

Research Horizon

ISSN: 2808-0696 (p), 2807-9531 (e)

Research Horizon

Volume: 06

Issue: 02

Year: 2026

Page: 821-834

Citation:

Baasitha, P. A., & Mathori, M. (2026). Social media recruitment and Generation Z job application intentions: The mediating effect of employer branding. *Research Horizon*, 6(2), 821-834.

Article History:

Received: March 21, 2026

Revised: April 14, 2026

Accepted: April 27, 2026

Online since: April 30, 2026

Social Media Recruitment and Generation Z Job Application Intentions: The Mediating Effect of Employer Branding

Putry Aliyya Baasitha¹, Muhammad Mathori¹

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

* Corresponding author: Putry Aliyya Bassitha (gemoybaasitha@gmail.com)

Abstract

The swift evolution of digital technology has transformed hiring methods, with Generation Z placing greater dependence on social media for job-related information. This research seeks to investigate how social media functions as a recruitment instrument on Generation Z's willingness to seek employment and to explore the mediating influence of employer branding within this context. This study utilized a quantitative method through a survey approach by distributing questionnaires to participants identified as Generation Z. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling, involving a total of 100 respondents. The gathered data were assessed through Structural Equation Modeling utilizing the Partial Least Squares method. The findings show that using social media for recruitment positively and significantly influences Generation Z's desire to seek employment. Moreover, employer branding positively impacts the intention to apply for jobs. The mediation analysis indicates that employer branding partially mediates the connection between social media recruitment and the job application intention of Generation Z. These results indicate that organizations need to refine their recruitment strategies via social media and cultivate a robust employer brand to improve their appeal to young job applicants.

Keywords

Digital Recruitment, Employer Branding, Generation Z, Job Application Intention, Social Media Recruitment.

1. Introduction

The advancement of information and communication technology in the digital age has resulted in major changes in several areas of life, especially in human resource management methods, specifically concerning the recruitment process. This shift is marked by a transition from conventional methods toward more adaptive, interactive, and wide-reaching digital approaches. Social media, which initially functioned as a medium for communication and entertainment, has now evolved into a strategic platform for reaching potential employees more effectively (Parwati & Mardiyono, 2025). This phenomenon encourages organizations to adjust their recruitment strategies in alignment with the characteristics of job-seeking generations in the digital era.

In this context, Generation Z (Gen Z), defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, has emerged as a highly relevant group in digital recruitment studies. Gen Z is widely recognized as digital natives with a strong attachment to technology, the internet, and social media, resulting in distinct information-seeking behaviors compared to previous generations (Dewa, 2023; Ananda & Santosa, 2024). These characteristics make social media a primary source for obtaining job-related information, building personal branding, and evaluating organizational reputation prior to making job application decisions (Novitasari & Mauludin, 2025). The use of social media as a recruitment tool (social media recruitment) becomes a crucial variable influencing job application intention among Generation Z (Segarwati et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the relationship between social media recruitment and job application intention is not merely direct but involves underlying psychological and perceptual mechanisms (Demir & Günaydın, 2023; Khan, 2024). One of the key variables influencing this relationship is employer branding. Employer branding refers to an organization's efforts to build and communicate its image as an attractive employer by conveying organizational values, culture, and work experiences to prospective employees (Ambler & Barrow, 2021; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2022). For Generation Z, employer branding plays a vital role, as this cohort tends to prioritize value alignment, authenticity, and meaningful work experiences when selecting potential employers (Indrahanif et al., 2025). Therefore, employer branding can be positioned as a mediating variable that explains how social media recruitment influences job application intention.

Previous empirical studies by Wibowo et al. (2025) have demonstrated that both social media and employer branding significantly influence Generation Z's intention to apply for jobs. The use of social media as a recruitment platform has been shown to enhance accessibility, broaden outreach, and foster interactive communication between organizations and potential applicants (Huneety, 2023). Moreover, studies conducted in Indonesia, particularly in Yogyakarta and Solo Raya, indicate that social media recruitment significantly affects job application intention, especially when the information presented is professional, engaging, and credible (Novitasari & Mauludin, 2025). Similarly, employer branding communicated through social media has been found to positively influence perceived organizational attractiveness and job application intention (Indrahanif et al., 2025).

