Hypothesis 2, which proposed that the themes emphasized in job advertisements align with the positively framed experiences shared by employees. This alignment was assessed through three interconnected dimensions: sentiment analysis, semantic similarity, and matched phrase patterns. Together, these layers offer a comprehensive view of how closely external branding reflects internal workplace perception.

Findings across the sentiment dimension reveal a tiered alignment: the United States shows strong emotional consistency between job ads and employee reviews across most workplace themes, while Ukraine presents more tempered but generally positive correspondence. Germany, by contrast, shows the greatest divergence, with reviews often reflecting more neutral or negative sentiment than the uniformly positive tone of job advertisements. Particularly in Germany, internal feedback reveals pressure and stress absent from job ads, suggesting a gap between messaging and experience.

Semantic similarity analysis reinforces this gradient. Ukraine and the U.S. display high conceptual coherence between the language of job postings and employee “pros,” suggesting that branding not only communicates attractive themes but does so in ways that resonate with how employees articulate their own experience. Germany, while still semantically aligned to a degree, lags slightly, likely due to the more formal tone of its recruitment language compared to the style of employee feedback.

Collocation analysis provides additional support, with phrase overlap appearing most frequently in U.S. data. Employees echo phrases from job ads in both positive and critical terms, suggesting high exposure and familiarity with the company’s external messaging. Ukraine exhibits limited overlap—just a few recurring collocations—while Germany shows none, underscoring the greater disconnect between formalized messaging and employee discourse in that context.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that alignment between external employer messaging and internal employee experience is context-dependent and uneven. While the hypothesis holds strongly for the United States, and to a more moderate extent in Ukraine, the German case reveals challenges in maintaining authenticity and consistency between internal culture and external branding.

Hypothesis 2 is partially accepted. While there is meaningful alignment between job advertisements and employee experience—especially in the U.S.—this consistency is less evident in Ukraine and minimal in Germany. The results suggest that branding coherence depends not only on message content, but also on cultural context, communication style, and organizational transparency.

4.3. Findings for Hypothesis 3: Contradictions Between Employer Branding and Internal Criticism

This hypothesis posits that certain themes promoted in job advertisements are contradicted by employee reviews expressing dissatisfaction or concern (particularly in the “Cons” review section). The analysis across countries—focusing in particular on Ukraine, Germany, and the United States—aims to identify where employer branding may misrepresent the actual workplace experience. Evidence drawn from multiple layers of textual analysis reveals not only isolated inconsistencies but also broader patterns of tension between external messaging and internal criticism.

Contradictions Between Employer Branding and Internal Criticism

In Ukraine, several themes promoted with highly positive sentiment in job advertisements—such as “work-life balance,” “culture/environment,” and “leadership”—were rated negatively in employee Cons reviews. For instance, while job ads portray “communication” with near-perfect enthusiasm (0.9977), employee sentiment on the same theme is strongly negative (-0.791), representing a sharp disjunction. These kinds of divergences, especially when coupled with high mention counts, are classified as “potential mismatches,” pointing to meaningful gaps between external messaging and internal experience.

At the same time, themes as “Growth” and “security, despite being evaluated solely through Cons reviews) maintain sentiment scores close to neutral or mildly positive—indicating the absence of perceived problems.

Theme Sentiment Comparison (Jobs Ads vs. Review Cons) - UA

Theme	Job Ads Sentiment	Cons Sentiment	Mentions	Difference	Note
work-life balance	0.9968	-0.211	28	1.2078	Potential mismatch
culture_environment	0.9968	-0.56	6	1.5568	Potential mismatch
leadership	0.9968	-0.07	5	1.0668	Potential mismatch
communication	0.9977	-0.791	1	1.7887	Potential mismatch
customer_focus	0.9968	-0.157	3	1.1538	Potential mismatch
growth	0.9968	0.061	6	0.9358	
security	0.998	0.0	1	0.998	

In Germany, the analysis reveals more moderate but still significant contradictions between job ad messaging and employee feedback. Several themes that are strongly emphasized in job postings—such as “work-life balance,” “culture/environment,” and “pressure”—are marked by negative sentiment in employee Cons reviews. For instance, while “culture/environment” is described in ads with an average sentiment score of 0.997, reviews report a much more critical tone, averaging -0.644. “Pressure” also emerges as a key point of tension, with a sentiment gap of over 1.35, reflecting concerns about workload or stress not acknowledged in branding materials.

