ENHANCING PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES' INTENTION TO SUBMIT A JOB APPLICATION THROUGH EMPLOYER BRANDING AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE (A CASE STUDY OF PT XYZ)

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Abstract: *PT XYZ has successfully supported the rapidly growing telecommunication industry and raised many companies' names within the industry. Today, PT XYZ is still faced with a challenge in the recruitment process, specifically in terms of attracting prospective talents to submit a job application at the company. Its business model is Business-to-Business (B2B); hence they are less known than a Business-to-Consumer (B2C) company as an employer despite its growth. In the current competitive labor market, organizations compete to have the best people within their organization to achieve their objectives. However, most candidates with high qualifications have more substantial bargaining power and tend to apply for jobs at reputable employers. PT XYZ wants to increase this percentage by attracting top talents who match with its candidate persona as it can increase the chances for future growth and success. In this study, the research model and variables were developed and synthesized from previous research. The drivers of the intention to submit a job application were explored using employer brand attractiveness, consisting of value of interest, social value, economic value, development value, value of cooperation, CSR and citizenship value, and also social media use, intervened by brand equity. One hundred questionnaires were distributed to targeted respondents using non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling. The author analyzed primary data collected in this study using SmartPLS through Structural Equation Model (SEM). This study found social value and development value to be the drivers, significantly increasing the prospective candidates' intention to submit a job application at PT XYZ. Social media use was also found to enhance brand equity; nonetheless, it did not significantly increase the prospective candidates' likelihood of applying for a job to the organization.*

Keywords: *employer branding, social media use, brand equity, intention to submit a job application*

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Introduction

In the era of heated competition and intense rivalry, organizations endeavor to create sustainable competitive advantages not only to generate profit but also to survive in the "battle" and eventually become the market leader in the industry in which they operate. Human resource holds a critical role that can contribute to the organizations' success as one of its importance is to recruit human capital who possesses a high degree of competence and demonstrates a strong willingness to exercise productive behavior. There is a continued demand for skilled workers at present, but due to a lack of capable applicants, hiring the right people to fill the vacant position has become more challenging (Lakshmi & Sohail, 2013).

With the changing paradigm in the context of generations, societies, as well as culture which have become more affected by the rapid change of technology, skilled labor shortage, global rivalry for employees, and an increase in one's tendency to undergo a career change have caused organizations' efforts in the recruitment and selection process to increase (Rampl, 2015; Rampl & Kenning, 2014; Backhaus, 2016; Bellou *et al.*, 2015). Wickham (2010) and Catteeuw, Flynn, & Vonderhorst (2007) shared a similar view. They also believed that the critical factor contributing to the demand for intellectual individuals to transcend the available supply is the growth of the knowledge economy and the need for flexibility and expertise in the workplace that marks the current business environment, which has caused applicants' skills competency requirements to change (Ewing *et al.*, 2002).

In earlier days, the concept of branding might only be linked to marketing strategies and activities since its importance in product market cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, in the current employment environment where employers strive to win the war talent, employer branding has become a strategic HR tool used to attract talents (Rampl & Kenning, 2014). It is considered a discipline that has just surfaced recently, which focuses on building organizations' image as potential employers. Collins & Stevens (2003) and Berthon, Ewing, & Hah (2005) also stated that when job seekers consider applying for a job, the employer's attractiveness and brand equity are two factors that candidates often emphasize.

Employer branding can promote an employer inside-out and distinguish it from other employers and make it seen as a desirable work to place (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Many employers have opted to create an employer branding strategy to attract the right candidates. By doing so, employers can identify important attributes sought by potential employees (Tanwar, 2017). In addition to that, the use of social media in employer branding campaigns and in the recruitment process have increased significantly (Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). Nonetheless, the study on social media recruitment is still limited. Hence, this study aimed to identify the drivers of prospective candidates' intention to submit a job application at PT XYZ.

PT XYZ

PT XYZ is engaged in a diversified telecommunication industry. Along with other industry players, they have succeeded in supporting the rapidly growing telecommunication industry's advancement and raising many companies' names. However, since PT XYZ uses the business-to-business (B2B) model, they are concerned about its popularity as a great employer in the younger generations. PT XYZ believes the company itself is less known than business-to-consumer (B2C) organizations even though it is one of Indonesia's industry leaders and has grown steadily throughout the years.

