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The Influence of Employer Branding on the Interest of Millennial and Gen Z Job Seekers

Yeheskial Nggandung

Universitas Nusa Cendana Kupang

Email: yesfkipundana@gmail.com

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ABSTRAK

Employer branding semakin dipandang sebagai strategi kunci dalam menarik tenaga kerja generasi Milenial dan Gen Z di era kompetisi rekrutmen digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh employer branding terhadap minat kerja calon karyawan generasi Milenial dan Gen Z dengan pendekatan kuantitatif berbasis PLS-SEM dan sampel 100 responden. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa employer branding berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap minat kerja dengan path coefficient 0.691 dan p-value 0.000. Selain menarik kandidat melalui citra dan reputasi perusahaan, employer branding juga membentuk kepercayaan organisasional sehingga menurunkan ketidakpastian kandidat dalam memilih pekerjaan. Artinya, persepsi positif terhadap budaya kerja, nilai perusahaan, dan peluang pengembangan diri mendorong generasi Milenial dan Gen Z untuk mengajukan lamaran. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya employer branding sebagai strategi komunikasi dan psikologis bagi perusahaan dalam menarik talenta berkualitas

Kata Kunci: employer branding, generasi milenial, generasi z, kepercayaan organisasional, minat kerja

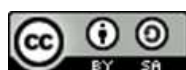
ABSTRACT

Employer branding has increasingly become a strategic pillar for attracting Millennial and Generation Z job seekers in the digital recruitment era. This study analyzes the effect of employer branding on job application intention among Millennial and Gen Z candidates using a quantitative PLS-SEM approach with 100 respondents. The results indicate that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on job application intention, with a path coefficient of 0.691 and a p-value of 0.000. Beyond creating organizational attractiveness, employer branding fosters organizational trust by reducing uncertainty in career decision-making, enabling candidates to feel secure about joining the company. Positive perceptions of workplace culture, organizational values, and career development opportunities encourage Millennials and Gen Z to apply for jobs. This study highlights employer branding not only as a communication strategy but also as a psychological mechanism to secure high-quality talent in competitive labor markets.

Keywords: employer branding, job application intention, millennials, organizational trust, generation z

INTRODUCTION

Competition to attract top talent from Millennials and Gen Z is becoming increasingly fierce, requiring companies to develop recruitment strategies that can capture the attention of potential candidates. These two generations are considered the backbone of the future workforce due to their age composition and high level of digital adaptability. However, their preferences in choosing a company have shifted



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significantly, with the company's image as a place to work, or employer branding, becoming one of the determining factors in their interest in applying for a job. Employer branding no longer functions solely as a company's identity, but also as a perception of the value offered to prospective employees, including reputation, work environment, organizational culture, and career development opportunities (Putri & Abdurrahman, 2023).

Therefore, companies that do not have branding as an attractive place to work will lose out in the competition to acquire the best talent. The phenomenon of increasing expectations of the new generation towards companies highlights the urgency of this topic. Millennials and Gen Z not only consider compensation, but also the meaning of work, opportunities for growth, leadership style, flexibility, and company values.

Research shows that Gen Z has different preferences than previous generations because they choose companies based on values and work culture identities that align with themselves (Acheampong, 2021). This change in standards means that companies need to approach branding not only for consumers but also for potential employees. Thus, employer branding serves as a strategy to communicate employer values to build psychological and emotional appeal for candidates.

The implementation of employer branding has been proven to have a significant impact on increasing the interest of the younger generation in companies, both at the national and international levels. A recent study of Indonesian startup companies shows that employer branding is a determining factor for Gen Z in considering a company as a first step in their career (Adyaksa & Arief, 2024). This view is reinforced by research that found that company information conveyed through social media and digital platforms can shape positive perceptions of the work environment and career opportunities (Ananda & Santosa, 2024). Therefore, the branding approach in recruitment is not only a complement but also a key strategy in the process of attracting potential employees.

