

Employer Branding Corporate Reputation and Job Application Intentions: Moderating Effects Of Social Media And Value Congruence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine and analyse the direct effect of employer branding on corporate reputation and job application intentions, as well as the effect of corporate reputation on job application intentions. Furthermore, this study also examines and analyses the mediating effect of corporate reputation on the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions, and the moderating effects of social media and value congruence on the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions. This study employs a quantitative approach, utilising an online questionnaire for data collection. A total of 220 respondents were recruited from final-year students enrolled in business faculties at various universities in Jakarta, Banten and West Java. Purposive sampling was used for sample selection, and data analysis in this study was conducted using SEM-PLS. The results of the testing and data analysis indicate that employer branding has a positive and significant impact on corporate reputation and job application intentions. Similarly, corporate reputation was found to have a positive and significant impact on job application intentions. Furthermore, employer branding has a positive and significant impact on job application intentions via corporate reputation; finally, social media does not moderate the influence of employer branding on job application intentions, but value congruence was found to moderate the influence of employer branding on job application intentions.

INTRODUCTION

The current business environment is characterised by intense global competition and a changing demographic of the workforce. Organisations are struggling to attract and retain the best talent. With the increasing mobility of the workforce and the shift in the expectations of the younger generation, especially Generation Z, which is gradually entering the labour market (Thang & Trang, 2024), the phenomenon of war over talent will be more real.

According to signalling theory (Michael Spence, 1973) prospective employees suffer from information asymmetry when evaluating prospective employers. Different signals are sent by an organisation via employer branding activities, the reputation of the company and information posted in social media that prospective employees rely upon to lower uncertainty and develop perceptions of the appropriateness of a workplace (Elbendary, 2024). On the other hand, the theory of congruence suggests that an individual tends to be interested in organisations that share similar values with their personal values so that value congruence becomes an important factor in the career decision making process (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2026).

Research in employer branding and intention to apply for a job has been growing rapidly but some research gaps need to be further researched. Previous research has primarily focused on the direct relationships between employer branding and job search intention separately (Silva & Dias, 2023; Turban et al., 1998), but there is a lack of research that comprehensively investigates the mediating role of corporate reputation in the relationships while considering the moderating effects of social media and value congruence. Second, empirical findings on most influential employer branding dimensions revealed different and context dependent results. Some studies have found that employer branding has a positive impact on the intention to apply for a job (Silva & Dias, 2023; Verma et al., 2024). But other studies have come to opposite conclusions. Research indicates that employer branding doesn't directly impact intention to apply but there is a factor that impacts this, which is attributes of the organisation and job security that play a more important role (Elbendary, 2023; Ammari et al., 2025). The mixed findings open up possibilities for further and more rigorous research." In addition, the mediating role of some social media attributes (e.g., informative and social presence) in the attractiveness of the company brands and fit between individuals and organisations is not well understood (Bharadwaj, 2024; Ashimkhanova et al., 2023).

Moreover, the studies on the role of social media moderation in the relationship between employer branding and job search intention are still inconsistent. Sivertzen et al., (2013) found a positive effect of social media use on corporate reputation but no significant moderating effects. In contrast, (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2026) reveal that social media attributes like social presence and informativeness have a significant effect on the employer brand attractiveness through full mediation of person-organisation fit. Likewise, (Bharadwaj, 2024) identified that social media and online reviews act as a mediator between employer branding and job search intention. Carpentier et al., (2019) emphasised the role of corporate brand personality signalling through social media. Fourth, while value congruence is identified as an important factor in the person-organisation fit literature (Cable & Judge, 1996), studies testing the moderating effects of value congruence on the relationship between corporate reputation and job search intentions are still rare. Bahri-Ammari et al., (2025) found that value congruence moderates the effect of employer brand on job seeker attitude but it has not been integrated to the role of social media simultaneously. Fifth, most employer branding studies

are conducted in the context of developed countries (Berthon et al., 2005; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Theurer & Lievens, 2018), while research conducted in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia is still very limited, even though its demographic characteristics, culture, and level of social media penetration are very different.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute by expanding the scope of signalling theory by integrating two sources of signals (deliberate signals from employer branding and indirect signals from social media and company reputation) in one comprehensive model. The integration of the signalling theory and congruity theory in explaining the mechanism of employer branding influence on application intention by considering the boundary condition of social media usage and value congruence. Practically, this study contributes to guiding HR managers to develop successful employer branding strategies, maximising the effectiveness of social media channels, and communicating organisational values consistently to achieve value congruence with potential employees.

