

Exploring the Impact of Employer Branding on Intention Towards Job Application: The Mediating Role of Social Media

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

Labor selection has emerged as the most crucial element in facing the dynamics of globalization. Companies face complexity that requires careful consideration in the workforce selection process on a global scale. In order to achieve success and ensure operational continuity, companies need to identify and consider several critical factors that influence work dynamics in the global market.

Globalization has significantly impacted workforce recruitment regarding how companies find and attract talent and the types of candidates they seek (Roberts et al., 1998). One of the main impacts of globalization is the global availability of talent. Companies can now easily access and recruit talent from a broader range, regardless of geographic location (Schmidt et al., 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 dramatically 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 et al., 2021).

Many candidates pay attention to the employer brand before applying because they want to work in an 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 terrible, this can affect prospective employees' intentions to apply

for jobs at the company. Researchers have recognized that employer branding is the primary source for attracting high-quality employees in the competition for the best talent(Ewing et al., 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 fascinating topic for researchers today, especially because Generation Z is vital 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(Croituru 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).

This research is crucial for comprehending the changing recruitment dynamics in the current fast-paced job market. This study focuses on adjusting to digital trends, specifically the role of social media in influencing the connection between employer branding and job application intents(Bharadwaj, 2024). This study aims to improve employer branding tactics by emphasizing the need to link recruitment efforts with contemporary communication platforms. Moreover, it recognizes the evolving demands of knowledgeable job seekers and provides significant insights for both scholarly discussions and practical applications in human resource management(Purwanto et al., 2023). This research addresses the gaps in the current literature by offering detailed knowledge of how employer branding affects job applications using social media as a mediator. As a result, it guides companies in dealing with modern recruitment issues.

This study aims to examine the correlation between employer branding and job application intentions, as well as to evaluate the connection between these two factors and the mediating influence of social media. This research aims to examine the impact of employer branding on individuals' motivation to apply for a job, specifically focusing on how an organization's image influences their intention to apply. This research examines how social media mediates the connection between employer branding and application intentions. It seeks to understand how individuals interacting with company information and image on social media platforms can influence their decision to apply for a job. This research seeks to enhance our theoretical and practical comprehension of the intricate interactions among employer branding, intention to apply, and social media's influence on labor recruiting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employer Branding And Intention To Apply

Employer branding is a marketing tactic utilized by HR departments to communicate an organization's positive image and standing 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 et al., 2007). A solid 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 job seekers that a company is a desirable workplace with a supportive and inclusive culture, good working conditions, and opportunities for growth and development(Sivertzen et al., 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 must create and maintain a solid 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 solid and consistent brand image on social media, companies can attract potential candidates who align with their values, culture, and work environment (Sivertzen et al., 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. METHODOLOGY

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). The assessment of employer branding is quantified through the utilization of eight statements formulated by Berthon et al., (2005) due to their established validity and reliability through rigorous testing. This statement encompasses workplace branding characteristics that are thorough and pertinent to the Gen Z demographic (born between 1997-2012). The measurement of social media interactions was conducted using four statements devised by (Collins & Stevens, 2002). These statements were selected due to their particular focus on the dynamics of social media and their applicability to the experiences of Generation Z individuals who have grown up in the digital age. Subsequently, the application intents were assessed by employing four statements formulated by Highhouse, Highhouse et al., (2003) due to their established efficacy in predicting the inclination of individuals, particularly those belonging to Generation Z, to seek employment prospects actively. The choice of this statement was also based on the efficacy of data gathering, alignment with the values and expectations of Gen Z, and overall pertinence to the research focus on the interplay between employer branding, social media, and application intents in the recruitment setting.

