



## How Employer Branding Shapes Person-Organization Fit in Gen Z: The Strategic Role of Social Media

Arinda Salma<sup>1</sup>, Nia Ariyani Erlin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: Arinda Salma

Email: : [arindasalma190603@gmail.com](mailto:arindasalma190603@gmail.com)



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### Abstract

As the world continues to develop and change, generations and intergenerational expectations are also changing. One of them is Generation Z, which shows unique characteristics in choosing a job, prioritizing the alignment of values and company culture. This study aims to examine the effect of employer branding on person-organization fit (P-O fit) in Generation Z job seekers, with social media as a mediating variable. The method used in this study is a quantitative approach with data collection through a questionnaire distributed online to 136 respondents who met the research criteria. The results of the analysis using SmartPLS show that employer branding has a positive and significant effect on P-O fit, and social media plays an important role in increasing this influence. These findings emphasize that companies need to build a strong and transparent image through social media to attract and retain Generation Z talent. This study provides insight for companies in formulating effective recruitment strategies in a competitive labor market.

## Introduction

The dynamics of shift between generations have always been a form of dynamic in the relations of employment but with the entry of a new generation being Generation Z there has been a distinct balance in the readjustment of values, expectations, and epistemologies by which workplace engagement has been conducted. As our societies develop amid the harsh impacts of technological pace, sweeping changes in sociocultural paradigms, and financial insecurity, so are changing the supposed logics with regards to the individual framing of work, self-identity, and institutional trust (Spence, 1973; BPS, 2015).

Similarly to the case in other countries, there is a demographic inflection point in the labor market in Indonesia, with a new generation of people born between 1995 and 2012, Generation Z, assuming a leading role when it comes to the active employment rate. This population trend links with more general shifts in the way the employment is constructed and pursued (Boccoli et al., 2023; Crompton et al., 1996). Generation Z no longer bases its career choices purely on the financial factor or job security but on a multifaceted equation with personal values, social mission, and cultural alignment with organizational values (LinkedIn, 2022; Stillman & Stillman, 2017).

Empirical studies that have been recently conducted confirm that this generation no longer considers the job offerings as economic and social constructs but rather as existential fits (Rudolph et al., 2021). The large percentage of workers of Generation Z have also shown a readiness to leave employment situations that do not raise meaning, personal relevance, or cultural applicability. The fact that 58 percent of this group is likely to quit the job that does not bring satisfaction is not to be seen as a sign of flakiness, but as a profound change in the

sense of work (LinkedIn, 2022). Instead of seeing employment as an ultimate goal, Generation Z tends to think about it as a medium of identity performance and social interaction. It is supported by the rise of the popularity of such business person lining as YouTubers and digital content creators, who can seek autonomy, authenticity, and personal branding rather than traditional ladders of hierarchy (Metacorps, 2022; Murphy, 2021; Johnston, 2020). These choices indicate that modern job seekers are not only analyzing the concrete part of work, but they are reading between the symbolic and ethical lines of which organizations represent.

Central to this process of interpretation is the notion of person-organization fit that has attracted growing interest in the fields of human resource practice and organizational behavior theory. P-O fit is an idea of congruency between personal values, objectives and personality and organizational culture and ethos (Kristof, 1996; Edwards, 1991). Although the very idea has long been linked to employee satisfaction and retention, it also takes on a new meaning with Gen Z employees whose employment choice hinges not only on the transaction benefits but also on the ideological fit.

In the modern world, P-O fit, on the one hand, can be discussed as predictor of organizational commitment, and, on the other hand, can be seen as the heuristic which helps the job seeker to find his or her way through institutional legitimacy (Carmeli & Freund, 2009). According to research conducted by Kim et al. in 2022 and Sahin et al. in 2023, younger candidates also implement P-O fit tests as such filters when interacting with prospective employers and emphasize the match with organizational purpose as one of the main factors.

Employer branding can therefore be seen as a very important process where through organizations are able to create and send the cues that help in such alignment to be viewed. Employer branding, which is described as the strategic expression of values, culture and employment experience of a company, would not only exist to recruit talent, but also exists in the facilitation of identity based recruitment (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). But whether, and specifically in what ways the employer branding is successful as a performative articulation is a question of its landing on the symbolic terrain in which job seekers reside.