Although the concept of employer branding is less prevalent in Indonesia than in other countries, PT XYZ realized the importance of acquiring the image as an attractive employer because they believe that it will help them attract highly skilled candidates. In the current competitive labor market, organizations eagers to have the best people within their organizations to achieve their objectives. According to Society for Human Resource Management (2018), 68 percent of HR managers experience difficulties in the hiring process. PT XYZ is also experiencing this; hence it feels less confident about its current and future ability to attract the right people to produce sustainable competitive advantage and deliver value to its customers. Moreover, candidates with high qualifications have more substantial bargaining power. They can freely choose companies to work for compared to those with limited qualifications and tend to apply for jobs only at reputable employers. They are also proven to only available on the job market for a shorter period of time.

One of the indicators that concerned PT XYZ was its last recruitment process for the future managerial position. Out of 2,800 applicants, there were only 723 applicants, or approximately 25.8%, who matched with its candidate preference. PT XYZ wants to improve its candidate pool's quality by increasing the number of applicants who match their candidate persona. By attracting top talents to apply for jobs at the company, it can increase the chances for future growth and success as they are mainly the best of the best people with a vast potential that the company can optimize. Nonetheless, PT XYZ still hardly knows what attracts prospective candidates to submit a job application at the company.

In addition to that, starting from 2020, Millennials are expected to dominate the global workforce, and in the following years, Generation Z will have started to enter the workforce. Millennials and Generation Z have several differences in characteristics and expectations from the previous generations, which means that employer cannot rely on the same methods and strategies that have been implemented so far in the recruitment process (Mičík & Mičudovà, 2018). PT XYZ believes they can increase their candidate pool's quality by knowing the prospective candidates' real drivers of submitting a job application.

In terms of recruiting, just like any other organization, PT XYZ heavily invests in the use of social media to reach potential candidates. The reason is that, as employers, social media allows them to expand their networks. It benefits them to get connected with both active or passive job seekers. However, based on Deloitte (2009) and Davison et al. (2011), employers still believe in social media's trickiness since it can quickly destroy their image through social media. Additionally, there might also be some ambiguity regarding social media and the number of applicants considered suitable for a position or whether social media is also causing more unfit applicants. Still, social media use for recruitment looks acceptable, possibly because it is somewhat similar to putting job ads on the internet (Davison et al., 2011). It is also resource-efficient, especially in terms of cost and time (Furu, 2011)

Literature Review

Employer Branding

Human resources have been known as one of the most crucial resources for organizations. Nonetheless, the attraction and recruitment of talented talents remain a challenge for organizations. Due to the skilled-candidates shortage caused by the demand that exceeds the supply, it becomes more vital for organizations to tackle this issue to ensure that they will not

experience any shortage of qualified talents in the future (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). Today, more organizations have decided to invest in employer branding to win the war talent.

The term employer brand was firstly introduced by Ambler & Barrow back in 1996, which stated that organizations should become more people-oriented by developing close relationships with employees, just as the relationships between customers and product brands. According to Alnıaçık *et al.* (2014). The concept of employer branding itself has arisen as the implication of applying marketing principles into human resources.

Santiago (2019) defines employer branding as all benefits offered by organizations to its employees that can create a unique identity in the mind of their current and potential employees and hence can encourage them to stay or increase their intention to join with the organization. Therefore, employer branding is a term that can be used to evoke how organizations communicate their offer both internally and externally. Internal communication is conducted to existing employees in order to maintain their loyalty, while external communication is aimed at prospective employees to promote the organization as a desirable place to work (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Jiang & Iles, 2011).

Based on previous studies, it became apparent that organizations that possess a stronger employer branding attract more talented employees and also able to retain high performer employees (Alnıaçık *et al.,* 2014). In developing a strong and favorable employer branding, organizations need to apprehend the key factors in attracting qualified employees to apply for a job in the organization.

As we all know, there is a tight relation between the quality of employees within an organization and the quality of the products and/or services offered by them. Ambler & Barrow (1996), describe the link as follows.
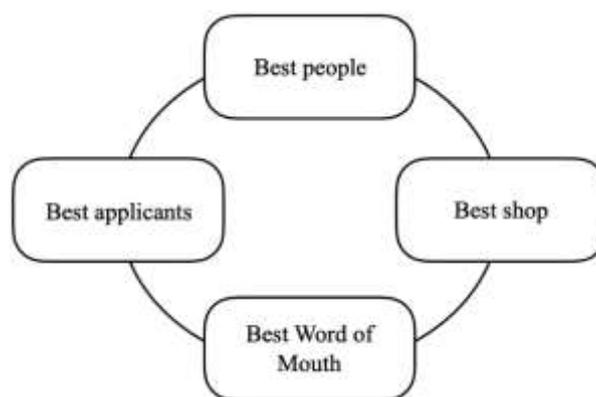
Figure 1: The Link Between The People and Offered Products and Services

In the illustration above, we see that having the best applicants result in the best people within the organization, which then enable the organization to be the best shop for its customers as they can offer the highest quality of products and/or services. The best shop helps organizations to spread positive words about them and eventually lead to the best applicants applying for jobs in the organization.

