

## **Original Research Article**

# **Exploring the Impact of Employer Branding on Intention to Apply: The Mediating Role of Social Media**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Research on Generation Z's career preferences and expectations is new because they are new to the labour market and have different personalities and interests than previous generations. This requires a different approach to recruiting and selecting jobs. HRD needs to understand the factors that motivate Generation Z to work and adjust the work environment to maintain its presence in the workforce. This research involved 172 respondents from Islamic universities in East Java. This study aims to explore the effect of employer branding on the intention to apply, which is mediated through social media. This study also uses SEM-PLS to answer the hypothesis. The finding is that Employer Branding can influence intention in applying for a job, but social media is not able to mediate the effect of employer branding on intention to apply; social media is at the same time new as an intervening variable.

*Keywords: Employer Branding; Social Media; Intention to Apply; Gen-Z.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Globalization has significantly impacted workforce recruitment, both in terms of how companies find and attract talent and the types of candidates they seek (Roberts, Kossek, & Ozeki, 1998). One of the main impacts of globalization is the global availability of talent. Companies can now easily access and recruit talent from a wider range, regardless of geographic location (Schmidt, Mansson, & Dolles, 2014). This has led to increasingly intense competition for the best talent and created a more diverse and multicultural work environment (Croitoru et al., 2022). Globalization has also made it easier for companies to expand their operations into new markets, which require greater variety in skill sets and expertise. As a result, companies are increasingly looking for individuals with global experience, cultural acumen, and intercultural communication skills.

Additionally, globalization has led to a more connected and interdependent global economy, which increases the importance of diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. Companies seek individuals who can bring diverse views and experiences and help organizations navigate and succeed in a rapidly changing global environment (Jain & Lobo, 2012). In conclusion, globalization has greatly influenced recruitment by widening the range of available talent, increasing competition for the best talent, creating a more diverse and multicultural work environment, and increasing the importance of diversity and inclusivity in the workplace (Sachdev, S, & Dutt, 2021).

Many candidates pay attention to the employer brand before applying because they want to work in a work environment that matches their values and expectations (Junça Silva & Dias, 2022). If the employer brand is good, this will attract competent candidates and make them more interested in joining the company. Conversely, if the employer's brand is bad, this can affect the intention of prospective employees to apply for jobs at the company. Researchers have recognized that employer branding is the main source for attracting high-quality employees in the competition for the best talent (Ewing, Men, & O'Neil, 2019).

Research on career preferences and expectations in Generation Z is new because this generation is new to the labor market (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). Intention to apply is a very interesting topic for researchers today, especially because generation Z has an important role in recruitment and job selection. Generation Z has different personalities and interests from previous generations (Singh, 2014), thus requiring a different approach to recruiting and selecting jobs. This is because Generation Z was born during the era of globalization (Kurniyati & Arwen, 2020). Researchers in human resource development have conducted in-depth studies of older generations, such as baby boomers, generation X, and millennials (Croitoru et al., 2022). Because Generation Z has entered the dynamics of the workplace, organizations need to understand the latest generation working there to meet all the needs of employees (Perilus, 2020). By joining Generation Z into the workforce, HRD needs to focus on understanding the factors that motivate the newest generation to work, as well as how to adjust the work environment so that they can maintain the presence of Generation Z at work (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Employer Branding And Intention To Apply**

Employer branding is a marketing tactic utilized by HR departments to communicate the positive image and standing of an organization to its present and potential employees, stakeholders, and customers (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding can significantly impact a person's intention to apply for a job (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007). A strong and positive employer brand can attract potential recruits and increase their interest in working for a particular organization. This is because a strong employer brand can signal to job seekers that a company is a desirable workplace with a supportive and inclusive culture, good working conditions, and opportunities for growth and development (A. Sivertzen, 2013). On the other hand, a weak or negative employer brand can discourage job seekers from applying, as it can indicate a poor work environment, low job satisfaction, and limited opportunities for advancement (Ong, 2011).

Therefore, companies need to invest in creating and maintaining a strong and positive employer brand, which can help attract and retain the best talent and contribute to the organization's overall success (Wong, 2015). This can be achieved through various means, such as creating an attractive company website, promoting employee testimonials and success stories, and actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Therefore, we propose a hypothesis in the form of.