Just as it has been highlighted in the recent studies, branding that lacks either moral coherence or transparency is more and more dismissed by younger consumers as unauthentic or performative (Ali et al., 2022; Naim & Lenka, 2022; Breugh et al., 2020). There is no longer isolation in the meaning of the employer brand. It becomes established or challenged on the stages of participation, where the stories on the trustworthiness and inclusivity of the organization spread fast, and their impacts are cumulative (Rodrigues & Bastos, 2021; Garg & Rani, 2024).

The social media currently occupies a central place in this ecosystem by not just serving as a communication medium but also by providing an epistemic infrastructure towards the organizational interpretation. Generation Z commonly referred to as digital natives is heavy on social media in order to access organizational reputations, to evaluate them as well as to socially negotiate them (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Daugherty et al., 2016). In addition to conventional job listing sites, pre-hires are engaging employer brands via informal ratings, peer-reviews and freestyle digital story telling. This transition explores the one-way logic of traditional employer branding because it comprises an environment where the information is decentralized, built in an interactive and emotionally high-energy manner. According to the research conducted by Fieseler et al. (2022) and Islam et al. (2021), not only can LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok be explored as sources of employment information, but as the affective context, they contribute to defining the fit alongside forming trust in employment contexts. As a result, social media not

only turns into a channels of employer branding but a negotiator of its legality and alleged authenticity.

The theoretical approach to which this question refers is the signaling theory, which helps to develop an efficient theory explaining how both asymmetrical and incomplete information are interpreted by all individuals in situations involving decision-making (Spence, 1973; Battaglio, 2015). In the employment context, the signaling theory explains the role of organizational indicators, which could be either visual, textual, or behavioral and are used to proxy underlying structural realities. That is because in a world where we are awash with information and data our cues to form meaningful decisions about prospective employers are limited to what we get. One of these signals is employer branding, and the other is social media, together creating a whole picture of what an organization is, what it upholds, and what kind of people it wants to recruit. Scholars such as Lim et al. (2022) and Hashmi et al. (2024) have extended this framework to account for the complexities of signal reception in digital environments, where the credibility of a message often hinges on social validation and participatory endorsement rather than the authority of its source.

Given this confluence of generational transformation, epistemic reorientation, and digital intermediation, this study aims to critically examine the influence of employer branding on person–organization fit among Generation Z job seekers, with social media acting as a mediating variable. The inquiry not only addresses a gap in empirical understanding but also speaks to broader theoretical debates on how identity, authenticity, and organizational trust are constructed in a post-industrial, digitally saturated employment landscape. In doing so, it offers insight into how organizations can strategically recalibrate their branding practices to align with the epistemic expectations of a generation that seeks not just employment, but ethical congruence and narrative integrity.

## **Literature Review**

### **Signaling Theory**

Grand signal theory, often referred to in the context of economics and communication, explains how individuals and organizations use signals to communicate relevant information to others, especially in situations of uncertainty. The basic concept of signal theory was first introduced by Michael Spence in 1973 in his paper titled “Job Market Signaling” (Ferizal, 2016). In the paper, Spence explained that individuals with different qualities can send signals to others to distinguish themselves. Spence argued that individuals with higher qualities will be more willing to incur greater costs to send credible signals. In this case, clear and credible signals help reduce information asymmetry between the parties involved, thus allowing for better and more efficient decisions.

Signal theory plays an important role in the recruitment process and employer branding, especially for job seekers who often face difficulties in obtaining clear and reliable information about potential employers (Edwards, 1991). As Spence argued, signals help reduce uncertainty by allowing employers to convey key attributes about their organizations. This is then supported by Battaglio who stated that when individuals do not have sufficient or clear information, they tend to rely on heuristics, perceptions or external cues to form their judgments (Edwards, 1991). One source that provides such signals is digital advertising or information provided through social media, which can influence the interest of prospective workers in an employer. The core of signal theory is the existence of information asymmetry between two parties, where one party has more information than the other (Edwards, 1991).

Signaling theory focuses on how an organization can communicate information to prospective applicants through various activities (Edwards, 1991; Celani & Singh, 2011; Taj, 2016).