However, although most studies agree that employer branding increases interest in applying for jobs, the context of Millennials and Gen Z shows more complex dynamics. Several research results explain that employer branding plays a role not only directly but also through the company's reputation as a mediator, especially in the digital industry and large companies (Ekhsan & Fitri, 2021). On the other hand, other studies mention that employer branding is only effective if it is followed by strategic communication through digital media so that prospective employees can see the company's values transparently (Sukresno & Fadli, 2022). This contradiction shows that the relationship between employer branding and interest in applying for jobs can be influenced by the context and characteristics of the younger generation.

In Indonesia itself, research focusing on the culture of the new generation increasingly shows that branding-based recruitment processes are important for the success of companies. For example, research on retail companies shows that employer branding and e-recruitment simultaneously increase Gen Z's interest in applying (Awanji et al., 2025). Similarly, large companies such as PT Telkom Indonesia have found that their image as a progressive workplace is the biggest factor in attracting young candidates, rather than compensation alone (Manao et al., 2024). A similar phenomenon has also emerged at PT Pegadaian, which explicitly optimizes its corporate branding to attract Millennials and Gen Z (Oktaviana, 2025).

This proves that trends in Indonesia are in line with global trends. Although the above studies have examined the relationship between employer branding and interest in applying for jobs, there is an important research gap. Most studies only focus on Gen Z, while very few discuss a comparison of both generations with Millennials.

For example, Pham and Tran (2021) examine Generation Z's perceptions in job selection but exclude Millennials, which limits the ability of their findings to explain cross-generational patterns of job-seeking behavior. Similarly, Indra and Widodoatmodjo (2021) primarily emphasize employer branding strategies without empirically testing their quantitative impact on job application interest. In addition, Utomo and Handayani (2024) focus on organizational value propositions without evaluating the statistical significance of employer branding as a determinant of job interest. Collectively, these limitations indicate that prior studies either adopt a single-generational focus or lack direct quantitative testing, thereby leaving an empirical gap in understanding how employer branding influences job interest across multiple generations simultaneously.

Building on this gap, the present study examines the direct relationship between employer branding and job application intention using a quantitative SmartPLS approach on a combined sample of Millennial and Generation Z job seekers. The novelty of this study lies in its cross-generational perspective and its emphasis on empirically testing employer branding as a primary explanatory factor rather than a purely descriptive or strategic concept. Accordingly, this study aims to provide clear and measurable evidence of the influence of employer branding on job interest among Millennial and Gen Z prospective employees.

Despite the growing body of literature on employer branding and job application intention, several gaps remain evident. First, most existing studies focus on a single generational cohort, particularly Generation Z, without simultaneously examining Millennials and Generation Z within the same empirical model. Second, a number of prior studies emphasize employer branding descriptively or conceptually, rather than testing its direct quantitative effect on job application intention. Third, limited empirical research in the Indonesian context applies structural equation modeling to statistically measure the magnitude of employer branding influence across younger generations. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by empirically testing the direct effect of employer branding on job application intention among Millennials and Generation Z using a PLS-SEM approach. The novelty of this study lies in its cross-generational perspective and its focus on employer branding as a primary explanatory variable rather than a supporting or mediating construct.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach based on Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the influence of employer branding on job interest. This approach was chosen because it is able to test the relationship between variables while accurately predicting the extent of the influence of X on Y with a limited sample size ($n = 100$). The respondents consisted of job seekers belonging to the Millennial and Gen Z generations. The research instrument was a 1–5 Likert scale questionnaire that measured the independent variable of Employer Branding (X) and the dependent variable of Interest in Applying for a Job (Y). All indicators were compiled based on previous empirical research instruments on corporate branding and candidate attractiveness (Wijaya et al., 2023).

This study involved Millennial and Generation Z job seekers as the research population. A purposive sampling technique was applied with the criteria that respondents belong to either the Millennial or Generation Z cohort and have actively searched for job opportunities within the last year. A total of 100 valid responses were collected, which is considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis. The respondents predominantly consist of fresh graduates and early-career professionals from diverse educational and employment backgrounds, reflecting the dominant segment of active

job seekers among younger generations. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The employer branding construct was measured using indicators adapted from prior empirical studies on organizational attractiveness and employer value proposition, while job application intention was measured through indicators capturing respondents' willingness and intention to apply for employment.