Employer Branding Attractiveness

Employer branding's ability to draw in future employees signifies an organization's position within potential candidates' minds. One of the substantial competitive edges that employer branding attractiveness conveys is the target audience selection, which is an approach used to attract new talents to the organizations and increase the probability of recruiting those talents. Therefore, organizational attractiveness represents as ideated advantages that potential employees perceive when working for a particular organization. Jiang & Iles (2011) also considered employer brand as one factor that thoroughly draws potential candidates' attention to certain organizations. It can also encourage current employees to remain loyal to the organization they are currently working at. From another perspective, Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012) explained employer branding as an embodiment of the employer's qualitative traits that the targeted candidates consider attractive. Here, the qualitative features refer to the employer's favorable image due to offering material and non-material advantages that distinguish one employer from another employer in the labor market. For this reason, employer branding is said to be a multi-dimensionals construct. In this study, the used dimensions of employer branding attractiveness are value of interest, social value, economic value, development value, value of cooperation, and CSR and Citizenship Value.

Brand Equity

Kotler & Keller (2016) explained that brand equity is the added value provided to products or services offered. Brand equity can be reflected in the way people think, feel, and act in relation to a particular brand. It also consists of various identifiers such as name, sign, symbol, or a mix of these that can serve as a differentiator to distinguish itself from other competitors. They differentiate two major components of brand knowledge: brand awareness and brand image, as the brand equity differentiator.

Generational Shift in The Workplace

Differences in a generation might determine what specific individual wants from their work, what kind of environment they want to work in, and how they want organizations to satisfy their needs and desires (Maier *et al*., 2015). According to Santiago (2019), most Millennials believe in the saying rules are made to be broken where they deny staying only within a job description. Millennials are the first generation that has grown up with the internet. They utilize electronic collaboration and therefore are highly adaptive to technology. Ferri-Reed (2014) stated that Millennials prefer to work in a place that practices transparency to openly share the mission, values, operations, and conflicts. He also believed that Millennials consider the organization's social value more important than its market value. In research carried out by Deloitte (2018) it was mentioned that organizations and senior management teams that have more similarities with Millennial have a greater chance of attracting and retaining the best Millennials talents. While studies on Generation Z's characteristics at the workplace are still limited, they are now arriving at the workplace and will soon represent a significant portion of it. However, in terms of economic value, Deloitte (2018) concluded that Gen Z values salary less than other generation. Nonetheless, they seek for job security and job that is interesting.

Conceptual Framework

Based on PT XYZ's business issue and the literature review, below is the proposed conceptual framework to define the relationships between employer branding attractiveness and social media use, intervened with brand equity, on the intention to submit a job application. The dimensions of employer brand attractiveness are developed based on previous studies, which included both material and non-material attributes.
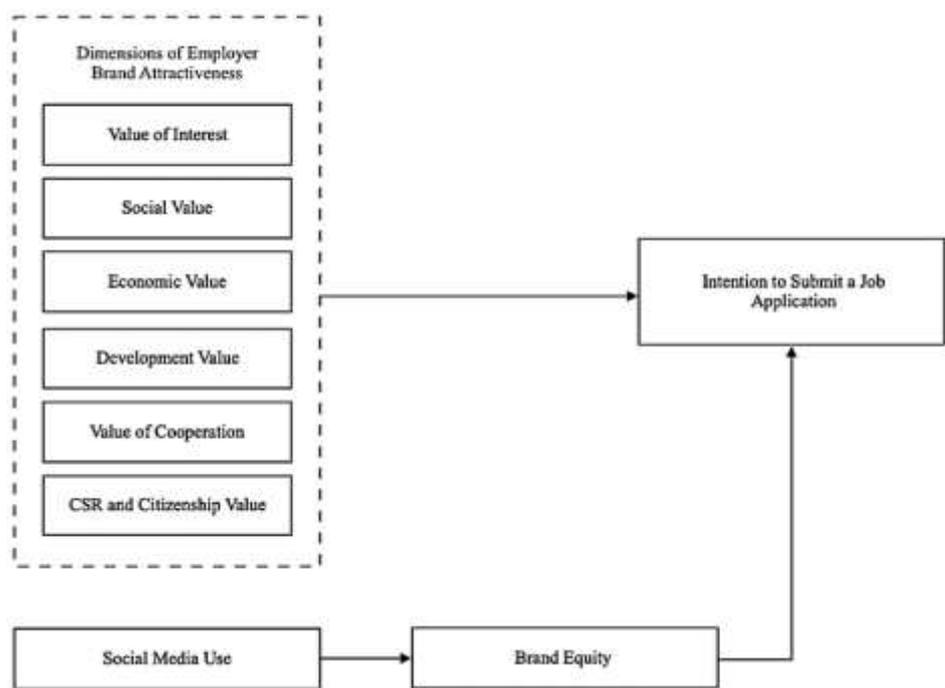
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