This study aims to present empirical evidence on the direct impact of employer branding on intention to apply for a job and indirect impact through the mediators of company reputation. This also contributes to the understanding of the stronger moderating effect of social media usage and value congruence on the employer branding relationship and job pursuit intention. The purpose of this study is to emphasise the need for a strong employer brand to attract talent in a time when social media plays a significant part in the perception. The study seeks to offer actionable insights for organisations interested in improving their recruitment strategies, by analysing these dynamics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between employer branding, corporate reputation, social media usage, value congruence and job application intentions. The research method employed a self-administered online survey, which is widely used in employer branding research due to its efficiency in reaching geographically dispersed respondents and its ability to collect standardised data (Carpentier et al., 2019; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2026). A Likert-scale questionnaire was used. The target population consisted of final-year undergraduate students from public and private universities in the three provinces of DKI Jakarta, West Java and Banten. This population was selected because students are about to enter the job market and are active social media users, making them ideal respondents for employer branding research (Berthon et al., 2005; Thang & Trang, 2024). The sampling technique employed non-probability sampling, as this study targeted a specific demographic group accessible via university networks and social media platforms (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). The sampling aimed to ensure that only eligible respondents were included, such as: students in their final year of study or recent graduates actively seeking employment and from business faculties. The questionnaire was distributed via email, university online forums, and social media

platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram (Bharadwaj, 2024). Data analysis was conducted using a two-step approach: measurement model assessment followed by structural model testing (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software was employed to test the hypothesised relationships. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$). Convergent validity was evaluated via the average variance extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$), and discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio (Fornell and Lacker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2016). Mediation and moderation effects were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). General method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test, with a threshold of less than 50% of total variance indicating that bias was not a serious issue (Podsakoff, 2003).

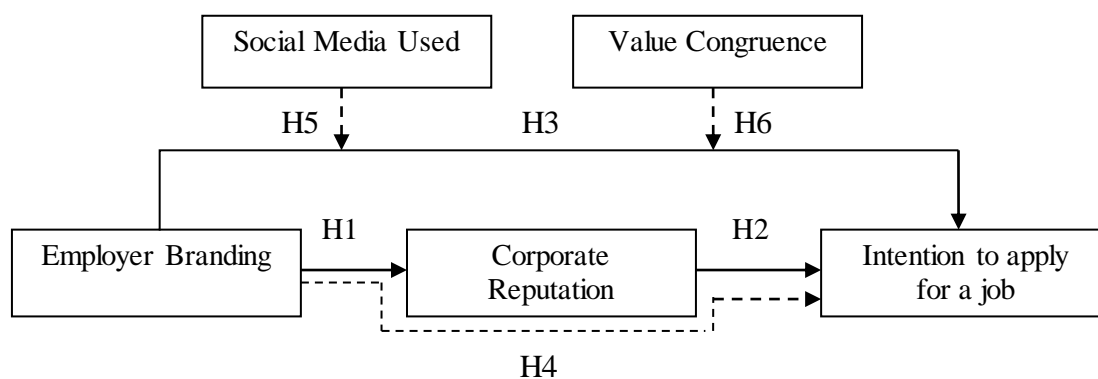


Figure 1. Empirical Model

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristic respondent

The respondents in this study were 220 final year students taking undergraduate courses in business faculties at various state and private universities in DKI Jakarta, Banten and West Java. Based on gender, respondents in this study were dominated by women as many as 113 or 51% and men as many as 107 or 49%. Then based on age, the most respondents were between 20-25 years old, as many as 147 or 66% then the least age was under 20 years old as many as 8 or 3.6%. Furthermore, respondents based on region, were dominated by respondents in DKI Jakarta totaling 105 students followed by West Java totaling 83 students then Banten totaling 18 students. Finally, respondents based on study program were dominated by students taking management study programs totaling 84 students or 38% and the smallest number of respondents were students taking economics study programs totaling 8 students or 5,5%.