### **Employer Branding**

Employer branding according to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) is an effort to create a positive image of the company in the eyes of prospective employees, which focuses on the values, culture, and work environment offered [16]. According to Lievens & Highhouse (2003), employer branding refers to the process of promoting a company as an employer of choice to the desired target group (Hays, 2018). Ferizal (2016) emphasized that employer branding includes various elements, including company values, organizational culture, and work experiences offered to employees (Parveen et al., 2022). Employer branding aims to attract quality talent, increase employee retention and engagement, and create loyalty and a positive image of the company (Wellman, 2007; Hays, 2018). Berthon et al. (2005) explained that there are five dimensions of employer branding, namely economic value, development value, social value, interest value, and application value (Wellman, 2007). These dimensions include financial compensation, professional development opportunities, a positive work environment, challenging work, and opportunities to apply employee skills.

### **Person Organization Fit**

According to Edwards (1991), person organization fit is the level of suitability between an individual and an organization, where the individual has characteristics that are in line with the characteristics of the organization (Theurer et al., 2018). Kristof (1996) defines P-O Fit as the extent to which an individual's values, beliefs, and goals are in line with the values, culture, and goals of the organization (Theurer et al., 2018). Cable & DeRue (2002) state that P-O Fit is an individual's perception of the extent to which their personal values are in line with the values, culture, and norms adopted by the organization (Theurer et al., 2018). Kristof (1996) mentions three main indicators of P-O Fit, namely value congruence, goal congruence, and employee need fulfillment (Theurer et al., 2018). Value congruence refers to the suitability of individual and organizational values; goal congruence to the suitability of work goals; and employee need fulfillment relates to the extent to which the organization meets the needs and expectations of individuals.

### **Social media**

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), social media is a group of internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media is not only a communication tool, but also a digital public space that shapes individual and community identities (Marino, 2015; Sarıkaya, 2023). Social media plays an important role in branding strategies, education, social change, and public sentiment analysis (Mehmood et al., 2022). In the context of job searches by Generation Z, social media plays a role as the main source of information about companies (Trang et al., 2024). Daugherty et al. (2016) stated that 70% of Generation Z use social media to research companies, and Hays (2018) showed that this generation trusts recommendations and testimonials found on social media more than formal information from companies.

### **Relationship Between Variables**

Employer branding can influence person-organization fit directly or indirectly through social media. Parveen et al. (2022) stated that social media acts as a bridge connecting employer branding with individual perceptions of organizational fit. Employer branding that is actively communicated through social media can help Generation Z job seekers assess the fit between

company values and their personal values, thereby increasing P-O Fit (El-Menawy & Saleh, 2023; Brinke, 2021; Tanwar et al., 2021).

## Methods

The present investigation followed a quantitative explanatory research design to investigate the cause and effect relationships among employer branding, social media, and person organization fit among those job seekers belonging to generation Z. A quantitative approach had been selected because it objective measure and test the theoretical connections through statistical manipulation. The explanatory nature of the study allowed the researchers to translate the explanation on how a variable produces an impact on another and in particular how a variable called social media played a mediating situation in the issue of employer branding correlated to perceived fit with an organization. Research design identifies the trend towards a hypothesis-testing, which is facilitated by a variety of measurements, foundation on a theory and logical progression of steps. The research plan was developed to be able to replicate the findings and follow up the rules of inferences, particularly the digital behavior in young job seekers.

The population being researched in this study is the generation Z in the country of Indonesia that is participating in job seeking operations. This involves newly graduated students who are first time workers and also those who are thinking of making the career switch. The Generation Z is generally defined by its digital citizenship, digital literacy and associated expectations in employment. The researchers used purposive sampling to offer consistency between the research interest and character of the respondents.

The selection of the participants on the basis of certain criteria based on the research objectives can be done with the help of this non-probability sampling method. Four key conditions were used to define the inclusion criteria. The participants were required to be part of Generation Z depending on their years of birth. It was also required that they should actively or passively be seeking openings of employment. Moreover, they were forced to show their understanding of the companies which are ideal, in the opinion of their generation. Finally, they would require the use of social media sites to get information on potential employers. These filters provided relevance and contextual appropriateness of the sample as far as behavioral and informational patterns need to be tested that allow materializing relationships stipulated in the research problem.

In order to obtain the minimum sample size that they would use to test the structures of the model, the researchers have used the rule of thumb by Ketchen that stipulates that the number of indicators in the model is multiplied by a static factor of ten. The sample size derived was more than the required because of the number of the measurement indicators in the research instrument. This had reached an adequate conclusion that the amount of qualified respondents was enough to conduct extensive data analysis and testing of models. The information gathering procedure was online based by using a self-reported study questionnaire whose scale and design were based on well-known Likert-like scaling. Such a method of data collection can be deemed as appropriate due to the demographic features of the target population since they are normally quite comfortable using digital platforms. It was also an efficient administration method since geographically-scattered respondents could be reached effectively using the online information distribution method.