H1 : Employer Branding Affects The Intention To Apply

### **2.1 Social Media as a Mediator**

The role of social media in the previous literature has proven to be able to act as a mediator in the current conceptual framework because, with social media, employers will look more familiar or close to prospective employees, this will improve the company's image to job seekers (Cable & Turban, 2001). Social media platforms can be powerful tools for recruitment and help organizations manage key hiring outcomes by demonstrating the recruiter's brand personality. By establishing a strong and consistent brand image on social media, companies can attract potential candidates who align with their values, culture and work environment (A. M. Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). In addition, social media also provides an opportunity for organizations to interact with their audience and showcase corporate culture, as well as communicate job opportunities, benefits, and opportunities for growth and development (Ewing et al., 2019). By presenting a positive and attractive company image, social media can help organizations attract the best talent and build a strong pipeline of candidates for future recruitment needs. Therefore, we propose a hypothesis in the form of.

H2 : Social Media mediates the effect of Employer branding on intention to apply

## **3. METHODS**

This study aims to comprehensively investigate the intention to apply among Islamic university students in East Java who belong to the Z generation. The study employs a quantitative research design and utilizes an online questionnaire distributed to 172 Islamic university students in East Java. Employer branding, social media, and intention to apply are measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Employer branding is measured by 8 statements developed by (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005), social media with 4 statements developed by (Collins & Stevens, 2002), and intention to apply with 4 statements developed by (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). Table 1 shows the items used in this study.

**Table 1. Measured Items**

Variable	Items	Source
Employer Branding	I feel the work environment in the organization is fun	(Berthon et al., 2005)
	I feel the products/services produced are of high quality	
	I feel this organization is innovative in producing products/services	
	Good career promotion (level career)	
	This organization implements Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	
	I feel the field of work in this organization matches what I am currently studying (college)	
	I find this organization a fun place to work	
	I know that the salary offered is above average	
Social Media	I have seen news/advertisements about this company (for example TV, Social media)	(Collins & Stevens, 2002)
	This organization sponsors events on campus (e.g., seminars, concerts, sporting events, Etc.)	
	I saw this organization's job advertisement on campus or in the newspaper.	
	The company's Recruitment Brochure or website gives me detailed information.	
Intention to Apply	I will accept a job offer from this company.	(Highhouse et al., 2003)
	I would make this company one of my first choices.	
	I will accept if this company invites an interview.	
	I will try my best to work in this company.	

A partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling approach is used to test the research hypotheses in the SmartPLS 3.0 software. PLS is a variance-based approach useful for exploratory research or relatively complex models. The validity and reliability of the variables are tested in the first step, followed by the testing of the structural model to evaluate the research hypotheses, in line with the two-step approach proposed by Chin and Newsted (1999). PLS is a powerful analytical method because it does not rely on many assumptions of normal distribution, and the sample size does not have to be large, as Ghozali and Latan (2015) explained.

**Table 2. Convergent Validity**

Variable	Item	Loading Factor	AVE	Result
Employer Branding	EB 1	0,770	0,576	Valid
	EB 2	0,738		
	EB 3	0,803		
	EB 4	0,751		
	EB 5	0,767		
	EB 6	0,719		

	EB 7	0,760		
	EB 8	0,760		
	SM 1	0,756		
Social Media	SM 2	0,786	0,630	Valid
	SM 3	0,823		
	SM 4	0,807		
	IA 1	0,894		
Intention to Apply	IA 2	0,838	0,774	Valid
	IA 3	0,914		
	IA 4	0,871		

The first step in verifying the accuracy of the data involved examining Table 2. The results indicate that the items associated with work-family conflict, work flexibility, and job satisfaction have a loading factor of over 0.70, as evidenced by the AVE value exceeding 0.50. Consequently, the items utilized in this research are valid. Additionally, Table 3 displays the reliability test findings, demonstrating that each variable has a Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability value of at least 0.70. As a result, this study employs trustworthy items.

**Table 3. Reliability Test**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employer Branding	0,895	0,916	Reliable
Social Media	0,811	0,872	Reliable
Intention to Apply	0,902	0,932	Reliable

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 below illustrates that model testing results use the partial least square (PLS) structural equation model (SEM) method. The image below is analyzed using the bootstrapping method, which is used to test the research hypothesis either directly or indirectly. In detail, it can be seen in table 3 below regarding hypothesis testing accepted or rejected.