Despite these findings, several research gaps remain. Most prior studies tend to focus on the direct effect of social media on job application intention or position employer branding as an independent variable rather than as a mediating mechanism explaining the relationship between variables. As a result, a comprehensive understanding of how social media recruitment influences job application intention through employer branding remains limited, particularly in the Indonesian context (Novitasari & Mauludin, 2025). Additionally, many studies are constrained by specific samples, such as university students in certain regions, which limits the

generalizability of findings across the broader Generation Z population. Considering that Gen Z is projected to become the dominant workforce in the near future, a more comprehensive understanding of their preferences toward digital recruitment strategies is essential for organizational sustainability (Lenasri, 2025).

Based on these considerations, the novelty of this study lies in integrating social media recruitment, employer branding, and job application intention within a single conceptual framework by positioning employer branding as a mediating variable. This approach aims to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying Generation Z's job application decisions in the digital era. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media recruitment on Generation Z's job application intention, both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of employer branding. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of human resource management literature, particularly in the areas of digital recruitment and employer branding.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. The Effect of Social Media Recruitment on Intention to Apply

Utilizing social media as a recruitment tool enables organizations to disseminate job vacancy information rapidly, widely, and interactively to prospective applicants, particularly Generation Z, who are digital natives. From the perspective of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), an individual's acceptance of technology is primarily influenced by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Venkatesh et al., 2021). Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which individuals believe that using a particular system can enhance their performance, while perceived ease of use relates to the degree to which the system is considered free of effort (Zhao et al., 2010; Nitzl et al., 2016). In this context, Generation Z tends to perceive social media as an accessible and beneficial platform for obtaining career-related information, thereby encouraging their intention to apply for jobs.

Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains that an individual's intention to engage in a behavior is determined by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2022). Exposure to recruitment content through social media can foster positive attitudes toward the organization, strengthen social influence, and enhance individuals' perceptions of ease in completing online job applications (Rad, 2020; Pham & Vo, 2022). Therefore, the integration of social media into recruitment strategies not only improves access to information but also plays a crucial role in shaping job seekers' behavioral intentions, particularly among Generation Z.

H1: Social media recruitment has a positive effect on intention to apply.

2.2. The Effect of Employer Branding on Intention to Apply

Employer branding represents a company's image and reputation as a workplace, which is communicated to prospective employees. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2022), strong employer branding enhances organizational attractiveness by conveying relevant functional, emotional, and psychological values to potential applicants. In this context, employer branding can be understood as a strategic effort to shape perceptions and differentiate an organization from its competitors by emphasizing its unique employment value proposition (Bharadwaj, 2024). For Generation Z, factors such as an inclusive work culture, flexibility, opportunities for personal development, and organizational social values are key considerations when selecting a workplace (Indrahanif et al., 2025). Employer branding plays a crucial role in forming initial perceptions and influencing the attractiveness of an organization among prospective applicants.

Based on Signaling Theory, information communicated by organizations through employer branding functions as a signal of organizational quality to prospective applicants (Connelly et al., 2022). In situations characterized by information asymmetry, job seekers rely on these signals to evaluate organizational attributes, including reputation, values, and work environment. Positive signals are likely to enhance perceived organizational attractiveness and subsequently encourage job application intention. This argument is supported by prior research indicating that employer branding significantly influences job application interest among Generation Z, thereby reinforcing its strategic role in shaping applicants' perceptions and behavioral intentions toward organizations (Nggandung, 2025).

H2: Employer branding has a positive effect on intention to apply.

2.3. Employer Branding as a Mediator Variable

The use of social media as a recruitment tool not only exerts a direct influence on job application intention but also plays a crucial role in shaping a company's employer branding. Through visual content, storytelling, and interactive two-way communication, social media enables organizations to convey their identity and organizational values more authentically to Generation Z. This process allows prospective applicants to develop initial perceptions of the organization, which subsequently influence its attractiveness as a workplace. Prior studies indicate that the utilization of social media in recruitment is positively associated with the development of employer branding and increased job application intention (Huneety, 2023).