The following hypotheses are proposed

H1 : Employer brand attractiveness is positively related to the intention to submit a job application to the organization.
H2 : Social media use is positively related to the organization's brand equity.
**H3** : Brand equity is positively related to the intention to submit a job application to the organization.

Method

This research was conducted to gain insights into the potential candidates' drivers to submit a job application to the organization. Hence, it will enable the organization to formulate a more suitable strategy to attract the "right candidates." The author used quantitative questionnaires to collect primary data from targeted respondents to ensure that differences in their responses to the questions posed can be interpreted. Closed questions were used to permit the inclusion of more variables as it enables respondents to answer more questions within a short time. The targeted population of this research was both male and female who are either last year students or fresh graduate from six reputable universities **in Indonesia and** intend to submit a job application at PT XYZ. In total, there were of 27 questions in the questionnaire to measure all constructs used in this study. All questions were developed from previous studies and measured using 5-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. In order to estimate the structural model, the author used SmartPLS 3.0 to create PLS-SEM modelling method.

Results and Findings

The total number of participants came to 100 respondents, consisted of 46 male respondents and 54 female respondents. Most of them (73 percent) were currently pursuing or had a bachelor's degree, the rest were master's degree candidate or graduate. By performing PLS-SEM path model analysis, validity and reliability of each constructs were evaluated. To ensure

validity, the AVE value of each construct was higher than 0.50 and the value of cross loadings indicated no indicator loaded found to be higher on an opposing construct. As for reliability, Cronbach's alpha value of all constructs were greater than 0.70. The significance of the proposed research model was tested by using $R2$ value was used as a reference. The result showed that in terms of brand equity, the variable of social media use explained only 21.8% of the variance in it. As for intention to submit a job application, employer branding attractiveness and brand equity could explain 60.4% of the variance. Figure 3 below showed the result of the bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 subsamples to ensure higher stability
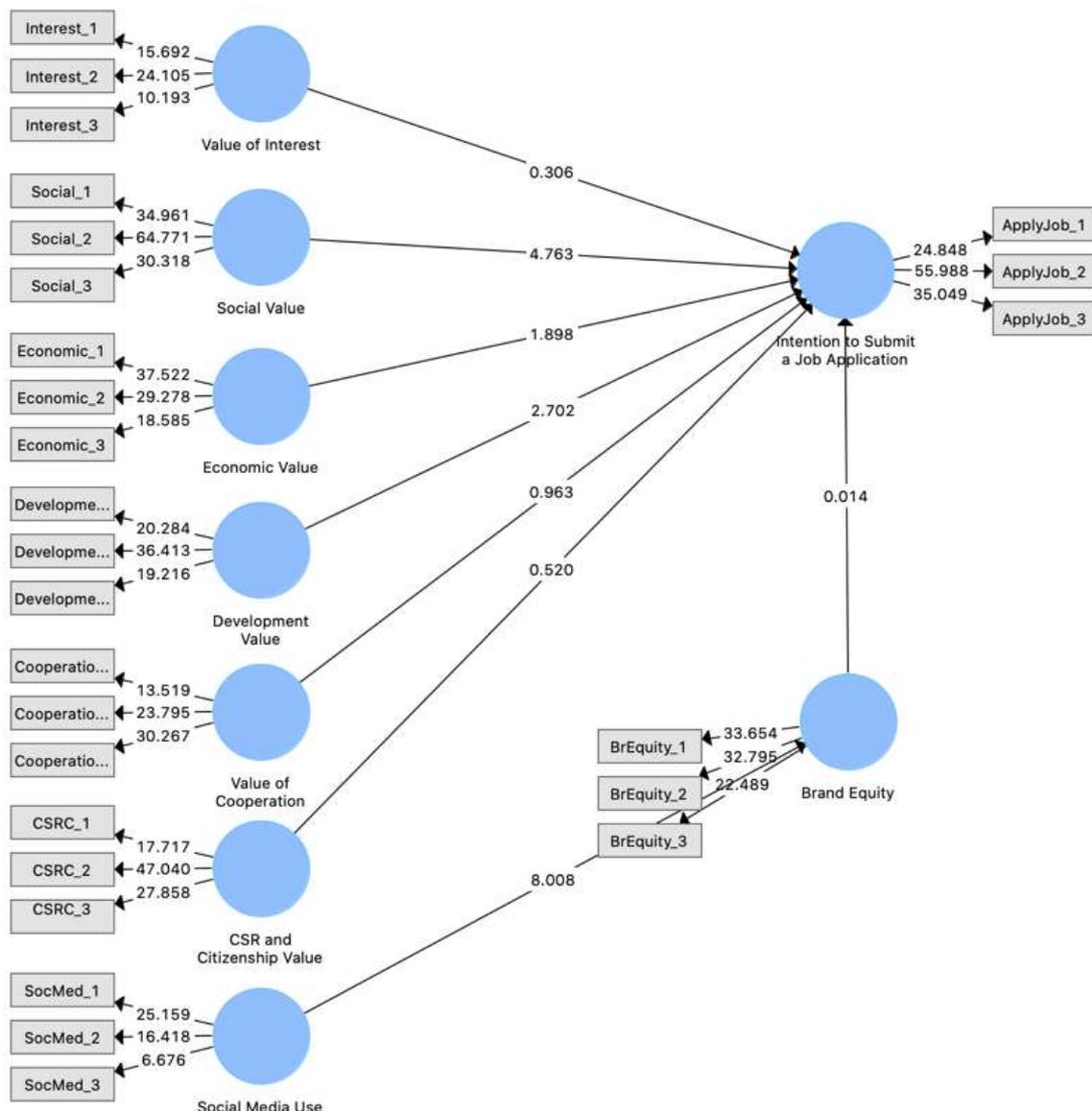
Figure 3: Bootsrapping result

