

GEN Z CAREER EXPECTATIONS IN STARTUPS: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES APPLICATION VALUE INFLUENCE INTEREST IN APPLAVING

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Abstract

Over the past ten years, startup companies in Indonesia have grown rapidly as a result of increased digital innovation and entrepreneurial spirit among the younger generation. Startups are now a symbol of technological progress and provide a dynamic, flexible, and learning-filled work environment. Generation Z—consisting of people born between 1997 and 2012 and referred to as digital natives—are becoming increasingly interested in startup companies because of these conditions. Generation Z is very interested in the meaning of work, self-development, and work-life balance. In this case, an important strategy for startup companies is employer branding, which helps them attract potential employees by creating a good reputation as an attractive place to work. Application value, also known as application value, is an important element in a company's brand. Application value is the extent to which prospective employees believe that working for a company allows them to apply their knowledge and skills. This is important for Gen Z students because they tend to look for jobs that provide real work experience that helps them improve their skills and broaden their professional horizons. The purpose of this study is to examine how perceptions of application value in startup company employer branding impact Gen Z's desire to apply for jobs. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide theoretical benefits for the development of research on employer branding and practical benefits for startup companies in developing more efficient recruitment strategies. Companies can increase their attractiveness to young talent and enhance their appeal with perceptions of application value.

Keywords:

Application Value; Employer Branding; Job Application Intention

Introduction

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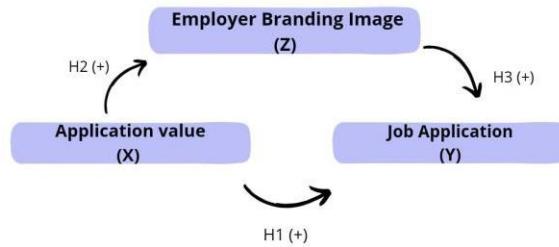
Theoretical Framework

Ambler and Barrow (1996) first introduced *employer branding* as a strategic effort to build a positive image of a company in the minds of potential employees through the communication of organizational values and strengths. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding aims to attract, motivate, and retain potential employees by portraying the company as an ideal workplace.

Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) later identified five dimensions of employer attractiveness: interest value, social value, economic value, development value, and *application value*—which reflects the extent to which employees can apply their knowledge and skills in real work settings. This dimension is particularly relevant for Generation Z, who view work as a platform for learning and self-development (Dimock, 2019).

Previous research has shown that *application value* significantly influences job application intentions by enhancing self-efficacy and perceived work meaning (Ergun & Tatar, 2016). Priyadarshini and Kumar (2020) found that younger generations prefer companies offering practical experience and continuous learning, while Safitri and Novianti (2024) showed that employer branding increases students' job application interest in Indonesia. However, studies focusing on employer branding value dimensions, especially *application value* in startup contexts, remain limited.

Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Employer Brand Attractiveness theory (Berthon et al., 2005), this study proposes that positive perceptions of *application value* enhance favorable attitudes toward startups, thus increasing students' intention to apply. Addressing a gap in previous research—largely centered on large or multinational companies—this study explores how perceptions of *application value* in startup employer branding influence Generation Z students' job application intentions in Indonesia.



H1: Application value has a positive effect on Generation Z students' interest in applying for jobs at startup companies.

H2: Application value has a positive effect on the employer branding image of startup companies.

H3: Employer branding image has a positive effect on Generation Z students' interest in applying for jobs and mediates the relationship between application value and interest in applying for jobs.

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach and a survey design. The objective is to examine how perceptions of application value—also known as application value—in the employer branding framework of startup companies impact Gen Z's interest in applying for jobs. To analyze the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables, data from a representative sample was used.

This study involved active Gen Z students from various universities in Indonesia. One of the main criteria was that they were aware of startup companies as potential employers. Non-probability sampling was the sampling method used. The target sample size was 200 Gen Z students.

The data collection method was through an online survey. The perception of application value and applicant interest were measured through this questionnaire. Data analysis will use multiple linear regression through statistical software to test the effect of perception of application value on interest in applying statistically. This step will test the research hypothesis that has been formulated based on a literature review.