Based on Signaling Theory, social media functions as a signaling channel through which organizations communicate cues about their quality and characteristics to potential applicants (Connelly et al., 2022). In conditions of information asymmetry, individuals rely on these signals to evaluate organizational attributes, including reputation, values, and work environment. A positive employer branding signal enhances perceived organizational attractiveness and encourages job application intention. Empirical evidence also suggests that mediating variables such as employer branding strengthen the relationship between digital recruitment practices and job application intention among Generation Z. This is consistent with the findings of Nggandung (2025), which demonstrate that employer branding mediates the relationship between social media and job application interest. Therefore, employer branding is positioned as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media recruitment and Generation Z's job application intention.

H3: Employer branding mediates the effect of social media recruitment on intention to apply.

Figure 1 illustrates the suggested conceptual model exploring the connections between social media, employer branding, and the intention to apply. It is proposed that social media has a direct impact on the intention to apply (H1), and similarly, employer branding also exerts a direct influence on the intention to apply (H2). Additionally, it is suggested that employer branding mediates the link between social media and the intention to apply (H3), implying that social media can influence views of employer branding, which in turn boosts candidates' intention to apply. The model highlights the direct and indirect impacts of digital recruitment methods on intentions to apply for jobs.

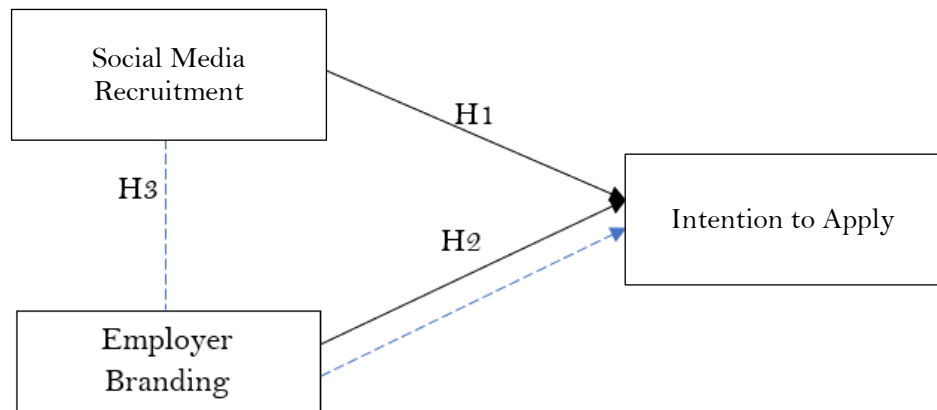


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among variables, namely social media utilization as a recruitment tool, employer branding, and Generation Z's job application intention. The primary objective is to analyze both direct and indirect effects, particularly the mediating role of employer branding in influencing job application intention. Data were collected through an online survey targeting Generation Z individuals in Indonesia who actively use social media and have experience or interest in job searching. The data collection process was conducted between January and February 2026, encompassing questionnaire development, distribution, and data analysis stages.

This study's population comprises Generation Z individuals aged 18 to 27 in Indonesia who routinely use social media for job-related information. A purposive sampling method was utilized, with requirements including regular engagement with platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or LinkedIn, and previous experience in finding job postings via social media. A total of 110 participants were gathered, which is deemed sufficient for SEM-PLS analysis, especially in explanatory studies that include mediation models (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2019). The study does not limit respondents to specific job search platforms but instead focuses on their perceptions of social media as a recruitment medium.

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The tool comprised closed-ended questions evaluated using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Questionnaire items were created based on established theories and previous empirical research concerning recruitment, employer branding, and job-seeking behavior. A pre-test was conducted prior to full distribution to ensure clarity, contextual relevance, and ease of understanding. Ethical considerations were maintained by ensuring voluntary participation, respondent anonymity, and data confidentiality (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

This study includes three main variables: social media as a recruitment tool (independent variable), employer branding (mediating variable), and intention to apply (dependent variable). Social media utilization is measured through indicators such as information accessibility, interactivity, and the attractiveness of recruitment content. Employer branding reflects perceptions of organizational reputation, economic value, and career development opportunities, while intention to apply is measured through indicators of job attraction and behavioral intention.