With regards to hypotheses testing, H1 was partially accepted, H2 was accepted, and H3 was rejected. The acceptance or rejection of proposed hypotheses was determined by referring to t-values. The critical t-values for a two-tailed test at significance level of 0.05 is 1.96. In the Table 1, the specific hypotheses test result is presented.

Table 1: Hypotheses Testing Result

		Path Coefficients	T-Value	Hypothesis Supported
H1a	Value of Interest→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.02	0.31	No
H1b	Social Value→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.41	4.76	Yes
H1c	Economic Value→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.18	1.90	No
H1d	Development Value→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.27	2.7	Yes
H1e	Value of Cooperation→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.08	0.96	No
H1f	CSR and Citizenship Value→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.05	0.52	No
H2	Social Media Use→Brand Equity	0.48	8.00	Yes
H3	Brand Equity→Intention to Submit a Job Application	0.00	0.14	No

Social value and development value were found to be positively related to prospective candidates' intention to submit a job application. The use of social media was also found to enhance brand equity. Nonetheless, it did not have any significant effect on the intention to submit a job application.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the drivers of prospective candidates' intention to submit a job application at PT XYZ. Three hypotheses were proposed, and the previous section has shown the findings in terms of evaluating the model fit and hypotheses testing. The first hypothesis (H1) was partially supported, it showed that two of employer brand attractiveness dimensions, namely social value and development value, were found to positively influence prospective candidates' intention to submit a job application. Here, social value refers to the extent to which a candidate is drawn to an employer that provides a positive working environment. Applicants will only decide to apply for a job when they consider the environment is fun and happy. They also want to have supportive and collaborative colleagues and superiors where their relationships are harmonious. As for development value, it is the degree to which candidates are attracted to employers because they regularly recognize the contribution of its employees for what they have done for the sake of the organization, make them feel worth and confident of themselves by being a part of the company, and is willing to offer various working experiences that can serve as launching pads for their future jobs.

The second hypothesis (H2), which stated that social media use had a positively impact on brand equity, was accepted. This finding indicated that employers that use social media in carrying their employer branding activity had succeeded in strengthening its brand equity. Nonetheless H3, which stated that brand equity had a significant influence on prospective candidates' intention to submit a job application was rejected. It indicated that brand equity was not a dominant factor in determining their decision to apply for a job. Consequently, the proposed strategy for PT XYZ to attract prospective candidates to submit a job application will revolve around promoting social value and developmental value within their company to the prospective candidates.

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