In this research, the only data source was primary data, which was specifically accumulated to get answers to the research questions. The questionnaire was designed on theoretical and empirical texts and it was organized with the help of five-point likert scale. The scale type was strongly disagree to strongly agree whereby the respondents were able to indicate their level of

agreement to each of the items. The instrument covered three variables with established measurement indicators. Employer branding was actually constructed in accordance to dimensions which depicts company qualities, which is of interest to job seekers. These aspects were economic value, development value, social value, application value and interest value.

The person–organization fit variable was operationalized using indicators such as congruence of values, goals, needs, and personality. Social media was measured by indicators that reflect its utility as an information source, such as ease of search, completeness of content, credibility of reviews, and communication quality. The construction of the instrument ensured content validity by adhering to established theoretical frameworks.

The list of answer choices and scoring weights used in the questionnaire is provided in the following table. This scoring system allowed for consistent quantification of response tendencies and facilitated the calculation of composite indicator values for each latent construct.

Table 1. List of Answer Scores Based on the Likert Scale

Alternative Answers	The Nature of Positive Statements
Strongly Agree (SS)	5
Agree (S)	4
Neutral (N)	3
Disagree (TS)	2
Strongly Disagree (STS)	1

To ensure the relevance of each indicator and its alignment with prior literature, the questionnaire items were mapped according to construct definitions, dimensions, and sources. The indicator framework is presented in the following table, showing how each variable was operationalized and sourced.

Table 2. Research Variables, Definitions, Indicators, and Sources

No	Variable	Definition	Indicator	Source
1	Employer Branding (X)	The process of promoting a company as an employer of choice to a desired target group, namely the group that the company wants to attract.	1. Economic value 2. Development value 3. Social value 4. Application value 5. Interest value	Berthon et al. (2005)
2	Person–Organization Fit (Y)	The level of fit between the individual and the organization, where the individual possesses traits aligned with the organization’s characteristics.	1. Value congruence 2. Goal congruence 3. Need congruence 4. Personality congruence	Kristof (1996)
3	Social Media (M)	A system that enables individuals and organizations to interact and share information through digital communication technologies.	1. Ease of search 2. Complete information 3. Reviews 4. Good communication	Pham & Vo (2022)

The data analysis in this study was conducted in two stages using both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Descriptive analysis was employed to summarize the profiles of the respondents and to provide an overview of their responses to each indicator. This helped in verifying the suitability of the sample to the research objectives. Inferential analysis was carried out to test the hypothesized relationships between variables and to validate the structural model. The SmartPLS software version 4.0 was used to perform path analysis based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. This modeling technique was selected due to its ability to handle complex models that include mediating variables and multiple constructs, particularly under conditions of non-normal data distribution.

The validity and reliability of the measurement instruments were assessed before the structural model was tested. Convergent validity was examined by evaluating the degree to which each indicator correlated with its underlying construct. The criterion for convergent validity was met for all variables, confirming the adequacy of the measurement model. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, ensuring that the items within each construct were internally consistent. Model evaluation proceeded by examining the strength of the relationships among the latent variables using bootstrapping procedures, which generated robust estimates for hypothesis testing. Mediation analysis was also performed to assess the indirect effect of employer branding on person–organization fit through social media. This methodological structure ensured that the research model was tested with rigor, while remaining consistent with the exploratory and confirmatory objectives of the study.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Respondent Characteristics**

This study was conducted on Generation Z job seekers in Indonesia, who actively use social media to assess and evaluate a company's employer branding. The total number of respondents who filled out the questionnaire was 161 respondents. Before answering the questionnaire questions, respondents were asked to fill out screening questions to ensure compliance with the research criteria. Respondent age range: 99.4% of respondents are in the 18–27 age range. Of the 161 respondents, only 0.6% are outside this age range, so the data is very relevant to the research focus on Generation Z. Job search status: 86.3% of respondents stated that they were looking for work or were in the process of looking for work (either actively or passively). Meanwhile, 13.7% were not looking for work. Exposure to job vacancy information on social media: all respondents (100%) admitted to having seen job vacancy information via social media, indicating that social media is the main source of job vacancy information for respondents. Interest in well-known companies: 98.6% of respondents have an interest or knowledge of large companies such as the Ministry of SOEs, Pertamina, Shopee, Gojek, Tokopedia, BCA, Unilever, Bank Indonesia, Google, or Traveloka. Only 1.4% of respondents do not have such interest or knowledge.