Data analysis utilized Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software, a common approach for examining intricate

connections between latent variables. The evaluation focused on the measurement model (outer model), assessing convergent validity (outer loading ≥ 0.70 ; AVE ≥ 0.50), discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings, and reliability testing utilizing Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (≥ 0.70) (Rasoolimanesh, 2022; Li & Lay, 2024). The structural model (inner model) was assessed using R^2 values, path coefficients, and hypothesis testing based on t-statistics (>1.96) and p-values (<0.05) obtained through bootstrapping (Henseler et al., 2009). Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted using specific indirect effects, supported by effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) through blindfolding.

4. Results

This study involved 110 Generation Z respondents aged 18-27 who had experience searching for job openings through social media. Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms, in line with the characteristics of Generation Z, who have high levels of digital literacy and are accustomed to using the internet and social media in their daily activities (Ananda & Santosa, 2024). Respondent profiles are presented based on gender, age, and the social media platform used to search for job openings.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Gender	Male	36	32.73%
	Female	74	67.27%
Age Group	18–21 years	56	50.91%
	21–23 years	42	38.18%
	24–27 years	12	10.91%
Social Media Platform	Instagram	53	48.18%
	LinkedIn	26	23.64%
	TikTok	10	9.09%
	Others	21	19.09%
Total		110	100%

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of respondents are female, accounting for 67.27% (74 individuals), while male respondents represent 32.73% (36 individuals). In terms of age distribution, the dominant group is those aged 18–21 years (50.91%), followed by 21–23 years (38.18%) and 24–27 years (10.91%). All respondents fall within the 18–27 age range, which aligns with the purposive sampling criteria established in this study. Regarding social media usage, Instagram emerges as the most frequently used platform (48.18%), followed by LinkedIn (23.64%), others (19.09%), and TikTok (9.09%). The dominance of Instagram indicates that Generation Z not only utilizes visually oriented platforms for entertainment but also actively uses them as a source of recruitment information.

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of Generation Z's perceptions of each research variable, namely the use of Social Media Recruitment (SMR), Employer Branding (EB), and Intention to Apply (ITA). Measurements used a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A mean value greater than or equal to 3.41 is categorized as high, indicating a positive perception of respondents towards the measured variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

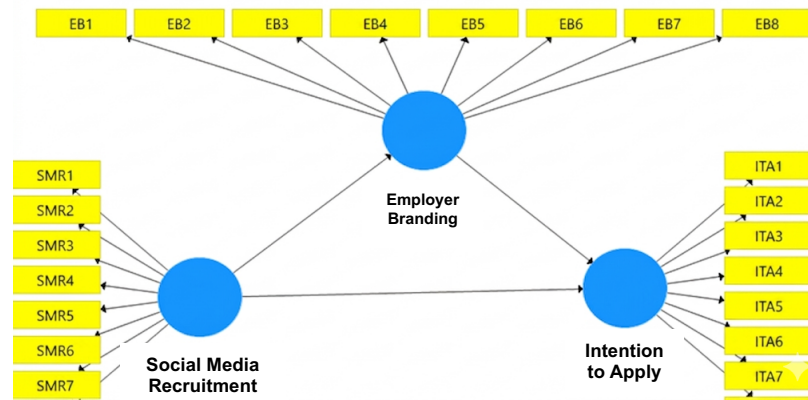


Figure 2. PLS-Model

Figure 2 illustrates a PLS-SEM model where social media recruitment impacts both employer branding and intention to apply, with employer branding additionally influencing intention to apply, creating a mediating relationship. The indicators represent reflective measurements of each latent construct, where observed variables are manifestations of underlying factors. This structure illustrates both the measurement model and the structural relationships, indicating a causal pathway among variables. It also highlights the role of employer branding as an intervening variable that strengthens the effect of social media recruitment on job application intention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical

Variable	Indicator	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Social Media Recruitment (SMR)	SMR1	110	2	5	4.12	0.73	High
	SMR2	110	2	5	4.05	0.78	
	SMR3	110	1	5	3.98	0.81	
	SMR4	110	2	5	4.10	0.74	
	SMR5	110	1	5	3.95	0.83	
	SMR6	110	2	5	4.08	0.76	
	SMR7	110	2	5	4.15	0.71	
	SMR8	110	1	5	4.02	0.79	
Employer Branding (EB)	EB1	110	2	5	4.18	0.69	High
	EB2	110	2	5	4.10	0.72	
	EB3	110	1	5	4.05	0.80	
	EB4	110	2	5	4.12	0.74	
	EB5	110	2	5	4.08	0.77	
	EB6	110	1	5	4.00	0.82	
	EB7	110	2	5	4.14	0.73	
	EB8	110	1	5	4.06	0.79	
Intention to Apply (ITA)	ITA1	110	2	5	4.20	0.70	High
	ITA2	110	2	5	4.15	0.74	
	ITA3	110	1	5	4.08	0.81	
	ITA4	110	2	5	4.10	0.76	
	ITA5	110	1	5	4.05	0.82	
	ITA6	110	2	5	4.12	0.73	
	ITA7	110	2	5	4.18	0.71	
	ITA8	110	1	5	4.09	0.80	

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for all research variables, including social media recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply, based on

Likert-scale measurements. The mean scores for all indicators range from 3.95 to 4.20, indicating that respondents generally exhibit a high level of agreement with the measured constructs. The intention to apply a variable demonstrates the highest mean values (up to 4.20), suggesting a strong tendency among Generation Z respondents to express interest in applying for jobs. Employer branding also shows consistently high mean scores (approximately 4.00–4.18), reflecting positive perceptions of organizational reputation, values, and career development opportunities. Meanwhile, social media recruitment displays slightly more variation, with mean values ranging from 3.95 to 4.15, yet still within the high category. The standard deviation values, which range from 0.69 to 0.83, indicate relatively low dispersion, suggesting that respondents' answers are fairly consistent and clustered around the mean, a key characteristic of descriptive statistical analysis. These findings demonstrate that respondents share similar positive perceptions across all variables examined in this study.

Table 3. Outer Loading, Validity, and Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Social Media Recruitment (SMR)	SMR1	0.798	0.827	0.835	0.885	0.659
	SMR5	0.750				
	SMR7	0.855				
	SMR8	0.840				
Employer Branding (EB)	EB3	0.820	0.861	0.862	0.906	0.706
	EB5	0.826				
	EB7	0.875				
	EB8	0.838				
Intention to Apply (ITA)	ITA2	0.847	0.889	0.891	0.918	0.692
	ITA3	0.839				
	ITA4	0.798				
	ITA7	0.840				
	ITA8	0.834				

Table 3 indicates that all selected indicators possessed outer loading values between 0.750 and 0.875, surpassing the suggested threshold of 0.70, which reflects strong indicator reliability and convergent validity. Every indicator strongly captured its related constructs of social media recruitment, employer branding, and application intent, while the pruning procedure guaranteed that only valid and trustworthy items were included in the subsequent phase. Outer loading values exceeding 0.70 suggest that the indicator exhibits a strong relationship with the latent variable and effectively measures the desired construct. Additionally, the consistently elevated loading values across all variables suggest that the measurement model is of high quality and suitable for advancing to the structural model evaluation phase.

Table 3 presents the results of construct reliability and validity, showing that all variables meet the recommended thresholds. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.827 to 0.889, and Composite Reliability values range from 0.885 to 0.918, both exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.659 to 0.706, surpassing the threshold of 0.50, which confirms adequate convergent validity. The rho_A values, which range from 0.835 to 0.891, further support the reliability of the constructs. These results indicate that all constructs of social media recruitment, employer branding, and intention to apply are measured reliably and are suitable for further structural model analysis.