Table 1. Measured Items

Variable	Items	Source
Employer Branding	I feel the work environment in the organization is fun	(Berthon et al., 2005a)
	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) 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.	(Collins & Stevens, 2002)
Intention to Apply	I will accept a job offer from this company. 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.	(Highhouse et al., 2003)

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 valuable approach 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 Bakk & Kuha (2018). 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 (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		
Social Media	SM 1	0,756	0,630	Valid
	SM 2	0,786		
	SM 3	0,823		
	SM 4	0,807		
Intention to Apply	IA 1	0,894	0,774	Valid
	IA 2	0,838		
	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

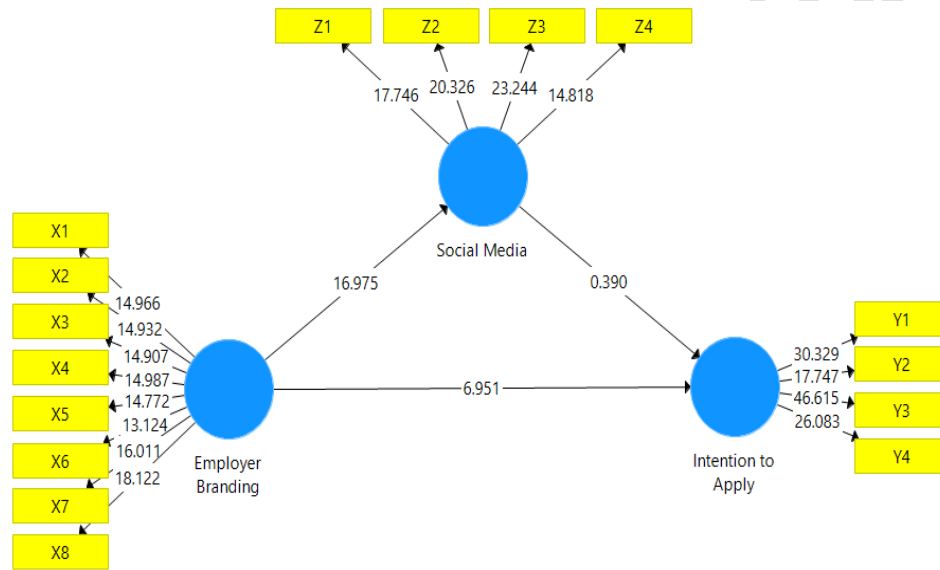


Table 4 below explains in detail that the first hypothesis in this study, namely the effect of employer branding on the intention to apply, has a t-statistic value of 9.654 with a p-value <0.05, with a positive sign on the coefficient value, meaning that the higher the Employer Branding, the intention 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. However, 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, which is 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 and intention to apply. These results reinforce the findings (Berthon et al., 2005), which state that employer branding significantly affects the intention to apply. The results of this study indicate that companies with solid branding will increase the intention to apply to prospective employees. Employer Branding can be described as creating and promoting an organization's image and reputation as the preferred workplace for employees. The results of this study align with previous research (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Moreover, Bahri-Ammari et al., (2022) show that employer branding positively relates to the intention to apply.

3.2 Social Media as a mediator

The results of this study reveal a complex relationship between employer branding and job application intentions, which is mediated by social media. In line with previous research, company image and reputation are essential in increasing attractiveness for prospective employees (Zhang et al., 2020). However, mixed findings highlight that not all aspects of branding automatically lead to increased application intentions (Jayasinghe, 2017). Specific variables, such as company values or innovation, can have different impacts (Wijaya et al., 2023). The importance of social media as a mediator also proves relevant, where different platforms and interactions can have varying effects (Blut et al., 2023). These results emphasize the need for contextual understanding in designing corporate branding strategies, focusing on the values desired by prospective employees and the critical role of social media in conveying these messages (Priya & Raman, 2021). These findings serve as a basis for further research, more effective recruitment strategies, and a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship between employer branding and job application intentions via social media (Abadi et al., 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the field of human resources by demonstrating that Employer Branding has the potential to influence the Intention to Apply among job searchers. However, Social Media needs equivalent influence. The research highlights the importance of an employer's branding in influencing the Intention to Apply, especially among Generation Z, and changing their career decision-making process. Companies are advised to give priority to the cultivation of a robust employer brand in order to attract prospective applicants. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize the constraints of the study, such as its exclusive concentration on a subset of university students in Indonesia and the want for further understanding of discrepancies in job-seeking conduct among different generations or educational backgrounds. Additional investigation is required to tackle these constraints, encompassing supplementary factors such as age and gender. The study's practical application underscores the significance of organizational culture and the advantages of being employed by an organization without providing any concrete recommendations for putting it into practice.

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