Not all themes exhibit this divergence. “Professionalism,” for example, stands out with a positive sentiment in reviews (0.664) despite high positivity in ads (0.995), indicating genuine alignment in this area. Similarly, “leadership” and “recognition” are framed favorably in both sources, with employee sentiment remaining clearly positive. Themes like “teamwork” and “customer focus” show smaller differences, suggesting a more stable perception across internal and external narratives.

Theme Sentiment Comparison (Jobs Ads vs. Review Cons) - GE

Theme	Job Ads Sentiment	Cons Sentiment	Mentions	Difference	Note
work-life balance	0.995	-0.157	17	1.152	Potential mismatch
culture_environment	0.997	-0.644	2	1.641	Potential mismatch
pressure	0.997	-0.363	6	1.36	Potential mismatch
communication	0.995	-0.201	2	1.196	Potential mismatch
professional	0.995	0.664	2	0.331	
teamwork	0.995	0.036	7	0.959	
leadership	0.996	0.474	2	0.522	
growth	0.995	0.205	5	0.79	
recognition	0.999	0.527	1	0.472	
customer_focus	0.995	0.077	4	0.918	

In the United States, contradictions between employer branding and internal employee feedback are both frequent. Among the twelve evaluated themes, ten are flagged as potential mismatches. While job advertisements display uniformly high sentiment scores—reaching 1.0 across all themes—employee Cons reviews often tell a more critical story. The sharpest divergences emerge around “recognition” and “autonomy.” Although heavily promoted in branding, “recognition” receives a sentiment score of -0.472 in reviews, and “autonomy” drops to -0.599, revealing substantial discontent with how these ideals are enacted in practice. Similarly, “pressure” is portrayed in job ads with idealized positivity but is assessed far more negatively by employees, scoring -0.287. “Leadership,” “culture/environment,” and “work-life balance” also reflect significant sentiment gaps, each with differences exceeding 1.1 points, indicating tension between corporate

promises and daily experience. Even widely used terms like “teamwork” and “customer focus,” while less critical in tone, still show notable mismatches.

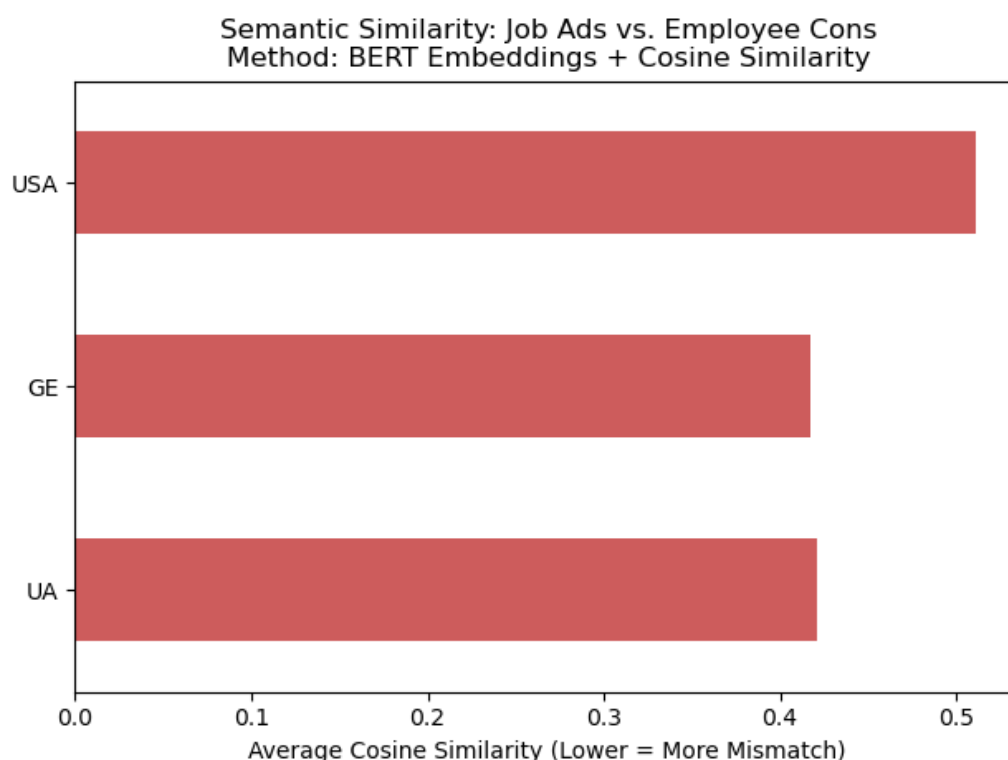
Despite these gaps, some themes retain credibility. For example, “professionalism,” “growth,” and “security” show smaller differences between sources, suggesting that in some areas, external messaging aligns more closely with lived experience. Still, the broader pattern highlights a systemic risk of overstatement.