Tabel. 1 Charcretistic Respondent

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	107	49
Female	113	51
Age		
< 20 year	8	3,6
20 – 25 year	147	66,8
26 – 35 year	43	19,5
35 year or above	22	10
Field of specialization		
Management	84	38
Accounting	33	15
Economic	12	5,5
Business Administration	36	16,5
Entrepreneurship	28	12,7
Business Digital	27	12,3

Source: Data Process, 2026

Evaluation of Measurement Model

The evaluation model measurement in this study was conducted using Smart PLS by testing validity and reliability. The results of the outer model test showed that the loading factor values of all indicators in each variable had met the required threshold, which was above (> 0.70), thus meeting the convergent validity criteria. In detail, Employer branding (0.944–0.960), company reputation (0.934–0.954), job application intentions (0.934–0.955), social media use (0.876–0.934) and value conformity (0.914–0.925) showed a strong relationship with the construct. Likewise, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value was above 0.50, indicating that the construct was able to explain more than 50% of the indicator's variance. In addition, the cronbach's alpha value range 0.898 – 0.986, and Composite Reliability (CR) 0.935 – 0.996 indicated that all constructs had a good level of internal consistency, so that the model measurement was worthy of being continued to the inner model analysis (table.1).

Table 2 Validity and Reliability Test Results

Construct	Item	Loading Factors	Croncach alpha	CR	AVE
Employer Branding (Berthon et al., 2005; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Silva & Dias,2023; Thang & Trang, 2024)	EB1	0.955	0.995	0.996	0.909
	EB2	0.952			
	EB3	0.957			
	EB4	0.960			
	EB5	0.960			
	EB6	0.954			
	EB7	0.948			
	EB8	0.958			
	EB9	0.944			
	EB10	0.945			
	EB11	0.956			
	EB12	0.944			
	EB13	0.955			
	EB14	0.953			
	EB15	0.957			
	EB16	0.958			
	EB17	0.954			
	EB18	0.947			
	EB19	0.959			
	EB20	0.959			
	EB21	0.957			
	EB22	0.966			
	EB23	0.944			
Corporate Reputation (Wartick, 2002; Silva & Dias, 2023)	CR1	0.946	0.986	0.988	0.891
	CR2	0.947			
	CR3	0.944			
	CR4	0.950			
	CR5	0.954			
	CR6	0.935			
	CR7	0.951			
	CR8	0.940			
	CR9	0.934			
	CR10	0.938			
Job Application Intentions (Gomes & Neves, 2011; Soeling et al., 2022;	JAI1	0.955	0.959	0.970	0.891
	JAI2	0.948			
	JAI3	0.934			

Elbendary, 2023)	JAI4	0.939			
Social Media (Carpentier et al., 2019)	SC1	0.920	0.898	0.935	0.828
	SC2	0.934			
	SC3	0.876			
Value Congruence (Cable & Judge, 1996; Choi et al., 2021)	VC1	0.923	0.940	0.957	0.847
	VC2	0.925			
	VC3	0.918			
	VC4	0.914			

Sumber: *Output PLS, 2026*

The results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker criteria indicate that discriminant validity is met, with the square root of the AVE value greater than the correlation between constructs, indicating that each variable can be distinguished well. The relationship between constructs is quite strong, especially between Employer Branding and Corporate Reputation (0.954), while the lowest correlation was found between social media and job application intention (0.303). Overall, this research model is valid and shows a relationship that is in accordance with the theoretical concept.

Tabel 3. Fornell and Lacker

Construct	CR	EB	JAI	SC	VC
Corporate Reputation	0.994				
Employer Branding	0.877	0.954			
Job Application Intentions	0.735	0.723	0.944		
Social Media	0.443	0.525	0.303	0.910	
Value Congruence	0.432	0.465	0.384	0.339	0.920

Sumber: *Output PLS, 2026*

Evaluation of Structural Model

The R-Square analysis indicates that the job application intentions variable has an R² of 0.645, meaning that 64% of the variability in job application intentions is explained by the independent variables in the model. Based on Hair et al. (2017), this value falls into the ‘strong’ category, indicating that the model has good predictive power. However, 36% of the variability remains unexplained by other factors not included in this model. Therefore, although the model is already quite robust, there is still scope to explore other factors that may influence job application intentions. Furthermore, for the corporate reputation variable, the analysis results

Tabel 4. R Square

Construct	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Corporate Reputation	0.769	0.766
Job Application Intentions	0.645	0.625