Table 4. Fornell-Lacker Test

Construct	Intention to Apply	Employer Branding	Social Media Recruitment
Intention to Apply	0.832		
Employer Branding	0.814	0.840	
Social Media Recruitment	0.768	0.773	0.812

Table 4 reports the assessment of discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which examines whether each construct demonstrates greater variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. The diagonal elements, representing the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), are 0.832 for intention to apply, 0.840 for employer branding, and 0.812 for social media recruitment. These values are higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, where intention to apply correlates with employer branding at 0.814 and with social media recruitment at 0.768, while employer branding correlates with social media recruitment at 0.773. This pattern indicates that each construct shares more variance with its respective indicators than with other constructs, thereby satisfying the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Consequently, the results confirm that all constructs are empirically distinct and that the measurement model demonstrates adequate discriminant validity for subsequent structural analysis.

Table 5. Structural Model Evaluation

Aspect	Variable	Value	Category / Interpretation
R-Square (R^2)	Intention to Apply	0.710	Substantial
	Employer Branding	0.597	Moderate
R-Square Adjusted	Intention to Apply	0.705	—
	Employer Branding	0.593	—
Effect Size (f^2)	Social Media Recruitment → Intention to Apply	0.094	Small–Medium
	Employer Branding → Intention to Apply	0.232	Medium–Large
	Social Media Recruitment → Employer Branding	0.489	Large
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)	Intention to Apply	0.468	Predictive Relevance
	Employer Branding	0.373	Predictive Relevance

Table 5 presents the evaluation of the structural model, indicating that the model demonstrates satisfactory explanatory and predictive power. The R-square (R^2) value for intention to apply is 0.710, which is categorized as substantial, meaning that 71.0% of the variance in intention to apply is explained by social media recruitment and employer branding. Meanwhile, employer branding has an R^2 value of 0.597, categorized as moderate, indicating that 59.7% of its variance is explained by social media recruitment. The adjusted R^2 values (0.705 for intention to apply and 0.593 for employer branding) further confirm the stability of the model. In terms of effect size (f^2), social media recruitment has a small-to-medium effect on intention to apply (0.094), while employer branding shows a medium-to-large effect (0.232), and social media recruitment exerts a large effect on employer branding (0.489). Additionally, the Q^2 values for intention to apply (0.468) and employer branding (0.373) indicate strong predictive relevance, suggesting that the model has good capability in predicting endogenous constructs.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Path	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Std. Dev.	t-statistics	P-value	Decision
H1: Social Media						
Recruitment → Intention to Apply	0.347	0.349	0.093	3.726	0.000	Supported
H2: Employer						
Branding → Intention to Apply	0.546	0.547	0.087	6.275	0.000	Supported
H3: Social Media						
Recruitment → Employer Branding → Intention to Apply	0.422	0.424	0.081	5.220	0.000	Supported

Table 6 displays the findings of hypothesis testing, showing that every suggested relationship is statistically significant and validated. The link between social media recruitment and the intention to apply (H1) has a positive coefficient of 0.347, accompanied by a t-statistic of 3.726 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant direct impact. Additionally, employer branding shows a more substantial positive effect on the intention to apply (H2), with a coefficient of 0.546, a t-statistic of 6.275, and a p-value of 0.000, revealing a highly significant connection. Furthermore, the indirect influence of social media recruitment on the intention to apply via employer branding (H3) produces a coefficient of 0.422, alongside a t-statistic of 5.220 and a p-value of 0.000, validating the mediating function of employer branding. These results indicate that both direct and indirect influences play a significant role in clarifying Generation Z's intention to apply for jobs.

5. Discussion

This study's findings indicate that social media recruitment has a positive and statistically significant impact on Generation Z's job application intentions, validating the efficiency of platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok as modern recruitment tools. This relationship can be analyzed using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which argues that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are crucial factors in the adoption of technology (Venkatesh et al., 2021; Arisanti & Mardalis, 2025). In this context, Generation Z perceives social media as an accessible and beneficial medium for obtaining career-related information, thereby increasing their engagement in job search activities. Moreover, Social Influence Theory provides additional explanatory power by highlighting how exposure to interactive and visually engaging recruitment content shapes job-seeking behavior through mechanisms such as compliance and identification (Kelman, 2023). These findings are consistent with prior empirical studies by Ananda and Santosa (2024) and Novitasari and Mauludin (2025), which emphasize the importance of interactivity and visual appeal in enhancing job application intention, particularly given the dominance of Instagram usage among respondents.