**Fig. 1. Structural Equation Modeling Results**

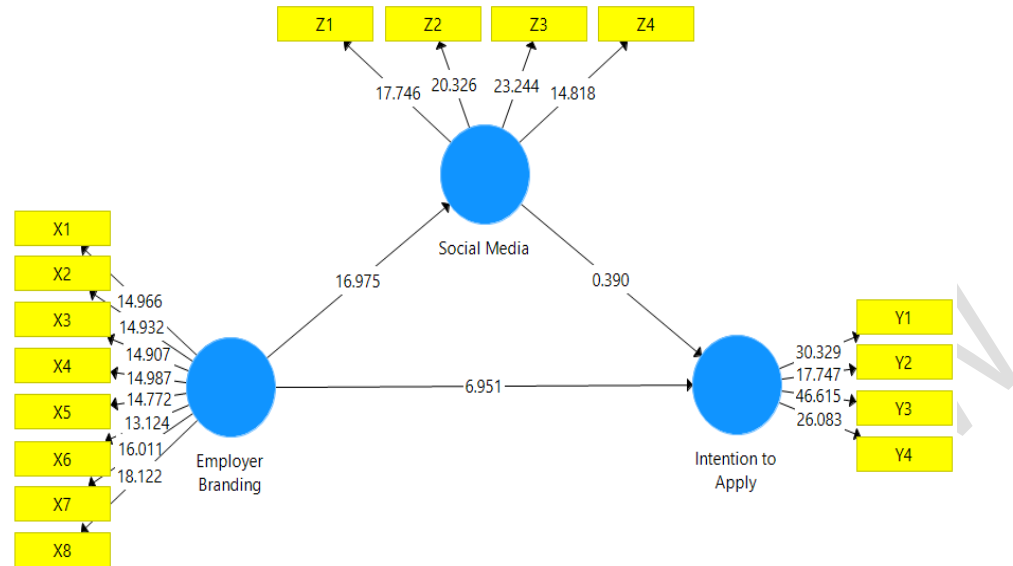


Table 4 below explains in detail that the first hypothesis in this study, namely the effect of employer branding on the intention to apply, has a t-statistic value of 9.654 with a p-value <0.05, with a positive sign on the coefficient value, meaning that the higher the Employer Branding, the intention to apply will also be higher. Furthermore, it shows a statistical t value of 0.390 with a p value > 0.05, which means that social media cannot affect the intention to apply, but these results show that the first hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 4. Direct Effect**

Direct Effect	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Employer Branding → Intention to Apply	0,702	9,654	0,000
Employer Branding → Social Media	0,702	16,975	0,000
Social Media → Intention to Apply	0,030	0,390	0,697

The table below shows that the t statistic is 0.388, less than 1.96. This illustrates that the social media variable cannot mediate the effect of employer branding on the intention to apply for generation Z. This means that social media is not a factor that builds employer branding, thus further causing the intention to apply for a job.

**Table 5. Indirect Effect**

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Employer Branding → Social Media → Intention to Apply	0,021	0,388	0,698

### 3.1 The Effect Employer Branding on Job Satisfaction

This research proves empirically that there is a significant influence between employer branding on intention to apply. These results reinforce the findings (Berthon et al., 2005), which state that employer branding has a significant effect on the intention to apply. The results of this study indicate that companies with strong branding will increase the intention to apply to prospective employees. Employer Branding can be described as creating and promoting an organisation's image and reputation as the

preferred workplace for employees. The results of this study are in line with previous research from (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Moreover, (Bahri-Ammari, Soliman, & Salah, 2022) shows that employer branding is positively related to the intention to apply.

### **3.2 Social Media as a mediator**

The hypothesis in this study was rejected, this research cannot empirically prove the indirect effect of Employer Branding on the Intention to Apply through social media; this is also proven by research by (Koch et al., 2018), which states that social media cannot affect the intentions of a prospective job seeker. Research (Behringer & Sassenberg, 2015) states that using social media creates risks in the recruitment process, for example, privacy issues, data quality that is not always guaranteed, and tendencies of discrimination and bias that can arise in candidate selection. Furthermore, other studies state that social media is not a factor for a candidate intending to apply for a job, but in the future social media and technology will become important because of their effectiveness and convenience (Bohmova & Pavlicek, 2015)

## **4. CONCLUSION**

In summary, this study's findings advance the field of human resources by demonstrating that Employer Branding can impact the Intention to Apply among job seekers. At the same time, Social Media does not have the same effect. The study also reveals that the key factor driving Intention to Apply among Generation Z is the strength of an employer's branding, which influences their career decision-making process. Companies should focus on developing a strong employer brand to attract potential candidates. However, the study has some limitations as it only involves a sample of university students in Indonesia, and it does not provide insights into how other generations or educational levels may differ in their job-seeking behaviour. Therefore, further research is needed to address these limitations and incorporate additional variables such as age and gender. The practical implication of the research is that companies should emphasize the importance of culture and the benefits of working for their organization to potential candidates.

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