Sumber: *Output PLS, 2026*

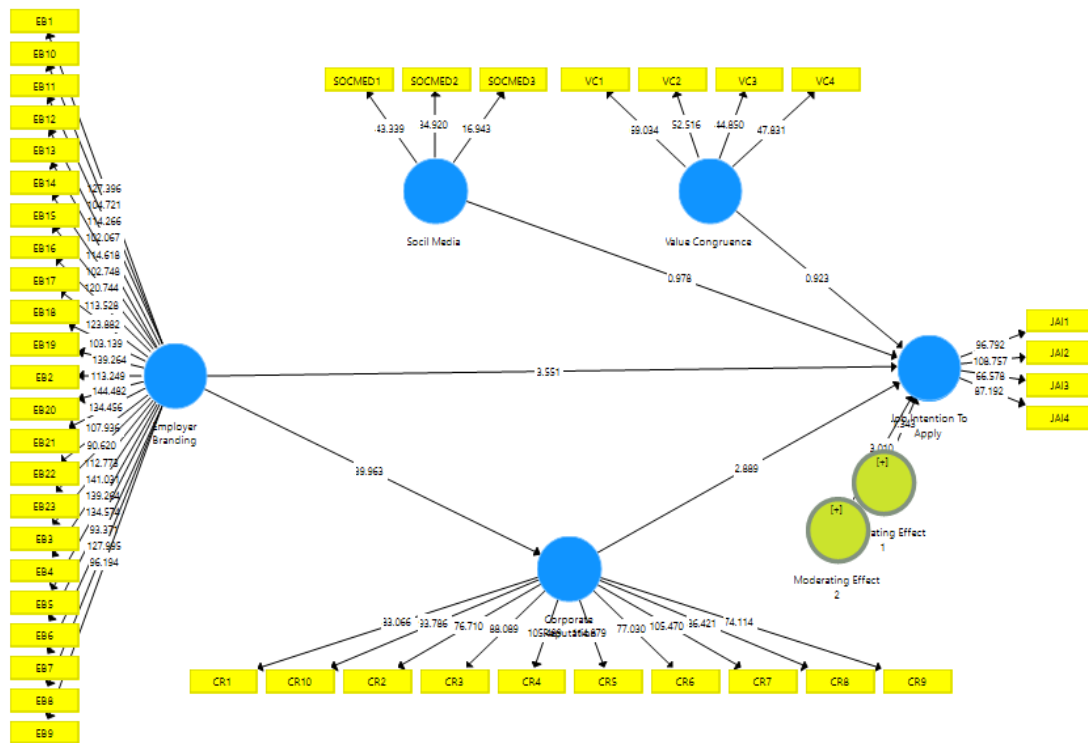


Figure. 1 Path Analysis

Table 5. Results of the analysis of direct effects, mediation and moderation

Path Analysis	Original Sampel	T Statistic	P Value	Description
H1 : CR → JAI	0.330	2.802	0.005	Suported
H2 : EB → CR	0.877	38.257	0.000	Suported
H3 : EB → JAI	0.446	3.648	0.000	Suported
H4 : EB → CR → JAI	0.290	2.775	0.006	Suported
H5 : EB*SC → JAI	0.113	1.465	0.144	Not Suported
H6 : EB*VC → JAI	0.214	3.136	0.002	Suported

Sumber: *Output PLS, 2026*

The results of the hypothesis testing in Table 4 show that all direct relationships in this research model are significant. Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on company reputation ($\beta = 0.877$; $t = 38.257$; $p = 0.000$), so the hypothesis is supported. Company reputation is also proven to have a positive and significant effect on Job Application Intention ($\beta = 0.330$; $t = 2.802$; $p = 0.005$). and Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on Job Application Intention ($\beta = 0.446$; $t = 3.648$; $p < 0.000$). Thus, all direct effect hypotheses are declared accepted.

The indirect effect test showed that corporate reputation significantly mediated the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions ($\beta = 0.290$; $t = 2.775$;

$p = 0.006$). However, social media did not moderate the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions ($\beta = 0.113$; $t = 1.465$; $p = 0.0144$). Furthermore, value congruence moderated the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions ($\beta = 0.214$; $t = 3.136$; $p = 0.002$).