In addition, employer branding is found to exert a stronger and more dominant positive effect on job application intention, indicating that Generation Z places substantial importance on organizational image, values, and reputation. This result aligns with Signaling Theory, which suggests that employer branding functions as a signal of organizational quality in situations characterized by information asymmetry (Connelly et al., 2022). Positive organizational signals such as an inclusive work culture, opportunities for career development, and purpose-driven missions enhance perceived organizational attractiveness and influence applicants' behavioral intentions (Nggandung, 2025). The consistently high mean scores of employer branding indicators further indicate that these attributes are highly valued

and well perceived by Generation Z, reinforcing their role in shaping employment decisions. This finding corroborates previous research by Indrahanif et al. (2025), which highlights the critical role of employer branding in attracting young talent in the digital era.

Furthermore, the results confirm that employer branding significantly mediates the relationship between social media recruitment and job application intention. This suggests that the influence of social media operates not only through direct exposure but also, more importantly, through the formation of favorable perceptions regarding the employer (Ajzen, 2022). The magnitude of the indirect effect, which exceeds the direct effect, indicates that employer branding serves as a key psychological mechanism translating social media engagement into concrete behavioral intentions. The strong relationship between social media recruitment and employer branding also underscores the importance of consistent, authentic, and value-driven communication across digital platforms. Organizations that effectively utilize visual storytelling, employee testimonials, and meaningful content are more likely to strengthen both awareness and perceived attractiveness among Generation Z candidates.

From a broader perspective, the structural model explains a substantial proportion of variance in job application intention, highlighting the critical role of social media and employer branding within the context of digital recruitment. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating multiple frameworks, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (2022), Signaling Theory, and the Resource-Based View by Barney (2021), in explaining Generation Z's job-seeking behavior. In practice, the findings offer valuable implications for organizations and human resource practitioners in designing integrated digital recruitment strategies. Specifically, companies are encouraged to optimize their social media presence not only as a tool for disseminating job information but also as a strategic platform for developing a strong and authentic employer brand. Aligning organizational values with Generation Z's preferences, such as flexibility, inclusivity, career growth, and social impact, has been empirically demonstrated to significantly enhance job application intention (Nggandung, 2025).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that both social media recruitment and employer branding significantly influence Generation Z's intention to apply for jobs. Social media functions as an effective recruitment channel by delivering accessible, interactive, and engaging content that attracts potential applicants. However, employer branding emerges as the most dominant factor, indicating that organizational image, values, and reputation are critical considerations for Generation Z when evaluating employment opportunities. Moreover, employer branding partially mediates the relationship between social media recruitment and job application intention, suggesting that social media exerts not only a direct effect but also an indirect influence through the formation of positive organizational perceptions. These findings imply that organizations should integrate digital recruitment strategies with strong employer branding initiatives by optimizing platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok through creative content, authentic employee storytelling, and clear value communication to enhance both short-term engagement and long-term attractiveness.

Despite these contributions, this research faces multiple limitations. Employing purposive sampling with a small sample size could constrain the generalizability of the results, and the cross-sectional design limits the capacity to track changes over time. Moreover, dependence on self-reported information might lead to response bias, and emphasizing specific platforms may not completely capture the ever-

changing landscape of digital recruitment. Consequently, it is suggested that future studies broaden the sample to include wider regions, utilize longitudinal approaches, and integrate more variables like digital literacy or work experience as moderating elements. Investigating a broader spectrum of social media platforms could yield a greater understanding of changing recruitment strategies in the digital age.