### **Validity and Reliability Test**

Convergent validity is seen from the average variance extracted (AVE) value. Each construct has an AVE value  $> 0.5$ . This shows that each construct has good validity and can be accepted.

Table 3. Average variance extracted (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
M	0.607
X	0.536
Y	0.617

AVE Value:

M = 0.607

X = 0.536

Y = 0.617

The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values shown in the table indicate the degree to which the observed indicators reflect their respective latent constructs. These results offer evidence of adequate convergent validity, suggesting that the indicators for each construct are well-correlated and reliably measure a common underlying concept. All AVE values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50, confirming that more than half of the variance in each construct is captured by its indicators rather than by error.

The construct M, with an AVE of 0.607, demonstrates strong item convergence, indicating that the underlying dimension measured by M is conceptually unified. Similarly, the construct Y, with an AVE of 0.617, supports the claim that the observed variables are reliable reflections of a single latent factor, which could, for example, include various psychological or behavioral dimensions. Meanwhile, construct X, though slightly lower at 0.536, still meets the acceptable standard, validating the integrity of its measurement.

These findings imply that the model has solid structural integrity and that the latent constructs used in the study are statistically coherent. The AVE values thus affirm that the theoretical concepts have been effectively operationalized, and the resulting empirical constructs are sufficiently distinct to support further structural equation modeling or path analysis..

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
M	0.838	0.842	0.885
X	0.964	0.966	0.967
Y	0.792	0.796	0.865

Reliability value:

M:  $\alpha = 0.838$ , CR = 0.885

X:  $\alpha = 0.964$ , CR = 0.967

Y:  $\alpha = 0.792$ , CR = 0.865

Table 5 presents the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for the three latent constructs under examination. These values serve to confirm both the internal consistency and the unidimensionality of each construct. A high Cronbach's Alpha indicates that the items grouped under each variable measure the same underlying concept reliably, while the Composite Reliability (CR) complements this by accounting for indicator loadings. In this study, all constructs exceed the conventional reliability threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instruments used are statistically robust, with minimal random measurement error.

From a measurement standpoint, the high internal reliability scores suggest that respondents interpreted the scale items with strong consistency. For example, the employer branding construct (X), which yielded the highest alpha (0.964) and CR (0.967), includes diverse facets such as organizational attractiveness, career development, and brand equity. The internal cohesion of this construct implies that Generation Z respondents perceived these attributes as parts of a cohesive evaluation framework, rather than separate concepts. Similarly, the media usage construct (M), with  $\alpha = 0.838$  and  $CR = 0.885$ , suggests respondents interpreted various aspects of digital interaction (e.g., online reviews, visual branding, and social media presence) as integrated dimensions of organizational credibility.

For the Person-Organization Fit (Y) construct, the reliability values ( $\alpha = 0.792$ ;  $CR = 0.865$ ) remain strong, further supporting the notion that value congruence, workplace expectations, and compatibility were viewed as interrelated rather than fragmented dimensions. This level of internal consistency across constructs affirms the validity of the theoretical framework and supports the model's structural integrity, thus lending confidence to subsequent path analyses and hypothesis testing.

### Uji R-Square ( $R^2$ )

After the outer model testing is done, the next step is the evaluation of the inner model. The R-square value is used to assess how much the independent variables are able to explain the dependent variable. A larger  $R^2$  value indicates that the model has better predictive power.

Tabel 5. R-square

	<b>R-square</b>	<b>R-square adjusted</b>
M	0.536	0.532
Y	0.587	0.580

The  $R^2$  value of 0.536 for the social media variable shows that employer branding is able to explain 53.6% of the variation in social media perceptions. Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value of 0.587 on the person-organization fit variable indicates that employer branding and social media together explain 58.7% of the variance in P-O fit. According to Chin (1998) and Hair et al. (2014), an  $R^2$  value of 0.19 is considered weak, 0.33 is moderate, and  $\geq 0.67$  is strong in behavioral research contexts. Therefore, the  $R^2$  values in this study fall into the moderate-to-strong predictive category, indicating that the model has sufficient explanatory power for the observed relationships. However, the remaining unexplained variance (46.4% for social media and 41.3% for person-organization fit) suggests that other factors such as organizational culture, job seeker values, prior work experience, or job design may also play a role, as suggested by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005). This opens opportunities for future research to include additional predictors to further enhance the model's explanatory capability.