DISCUSSION

The impact of employer branding on corporate reputation

The results of this study (H1) show that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on corporate reputation. This confirms that employer branding significantly impacts a company's reputation, which in turn influences job application intentions among prospective candidates. This study shows that strong employer branding enhances a company's reputation, thereby increasing its attractiveness to job seekers, particularly among final-year students. These findings align with those of (Widiantari & Yunita, 2025; Kusdiyanto & Faliqul Ishbah, 2024; Janechová & Bednárík, 2023; Yadav et al, 2020) which state that employer branding has a positive impact on job application intentions. Out of five employer branding dimensions, three (corporate social responsibility, healthy work atmosphere and training and development) were found to be significant predictors of intention to apply for a job. Overall, these findings underscore the strategic importance of employer branding and company reputation in recruitment efforts.

The impact of corporate reputation on job application intentions

The results of this study (H2) indicate that company reputation has a positive and significant effect on job application intentions. This study confirms that job application intentions can be understood through the role of corporate reputation as a signal that builds trust among job seekers in line with the statement of (Baumgartner et al., 2022; Silaban et al., 2023) A good reputation makes prospective applicants perceive the company as offering a better working environment and promising career opportunities, thus increasing their willingness to apply. (Elbendary, 2023) The findings revealed that the most influential variable in the intention to apply is organizational attributes, followed by organizational reputation and finally employer brand. There is a significant relationship between organizational attributes and intention to apply for a job vacancy via employer brand.

The impact of employer branding on job application intentions

The results of this study (H3) indicate that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intentions. This result confirms that applicants prefer companies they know and that guarantee personal development and job security, which are considered key characteristics of an employer brand. For prospective employees, an employer brand refers to what the organization will offer and what their future work life will be like. This finding confirms previous research (Shahzad et al., 2011; Silva & Dias, 2023; Mishra & Mishra, 2023; Verma et al., 2024; Bahri-Ammari et al., 2025) Research shows that

a strong company image has a positive impact on job application intentions. Organizations that effectively project an attractive company image will attract more qualified applicants.

The impact of employer branding on job application intentions through corporate reputation

The research finding (H4) show that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intentions through corporate reputation. These results confirm that employer branding (interest value; social value; economic value; development value; application value) positively influenced an organisation's corporate reputation, which, in turn, increased an individual's intention to apply for an employment offer in that organisation. The results of this study are in line with the results of research (Silva & Dias, 2023; Janechová & Bednárík, 2023; Soeling et al., 2022) which states that if corporate identity becomes a central platform and organizations make strategic decisions in aligning corporate strategy, culture, and corporate communication, it creates the foundation for building a solid reputation that can be a source of competitive advantage and the right foundation for achieving an attractive employer brand.

Social media and value congruence moderates the relationship between Employer Branding and Popularity of Job Application Intentions.

The results of this study (H5 & H6) indicate that social media and value congruence have different outcomes. Social media does not moderate the effect of employer branding on job application intentions. This finding contradicts previous research that suggested that social media and value congruence Social media characteristics and value congruence serve as important moderators in the relationship between employer image and application intentions, but their interactive effects offer a more nuanced theoretical contribution. Social media's social and informative presence (Ghorbanzadeh & Alkhayet, 2025; Suprawan et al., 2026) not only transmits employer image signals but actively reshapes perceptions of fit between individuals and organizations, thereby strengthening application intentions (Bharadwaj, 2024; Ashimkhanova et al., 2023). However, Value congruence acts as a moderator in the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions. Studies indicate that when there is a strong alignment between the values of the organization and the candidates, the effectiveness of employer branding in attracting applicants is significantly enhanced (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2025).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study shows that employer branding and corporate reputation significantly influence job application intentions. The results of the same study also indicate that corporate reputation significantly influences job application intentions. Furthermore, this study indicates that corporate reputation has a mediating effect on the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions. The moderation analysis results indicate that social

media does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions; however, value congruence does have a moderating effect on this relationship. Our research has limitations, including: 1) the respondents in this study were limited to final-year students enrolled in business faculties; 2) the sample size was too small, meaning the research findings cannot be generalized; and 3) the results of this study were unable to prove the moderating role of social media in the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions. Future research should employ a more extensive sample, including final-year students and recent graduates from diverse disciplines and universities within a country. Furthermore, a larger sample size is recommended to ensure the findings can be generalized. In future research models, it is hoped that the moderating role of social media or other variables can be re-examined to strengthen the relationship between employer branding and job application intentions.

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