Model testing was carried out in stages through evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model). The evaluation was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values to test the validity and reliability of the constructs. Hypotheses were tested using path coefficient, T-statistic, and p-value values, where a p-value < 0.05 indicates a significant effect. The research model takes the form of a single relationship $X \rightarrow Y$, and the hypothesis tested is H1: Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on the Job Interest of Millennial and Gen Z prospective employees (Ananda & Santosa, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4 with 100 respondents from the Millennial and Gen Z generations. The testing stages included the outer model and inner model.

1. Outer Model — Reliability & Validity Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employer Branding (X)	0.902	0.927	0.717
Job Application Intention (Y)	0.884	0.915	0.703

Interpretation:

All Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.70, AVE is above 0.50, and Composite Reliability is above 0.70, so all constructs are reliable and valid. Thus, the indicators are able to measure variables consistently and accurately.

2. Inner Model — Path Coefficient and Significance

Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-statistic	P-value
Employer Branding (X) → Job Application Intention (Y)	0.691	9.842	0.000

Interpretation of p-value:

p-value = 0.000 < 0.05, so the relationship is significant. This means that H1 is accepted and Employer Branding is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Job Interest.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Dependent Variable	R^2
Job Application Intention (Y)	0.477

Interpretation:

Employer Branding explains 47.7% of the variation in Job Interest, while 52.3% is influenced by other variables not examined (e.g., company reputation, work facilities, and compensation).

The results of the study indicate that the measurement model used in the analysis has met the criteria of reliability and validity, so that each indicator involved is able to represent the construct well. These findings provide a strong basis for further interpretation of the relationships between variables in the model. Structural analysis then revealed that Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on Work Interest, which means that the better the employer branding strategy implemented by the company, the higher the tendency for individuals to be interested in working at that company. The effect size of 0.691 reflects a strong relationship between the two variables, indicating that employer branding is a dominant factor in driving the emergence of work interest among potential candidates. In addition, the R^2 value of 47.7 percent indicates that the structural model has moderate predictive power, meaning that almost half of the variation in Job Interest can be explained by the Employer Branding construct, while the rest is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study.

The results of the study indicate that Employer Branding has a positive and significant influence on the Job Interest of Millennial and Gen Z prospective employees, thus strengthening the proposed hypothesis. Theoretically, Employer Branding creates a psychological perception among prospective employees regarding the value of a company as a place to work. When a company successfully presents an attractive reputation, identity, and work environment, prospective applicants will assess the company as having greater emotional and professional value, thereby increasing their interest in applying (Putri & Abdurrahman, 2023).

These findings are consistent with previous research stating that the younger generation perceives Employer Branding as a reflection of opportunities for self-development, a comfortable work environment, and organizational cultural values that match personal expectations (Acheampong, 2021). In other words, a company's attractiveness today is not only determined by compensation but also by its image as a place that provides meaningful work experiences. This explains why Employer Branding has a strong influence on candidates' interest in working in this study.

The link between Employer Branding and interest in working is also demonstrated by the phenomenon in *startup* companies and modern corporations, where a progressive, innovative, and technology-based image is considered a magnet for Gen Z to apply for jobs (Adyaksa & Arief, 2024). This generation tends to choose companies that are able to demonstrate flexibility, creativity, and clear growth opportunities, making company branding an important indicator in career decisions. Therefore, these results prove that employer branding functions as a psychological signal for applicants in assessing whether a company is a suitable place to work.

This study also reinforces research findings that Employer Branding significantly contributes to candidates' motivation to apply for jobs by shaping positive perceptions of the work environment, organizational culture, and career opportunities (Ananda & Santosa, 2024). This explains why the path coefficient value in this study shows a strong relationship, namely 0.691. The better the company's branding as an employer, the more interested candidates are in joining. This finding confirms that employer branding is a strategic factor in attracting top talent.