### Hypothesis Testing

The SmartPLS results on the bootstrapping feature show the hypothesis testing conducted in this study. If the p-value  $< 0.05$  and the T-statistic value  $> 1.65$  then the hypothesis is considered significant. The results of the direct effect hypothesis testing can be seen in the following table:

Table 6. Results of inner model analysis

	<b>Original sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P values</b>
M -> Y	0.579	0.583	0.085	6.842	0.000
X -> M	0.732	0.740	0.050	14.535	0.000
X -> Y	0.233	0.229	0.108	2.150	0.032

Based on the results presented in the table, employer branding is shown to have both direct and indirect effects on person-organization fit. The original sample value of 0.233 with a T-statistic of 2.150 and a P-value of 0.032 confirms that employer branding has a direct and significant influence on the alignment between Generation Z job seekers and organizational values, thus supporting hypothesis H1. In addition, employer branding significantly influences how job seekers perceive the organization through social media, with an original sample value of 0.732, a T-statistic of 14.535, and a P-value of 0.000, supporting hypothesis H2. This implies that the stronger the employer branding conveyed, the more positive the perception formed through social media. These findings are consistent with prior studies by Cable and Turban (2001) and Collins and Stevens (2002), which emphasized the role of employer branding in shaping organizational attractiveness and influencing early perceptions of fit.

Moreover, the test results for hypothesis H3 indicate that social media has a significant role in forming person-organization fit, with an original sample value of 0.579, a T-statistic of 6.842, and a P-value of 0.000. This supports the idea that social media functions not only as a platform for information dissemination but also as a space where organizational values are interpreted, evaluated, and internalized by job seekers. Generation Z, in particular, relies heavily on social media to assess whether a company's values align with their own. This is in line with findings from Theurer et al. (2018), who emphasized the strategic role of social media in employer branding and its impact on shaping perceptions of organizational fit.

Table 7. Results of inner model analysis

	<b>Original sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P values</b>
X -> M -> Y	0.424	0.431	0.065	6.478	0.000

Based on the results of hypothesis testing on the indirect path, the original sample value was obtained at 0.424 with a T-statistic value of 6.478 and a P-value of 0.000. This indicates that the influence of employer branding on person-organization fit through social media as a mediating variable is statistically significant. Therefore, hypothesis H4, which states that social media mediates the effect of employer branding on person-organization fit in Generation Z job seekers, is supported. This finding reinforces the importance of social media as an intermediary that bridges employer branding efforts with job seekers' perception of organizational compatibility.

The significant mediation effect also highlights that social media does not merely function as an information channel, but rather plays an active role in shaping how branding messages are perceived and internalized by Generation Z. As digital natives, this generation tends to rely on social media when evaluating employers, making platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok critical spaces for communicating organizational values. These findings are in line with research by Sivertzen et al. (2013) and Theurer et al. (2018), who found that employer branding

is more impactful when delivered through social media, as it enhances employer attractiveness and fosters person-organization fit. Therefore, organizations are encouraged to not only craft compelling employer branding strategies, but also ensure that such messages are effectively communicated through interactive and relatable digital content.

Moreover, the importance of the indirect route indicates a high value of generation Z job seekers about the social scene and apparent transparency of an organizational message. Social media is not a mere messaging conveyer. It reads like it becomes a concept through which branding is tested, challenged or supported. This is in line with the behavioral inclinations of the digital natives; this implies that they need peer input, authenticity, and multi dimensional story telling prior to attitude or decisions being made. The existence of a rather statistically significant mediational path denotes that organizations can hardly afford to approach branding and social media strategy as a disjuncture. As opposed to this, there must be a synergistic integration where value of the employer will always be echoed at digital engagement.

The mediation actually gives a theoretical support to signaling theory that states that credibility of signal is not only determined by its contents but also by the channel through which it comes. This principle is proven by the existence of social media as meaningful moderator in this study proving that, digital media acts as a strong moderator of organizational image. It is especially so in relation to a group of individuals that is highly sensitive to inconsistency, performative branding, or low transparency.