References

- Ajzen, I. (2022). Theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
- Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (2021). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4(3), 185–206.
- Ananda, R., & Santosa, B. (2024). Pemanfaatan media sosial dalam rekrutmen Generasi Z. *Jurnal Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia*, 12(2), 145–158.
- Arisanti, N. P., & Mardalis, A. (2025). The influence of social media and e-recruitment on job application interest with company reputation as a mediating variable (Case study on students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta). *Majalah Journal of Islamic Finance and Management*, 5(2), 1919–1948.
- Backhaus, K., & Tikoo, S. (2022). Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. *Career Development International*, 9(5), 501–517.
- Barney, J. B. (2021). *Resource-based theory and competitive advantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bharadwaj, S. (2024). How the interplay of social media usage and online reviews generates intention to apply for a job vacancy: An employer branding-based agenda. *Management Research Review*, 47(3), 441–463.
- Chin, W. W. (1998). The partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling. In G. A. Marcoulides (Ed.), *Modern methods for business research* (pp. 295–336). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, R. D., & Reutzel, C. R. (2022). Signaling theory: A review and assessment. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 39–67.
- Demir, M., & Günaydn, Y. (2023). A digital job application reference: How do social media posts affect the recruitment process? *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 45(2), 457–477.
- Dewa, A. (2023). The influence of work ability, work discipline, and work environment on employee performance. *Economic and Business Horizon*, 2(3), 1–10.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. *Advances in International Marketing*, 20(2), 277–319.
- Huneety. (2023). *Social media recruitment trends in Southeast Asia: How Gen Z is reshaping hiring*. Retrieved on August 15, 2025, from <https://www.huneety.com/en/blog/how-to-effectively-recruit-genz>.
- Indrahanif, M., Pratama, A., & Wibowo, R. (2025). Employer branding melalui media sosial dan daya tarik organisasi bagi Generasi Z. *Eduvest Journal*, 5(1), 23–37.
- Kelman, H. C. (2023). Compliance, identification, and internalization: Three processes of attitude change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2(1), 51–60.
- Khan, R. B. F. (2024). Exploring the impact of employer branding on intention towards job application: The mediating role of social media. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 24(3), 172–180.
- Lenasri, D. (2025). Digital recruitment strategy in the Gen Z workforce. *Human Resource Development Review*, 14(1), 88–102.
- Li, W., & Lay, Y. F. (2024). Examining the reliability and validity of measuring scales related to informatization instructional leadership using the PLS-SEM approach. *Dinamika Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 16(1), 12–32.
- Nggandung, F. (2025). Employer branding dan minat melamar pekerjaan Generasi Z. *Journal Nawalaedu*, 7(1), 44–59.

- Nitzl, C., Roldán, J. L., & Cepeda, G. (2016). Mediation analysis in partial least squares path modeling: Helping researchers discuss more than they tested. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 116(9), 1849–1864.
- Novitasari, A., & Mauludin, R. (2025). Job search behavior Generasi Z di era digital. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi*, 10(1), 88–101.
- Parwati, D., & Mardiyono, A. (2025). The impact of live streaming, free shipping vouchers, and promotions on purchase decisions in TikTok Shop. *Economic and Business Horizon*, 4(1), 1–12.
- Pham, Q. T., & Vo, D. A. (2022). Impact of employer value proposition and social media use on the intention to apply for a job in the IT industry of Vietnam. *The South East Asian Journal of Management*, 16(2), 1–25.
- Rad, B. M., Valmohammadi, C., & Shayan, A. (2020). An empirical investigation of the factors affecting the use of social networks in human resources recruitment. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 43(6), 517–526.
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2022). Discriminant validity assessment in PLS-SEM: A comprehensive composite-based approach. *Data Analysis Perspectives Journal*, 3(2), 1–8.
- Segarwati, Y., Rakhmaniar, A., Azka, Z., Gunawan, I., & Jamaludin, M. (2023). Enhancing brand awareness in TikTok: The impact of marketing communication on social media platforms. *Research Horizon*, 3(5), 554–565.
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2020). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (8th ed.). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2021). User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3), 425–478.
- Wibowo, I. A., Winarno, A., & Fakhri, M. (2025). The influence of e-recruitment on the intention of gen z to apply: the mediating role of employer branding. *Informing Science*, 28(8), 89–99.
- Zhao, X., Lynch, J. G., J., & Chen, Q. (2010). Reconsidering baron and kenny: Myths and truths about mediation analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(2), 197–206.

Acknowledgment

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

Funding Information

This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors.

This work is licensed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).