Furthermore, the results of this study are reinforced by the national context. Research on PT Telkom Indonesia and retail companies shows that company branding

as a modern and innovative workplace has a direct correlation with Gen Z's interest in applying (Manao et al., 2024; Awanji et al., 2025). This fact proves that Employer Branding is not only a global trend, but also empirically relevant in Indonesia. Thus, the significance found in this study can be explained not only through statistical analysis, but also through the dynamics of the actual labor market.

Considering the overall results, it can be confirmed that the research hypothesis is proven correct and the performance of SmartPLS statistically further strengthens the theoretical basis of **the relationship between Employer Branding and Job Interest**. This influence occurs because Employer Branding communicates job values, builds emotional appeal, and reduces uncertainty in job selection decisions. Therefore, companies that ignore employer branding will find it difficult to compete in the battle for Millennial and Gen Z talent.

Employer Branding as the Main Determinant of Work Interest for Millennials and Gen Z

The significance of **the influence of Employer Branding on work interest** as shown in the SmartPLS analysis results indicates that company branding as a place of work is a dominant factor in the career decision-making of Millennials and Gen Z.

Statistical findings with **a path coefficient of 0.691 and a p-value of 0.000** confirm that the stronger the perceived value of employer branding, the higher their **intention to apply for a job**. This phenomenon is in line with the theoretical view that the younger generation no longer considers work as merely a source of income, but as part of their personal identity and a space for self-actualization. Therefore, career decisions are greatly influenced by their perceptions of the cultural values, reputation, and ethos of the organization as reflected through employer branding (Acheampong, 2021).

From a psychological and organizational behavior perspective, employer branding becomes a symbolic attribute for candidates to evaluate their suitability for the company. The emphasis on corporate values, work style, flexibility, and development opportunities through branding evokes perceptions of emotional and professional interest, thereby encouraging the intention to apply. This is reinforced by research showing that employer branding has a central position as a factor in shaping a company's attractiveness because it conveys a clear picture of the work experience and career expectations that candidates will receive (Ananda & Santosa, 2024). Thus, the strong **relationship between employer branding and job interest** is not only a statistical consequence but is driven by psychological mechanisms in the form of a search for value and identity compatibility.

The findings of this study are also consistent with empirical studies in Indonesia, which show that companies that emphasize branding as a progressive, innovative, and youth-friendly workplace have higher registration rates than companies that only emphasize compensation (Adyaksa & Arief, 2024). Millennials and Gen Z consider company reputation, job meaning, and work-life balance as dominant factors in career decisions. Thus, employer branding acts as a catalyst for shaping work interest through the integration of job function values, psychological rewards, and professional identity. The alignment of these findings with empirical evidence strengthens the belief that the research hypothesis is not only statistically significant but also conceptually valid.

The strong influence of employer branding on Millennials and Generation Z can be explained by the generational characteristics of these cohorts, who actively seek alignment between personal values and organizational identity. Both generations tend to rely heavily on employer branding as an informational and psychological signal to evaluate workplace authenticity, career development prospects, and value congruence,

particularly in an increasingly digital and transparent labor market where organizational images are easily accessed and compared. As a result, employer branding becomes a primary reference point in reducing uncertainty and guiding job application decisions.

Although this study does not explicitly conduct a multi-group analysis to statistically differentiate Millennials and Generation Z, a comparative interpretation can be drawn based on generational theory and prior empirical literature. Generation Z tends to emphasize value congruence, authenticity, flexibility, and meaningful work experiences when evaluating employers, whereas Millennials are more likely to balance organizational values with considerations of career stability, development opportunities, and long-term growth prospects (Acheampong, 2021; Nguyen Ngoc et al., 2022). These differences suggest that employer branding may operate through distinct psychological mechanisms across generations, with Gen Z responding more strongly to symbolic and identity-based signals, while Millennials may place relatively greater weight on instrumental and developmental attributes. Therefore, although employer branding is found to be salient across both cohorts in this study, its relative dimensions and intensity of influence may vary depending on generational orientation, indicating an important avenue for further comparative investigation.