### **Reconceptualizing Organizational Fit in the Digital Influence Era and Generational Identity**

Employer branding when applied to Generation Z cannot be considered as a company aesthetic or reputation approach. It will now serve as a symbolic artifact that holds epistemological references in forming meaning, dealing with uncertainty and developing a sense of belonging among the younger job seekers in institutions. Digital revolution in the labor markets has redefined the employer-employee relationship landscape, not by changing the location where people perform work, but by changing the shift in how people conceptualize the working promise. Branding is not mere promise anymore made by the human resource departments (Martin & Beaumont, 2003; Hatch et al., 2001). It is a story form of architecture where the values are not just diagnosed but seen, performed, and assessed on a multiplicity of platforms of contact. Socially saturated and transparent, this generation defines branding in semiotic terms: what (is said), how (it is said), and whether (it can make it in the discourse). The identity of the employer is no longer monologic or self-sufficient, then. It is co-produced in the real-time and can undergo redefinition due to the external perception and collective sentiment and the algorithmic visibility. These circumstances raise a doubt, whether this conventional notion that branding is only convincing. To the generation of Z, it is evidential. It needs to correspond to visible action and common cultural rationality, otherwise, it will be disregarded as false posing.

Such transition of branding (static to socially mediated) has a strong role of implication when it comes to the notion of person-organization fit (Özçelik & Fındıklı, 2014; Lee & Jin, 2024). The idea of a psychological fit based on pre-employment tests or shared values in the description of any job has transitioned to a publicly constructed view that has been bargained on the various digital stages where Generation Z as a member of their identity ecosystem may exist. To this generation, P-O fit happens to be a foreground issue rather than a background factor. It is stitched into the very calculus or organization selection and commitment itself. Generation Z does not accept being separate in personal values and organizational norms to gain job security or compensation, as it was the case in the prior generations. They want to find

themselves in a setting where there is a system in which personal ideology, culture at work, and the image in the community mesh together. The compatibility is not only administered at the time of hire. It is expected long before the actual contact with the recruiter in the form of audit of the digital trace, narrational consistency and symbolic conduct by job seekers. Recent studies have indicated toward ideology-fit based on the notion of ideological congruence, psychological safety, and organizational justice becoming more salient in the terms of fitting among young professionals (Wahyuningtyas et al., 2024; Sahin et al., 2023). What this implies is an old generational reworking of fit itself, which is no longer a latent alignment, unveiled retrospectively in the course of the hiring process, but rather an active evaluation that takes place in the process that could be called the discovery of the employer, based on the signals collected in the digital social realms.

Social Media has stopped being a means of recruiting but rather the platform upon which the authenticity of organizations is placed and proven. The social credibility of employer branding has shifted to the results of employment branding in the digital commons, its reception and interpretation by digital communities that Generation Z accepts as reliable. This generation is not only driven by official statements by companies but also by social cues that are subsumed in the user created content, peer reviews, influencer discussions and brand exchanges within the internet network (Teixeira et al., 2018). In this respect, social media can not only be viewed as the disseminator of content but as the credibility filter.

It accords prominence to stories that fit within digital standards of transparency, accountability, and social evidence (Lindquist & Huse, 2017; Reid & Ringel, 2025; Dubberley et al., 2020). That employer who does not connect with this space in a meaningful way is not merely invisible; he/she/they is understood to be either untrustworthy or out of touch. In addition, social media does not sit idle in this process. It constructs a definition of what a legitimate signal is, elevates authenticity via interaction and chastises inconsistency via virality and criticism. The epistemological turn in this case is radical. Branding powers are no longer based on the issuer but a digital reception network (Carlson, 2020). The level of trustworthiness depends on the brand digital discourse resilience (which is the capacity to stay coherent in the circumstance of decentralized interpretation) (Khaled, 2024).

In this new ecology of perception the signalling theory has to be reimaged. Its classical assumption, or one party broadcasting messages to relieve asymmetry with another, needs to be placed within a complex, participatory, algorithmically dampened environment of information. Gen Z does not take in those employer messages on their own. They triangulate them (Heimann, 2024). They contrast what is said and what is done, and that this is done by others. The source of the signal, the tone, the channel, frequency of the signal, and the validation of it by people all add up to its reception.