Theme Sentiment Comparison (Jobs Ads vs. Review Cons) - US

Theme	Job Ads Sentiment	Cons Sentiment	Mentions	Difference	Note
teamwork	1.0	-0.019	39	1.019	Potential mismatch
work-life balance	1.0	-0.144	50	1.144	Potential mismatch
culture_environment	1.0	-0.236	22	1.236	Potential mismatch
leadership	1.0	-0.148	45	1.148	Potential mismatch
pressure	1.0	-0.287	29	1.287	Potential mismatch
recognition	1.0	-0.472	2	1.472	Potential mismatch
autonomy	1.0	-0.599	1	1.599	Potential mismatch
customer_focus	1.0	-0.028	45	1.028	Potential mismatch
professional	1.0	0.061	8	0.939	
growth	1.0	0.043	35	0.957	
security	1.0	0.149	9	0.851	
communication	1.0	0.098	3	0.902	

Semantic Similarity

The semantic similarity analysis between job advertisements and employee “Cons” reviews offers further insight into the credibility of employer branding. Using BERT embeddings and cosine similarity, this method captures not just lexical overlap, but also the conceptual distance between what companies promote externally and what employees criticize internally.



Among the three countries analyzed, the United States displayed the highest average cosine similarity between job ads and negative employee feedback—just under 0.5. While this may suggest that job advertisements in the U.S. are at least partially grounded in the same conceptual space as employee complaints, it also indicates that contradictions are not complete disconnects. In other words, even when employees are dissatisfied, their criticisms often reference the same themes that companies choose to emphasize—such as leadership, culture, and recognition—highlighting a tension of unfulfilled expectations rather than total misrepresentation.

Germany and Ukraine, by contrast, showed lower semantic similarity, both around 0.42. This lower alignment suggests that in these countries, job advertisements and internal criticisms are conceptually more distant. Employees are not simply challenging the framing of advertised themes—they are often talking about different realities altogether. For example, the language used in Ukrainian employee criticisms diverges significantly from the polished branding tone of job postings, particularly around communication and organizational structure. In Germany, the disconnect appears especially strong in emotionally loaded themes like pressure and work-life balance, where employee feedback often references structural or procedural issues that do not feature at all in the employer's external messaging.

Summary and Evaluation: Hypothesis 3

The cross-country analysis of job advertisements and employee “Cons” reviews from Ukraine, Germany, and the United States offers strong support for Hypothesis 3, which posited that certain themes promoted in employer branding may be contradicted by internal criticism. Using sentiment comparison, mismatch detection, and semantic similarity, the findings reveal consistent patterns of dissonance between what companies promote and what employees report.

Sentiment analysis showed significant mismatches across all three countries. The U.S. exhibited the most widespread contradictions, with ten out of twelve themes—including *recognition*, *autonomy*, and *leadership*—receiving negative employee sentiment despite being highly praised in job ads. In Germany, key themes like *culture/environment* and *pressure* also showed sharp sentiment gaps. Ukraine presented fewer mismatches, but areas like *communication* and *work-life balance* still reflected notable discontent. These gaps were not incidental; they appeared most prominently in frequently mentioned themes, pointing to real perception risks.

Some themes, however, remained aligned even when analyzed solely through negative reviews. In Ukraine, *growth* and *security* retained neutral or mildly positive sentiment, suggesting credibility in these areas. Germany and the U.S. also showed consistency on *professionalism* and *security*, showing that contradiction is not universal.

Semantic similarity analysis confirmed these patterns. The U.S. showed the highest conceptual overlap (cosine similarity ≈ 0.5), suggesting that even when employees criticize, they often do so using the same themes employers emphasize—indicating broken expectations rather than thematic disconnect. Ukraine and Germany showed lower similarity (≈ 0.42), implying greater conceptual distance between branding and critique, particularly around structural or procedural concerns.

Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Contradictions between employer branding and internal criticism are real, measurable, and vary by national context. These mismatches—especially in high-impact areas like leadership, autonomy, and culture—pose significant risks to employer credibility. Addressing them requires not only communication adjustments but, in some cases, cultural or organizational change.

Summary

Employer branding has increasingly been recognized as a strategic tool for talent acquisition and organizational reputation management. However, questions have emerged regarding the authenticity of such branding—specifically, whether the values and benefits promoted in job advertisements accurately reflect the experiences of employees. This study was motivated by a desire to assess the credibility of employer messaging by examining the alignment between external communications and internal feedback, with particular attention to how these dynamics play out across different cultural and labor market contexts.

A comparative, cross-country textual analysis was conducted to examine employer branding across national contexts. The focus was placed on Ukraine, Germany, and the United States, chosen for their differing labor market conditions, cultural norms, and communication styles. The multinational professional services firm Ernst & Young (EY) served as the case organization due to its global presence and standardized recruitment practices, allowing for meaningful cross-country comparison. Data were drawn from two key sources: official job advertisements and publicly available employee reviews (segregated into Pros and Cons).

A multi-method natural language processing (NLP) framework was applied to analyze employer branding and its perceived authenticity. Thematic sentiment analysis using VADER allowed for standardized sentiment comparison across texts. Keyword frequency (via TF-IDF) and collocation analysis were used to uncover lexical and phrasal emphasis. Semantic similarity was calculated using BERT embeddings to detect conceptual alignment or divergence beyond surface-level wording. These methods enabled a rigorous and layered examination of thematic focus, tone, and underlying meaning across external and internal texts.

The first hypothesis—proposing that employer messaging varies systematically by country—was strongly supported. Although a shared core of workplace themes (such as professionalism, teamwork, and growth) was found across all three countries, distinct regional emphases and linguistic styles emerged. U.S. advertisements leaned toward aspirational and individualistic messaging, emphasizing leadership, recognition, and confidence. German postings focused more on structure, stability, and technical precision, while Ukrainian ads combined formal corporate branding with upward mobility cues. These findings suggest that multinational employer messaging is actively localized to reflect regional expectations.

Hypothesis 2 explored whether the values promoted in job advertisements were mirrored in the positive experiences shared by employees. The analysis revealed a tiered pattern of alignment. In the U.S., strong sentiment and semantic consistency were found across most themes, including leadership, autonomy, and culture. Ukraine showed moderately strong alignment, particularly for professionalism and growth, though with slightly more conservative sentiment from employees. Germany exhibited the weakest alignment, with employee feedback often more muted or neutral. Semantic similarity and phrase overlap analyses reinforced these patterns. Overall, the hypothesis was partially supported, depending on the country context.

Hypothesis 3 posited that certain themes promoted externally would be contradicted by negative internal reviews. This hypothesis was supported by data from all three countries, though the degree of contradiction varied. In Ukraine, strong positive messaging around communication, leadership, and culture was often challenged in employee Cons reviews. In Germany, negative sentiment was observed for work-life balance and pressure, despite high promotion in job ads. The United States exhibited the most frequent and severe mismatches, particularly around recognition, autonomy, and inclusive culture—where themes promoted with enthusiasm were rated negatively by employees. These contradictions signal not just overstatement, but deeper tensions between branding and lived experience.

When the findings across all three hypotheses are synthesized, a pattern emerges: while employer branding is strategically localized and partially aligned with employee perception, gaps remain—especially where branding becomes overly optimistic. High levels of sentiment in job ads often mask internal concerns, particularly in themes associated with emotional well-being, pressure, or recognition. Cultural norms and communication style also appear to mediate alignment. The U.S. data suggest a high-expectation, high-engagement model, while German and Ukrainian cases reflect more tension or divergence between employer promise and practice.

The study's findings highlight the importance of branding authenticity as a component of organizational credibility. When employee experience reinforces employer messaging, trust is enhanced among both current staff and potential applicants. However, when contradictions are exposed, especially on core themes like leadership or work-life balance, reputational risk increases. It is recommended that companies monitor internal feedback and sentiment regularly to ensure branding remains grounded in real organizational culture. Stronger alignment between external communications and internal realities not only improves recruitment outcomes but also strengthens employee engagement and retention over time.

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