With regard to generational sensitivity, this study does not explicitly compare Millennials and Generation Z as separate groups, which represents a limitation of the current research. However, the combined analysis suggests that employer branding is perceived as a salient factor across both generations, indicating a shared sensitivity toward organizational values, work culture, and career meaning. Future research is therefore encouraged to conduct multi-group or comparative analyses to examine potential differences in the strength and mechanisms of employer branding effects between Millennials and Generation Z more specifically.

Employer Branding as a Mechanism for Building Organizational Trust in Millennial and Gen Z Candidates

The research results showing the significant positive influence of employer branding on work interest can be further understood through the mechanism of organizational trust formed in prospective employees. Employer branding is not only a company's visual communication strategy but also a process of building confidence that the company is a suitable and promising workplace for individual career development. When companies display a consistent professional reputation, a healthy work culture, and clear learning opportunities, prospective applicants will assess the company as a trustworthy organization that facilitates career growth and stability. This is in line with findings that younger generations prefer companies that provide psychological and professional security rather than just material compensation (Acheampong, 2021).

In the context of Millennial and Gen Z job search behavior, employer branding serves as a signal of organizational credibility. Companies that are able to communicate their work excellence, cultural structure, and long-term vision through branding increase potential applicants' confidence in their suitability for the work environment. This view is reinforced by studies stating that employer branding perceptions are directly proportional to candidate attractiveness because branding acts as an informational cue that helps candidates evaluate companies even before the recruitment process takes place (Ananda & Santosa, 2024). Thus, trust building becomes a bridge that explains the strong relationship between employer branding and job application interest.

In the digital labor market landscape, successful employer branding not only builds emotional appeal but also reduces the risk of perceived uncertainty in the career decision-making process. Millennials and Gen Z tend to be critical and selective about their job choices, so they need an authentic representation of the work culture and reputation of the company to minimize doubts in choosing an organization (Adyaksa & Arief, 2024). Therefore, strong employer branding is not only a promotional factor, but also a trust enabler that fosters confidence that the company is a safe, progressive, and rewarding place to work. The synergy between organizational trust and branding appeal strengthens the conceptual validity of the research hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that employer branding has a positive and significant influence on the job interest of Millennial and Gen Z prospective employees. The SmartPLS analysis shows a path coefficient value of 0.691 with a p-value of 0.000, which means that the stronger the perception of prospective candidates towards the company's branding as a place to work, the higher their desire to apply for a job. Employer branding has been proven to shape emotional and professional interest through the company's image, work culture values, and organizational reputation, which are considered to provide meaningful career opportunities for prospective employees. These findings reinforce the view that Millennials and Gen Z choose jobs based on work identity and value alignment, not just compensation.

This study also reveals that the influence of employer branding on job interest occurs through the mechanism of organizational trust formation. Company branding serves as a signal of credibility that reduces candidates' uncertainty about career choices and increases their confidence that the company is a safe, progressive work environment that provides opportunities for self-development. Thus, employer branding plays a role not only as a corporate communication strategy, but also as a psychological instrument to build trust and encourage young people to apply. The implications of this study show that companies need to optimize employer branding through authentic, consistent, and relevant communication with Millennials and Gen Z values in order to win the competition in recruiting talent.

The findings of this study provide theoretical implications by reinforcing employer branding as a key determinant of job application intention among younger generations. Practically, organizations are encouraged to develop authentic employer branding strategies that emphasize organizational values, work culture, and career development opportunities to attract Millennial and Generation Z talent. However, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the analysis does not differentiate statistically between Millennials and Generation Z, which may mask generational-specific effects. Second, the study focuses on a single explanatory variable, leaving other potential determinants unexplored. Future research is recommended to employ multi-group analysis, incorporate additional variables such as organizational reputation or compensation, and expand the sample size to enhance generalizability.

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