The consequence of this is that employer signals are no longer analysed on the basis of underlying clarity but on the level of social fit and moral consistency. As shown through the works by Lim et al. (2022) and Hashmi et al. (2024), digital-era signaling is not only about the competence of senders but infused by the communal validation, and thus the employer branding should be viewed as a matter of communal epistemic judgment. This means that there is a new communicative imperative faced by organizations. They have to not just to give out coherent signals but also predict the channels through which the signals will be manipulated, defiled or amplified. This does not merely require branding literacy, but signal fluency: communication strategies are mediated by cultural semiotics, platform logics and digital ethics.

What happens here is more than transition in the infrastructure of communication. It is a transformation in moral framework of employment itself. The expectation of generation Z

cannot be only compounded by the compensation scheme or the manner of flexible working conditions. They go to moral congruency, inclusivity cultures, environmental care, and narrative praxis. According to this generation, work is a selflocating thing in a larger sociopolitical ecosystem. Employers are not only assessed on the basis of their operational prowess but their position on matters relating to justice, representation and global responsibility (Boyd et al., 2007). In this meaning branding does not mean ornament but ontology, it means what kind of an organization one is and what kind of a world it wants to co-create. Companies that view branding as marketing layer do not cut it on the epistemology and ethics of the contemporary employment hunter (Hunt, 2019). The ones who understand branding as a performed ethical story that lives in daily action accrue the symbolic capital to be perceived as trustworthy. Fit is not an HR measure anymore in this landscape. It is an ethical approval of the recognition on both parties employer and a prospective employee.

Lastly, this paper makes practitioners and scholars enlarge their theoretical and strategic vocabulary. The implication to practitioners is obvious. Employer branding needs to change to messaging to co-constructed meaning-making. This involves intentional storytelling, strategic transparency, and responsiveness to the interpretive communities shaping employer perception online. For scholars, the challenge lies in updating theoretical frameworks to reflect this epistemological evolution. Theories of organizational behavior, recruitment, and identity must integrate digital sociology, narrative studies, and platform studies to account for the new grammar of employer-employee interaction. Traditional constructs such as organizational attractiveness or job satisfaction are no longer adequate unless they incorporate the symbolic and emotional infrastructures shaping twenty-first-century employment decisions. Employer branding is no longer a strategic function confined to marketing or HR. It is a cultural practice rooted in identity politics, semiotic negotiation, and networked credibility.

## Conclusion

The paper will address the discussion of organizational identity by showing that there is a revolutionary change in how Generation Z job seekers regard, understand, and respond to employer branding. Employer branding is no longer viewed as a one-sided communication process but as the co-created, digitally-mediated and substance-driven discourse, which requires coherence in narration and social authenticity. As such, you become affected based on more than the content of the message: there is a difference in the recognition of congruency with self-ideals, shared ideals in the online world, and the affirmation of the message through the line of contact with others in real time within a peer group. All these dimensions generate perception, trust and fit to an organisation by co-constructing each another in a self-reinforcing cycle whereby the genuineness of one component is the foundation of credibility of another.

At the pivot of this systematized relationship lie the key role of social media. Quite on the contrary to having the role of an adjunct, social media forms the epistemic space in which employer branding is considered in employment relationship. Among the Generation Z, social media is the main place of bargaining of identity, career ambition, and belief group. In this online environment, signals of employer brand are read, new meanings are created, and commonly doubted. It is in this place that either the reputation of a brand is bolstered or ruined. The results thus show that the employee attraction rate of an employer no longer depends on the organisational size or scale of salary but on digital authenticity, value clearance, and story integrity.

In that regard, the study is not only theoretically elaborated but also practically oriented. The paper can make brand managers reconsider the generality in message creation under employer branding to implement a platform-specific, interaction-heavy, and morally aligned content

under the larger signalling theory concept, including social validation and emotional resonance. Organizations must not only be seen they must be understood, felt, and believed. This study also positions person organization fit as a dynamic, socially constructed perception no longer a latent match discovered in interviews, but a publicly performed alignment negotiated across digital platforms. It calls on future research to interrogate how affect, identity, and real-time interaction shape fit perceptions in ways traditional frameworks have yet to capture. Just as Generation Z redefines the labor market through its expectations and behaviors, so too must scholarship evolve its models, its assumptions, and its epistemologies

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