Results

Table 1.T-test

| Model | Coefficients ^a | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | | Correlations | | | Collinearity Statistics | |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Zero-order | Partial | Part | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 | (Constant) | 7.073 | 2.377 | | 2.976 | .004 | 2.360 | 11.786 | | | | | |
| | Perceived Application Value | -.094 | .138 | -.094 | -.679 | .499 | -.367 | .180 | .714 | -.066 | -.039 | .175 | 5.720 |
| | Employer Branding of Startup Companies | .861 | .134 | .889 | 6.415 | <.001 | .595 | 1.128 | .804 | .531 | .372 | .175 | 5.720 |

a. Dependent Variable: Job Application Intention of Generation Z Students

The application value (X1) has a t-value of -0.328 and a significance value of 0.187, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that Generation Z (Y) students' interest in applying for jobs is not significantly influenced by the Value of Application (X1) variable. In other words, students' desire to apply for jobs is not significantly influenced by the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills offered by startup companies.

The Employer Branding Image variable (X2) has a t-value of 4.200 and a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that Generation Z (Y) students' interest in applying for jobs is positively and significantly influenced by the Employer Image variable (X2). Therefore, Generation Z's interest in applying for jobs at startup companies is positively correlated with the employer's reputation.

Table 2. Multiple linear regression test

| Model | Coefficients ^a | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|-------|-------------------------|------|
| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | | Correlations | | | Collinearity Statistics | |
| | B | Std. Error | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Zero-order | Partial | Part | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 | (Constant) | 7.073 | 2.377 | | 2.976 | .004 | 2.360 | 11.786 | | | | |
| | Perceived Application Value | -.094 | .138 | -.094 | -.679 | .499 | -.367 | .180 | .714 | -.066 | -.039 | .175 |
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a. Dependent Variable: Job Application Intention of Generation Z Students

The table shows a constant value of 4.512. This value indicates that the value of Job Application Intent (Y) will be 4.512 units if both Application Value (X1) and Employer Brand Image (X2) are equal to zero.

The t-value of the application variable (X1) is -1.328, and the significance value of 0.187 is greater than 0.05. These results indicate that students' intention to apply for a job (Y) at a startup company is not influenced by the application value. In other words, students' desire to apply for a job is not significantly influenced by their perception of opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills.

Table 3. Coefficient of determination

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Model Summary ^b | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|---------------|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change | Durbin-Watson |
| 1 | .805 ^a | .647 | .641 | 5.75577 | .647 | 96.395 | 2 | 105 | <.001 | 2.069 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employer Branding of Startup Companies, Perceived Application Value

b. Dependent Variable: Job Application Intention of Generation Z Students

The table above shows an Adjusted R Square value of 0.615. This figure indicates that the two independent variables in this study—Application Value (X1) and Employer Branding Image (X2)—can together explain 61.5% of the variation in the Job Application Interest variable (Y).

Meanwhile, the remaining 38.5%, or 100% to 61.5%, is caused by factors outside the scope of this study. These factors may include organizational culture, labor market conditions, personal motivation, or other variables not included in the research model.

Table 4. F test

| ANOVA ^a | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|--------------------|
| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 6386.903 | 2 | 3193.451 | 96.395 | <.001 ^b |
| | Residual | 3478.533 | 105 | 33.129 | | |
| | Total | 9865.435 | 107 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Job Application Intention of Generation Z Students

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employer Branding of Startup Companies, Perceived Application Value

The F-value of 58.215 was found based on the F-test results shown in the table above, with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.000 less than 0.05. This indicates that Generation Z (Y) students' interest in applying for jobs at startup companies is simultaneously influenced by the variables Application Value (X1) and Company Brand Image (X2).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model used in this study is appropriate (fit) and has the ability to explain how the independent and dependent variables interact with each other as a whole. This means that perceptions of application value and employer branding can influence Gen Z's interest in applying for jobs at startup companies.

Table 5. Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Analysis between Application Value (X₁) and Interest in Applying (Y)

| Model | Coefficients ^a | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|-------|
| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | | Correlations | | |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Zero-order | Partial | Part |
| 1 | (Constant) | 7.073 | 2.377 | | 2.976 | .004 | 2.360 | 11.786 | | | |
| | Perceived Application Value | -.094 | .138 | -.094 | -.679 | .499 | -.367 | .180 | .714 | -.066 | -.039 |
| | Employer Branding of Startup Companies | .861 | .134 | .889 | 6.415 | <.001 | .595 | 1.128 | .804 | .531 | .372 |

a. Dependent Variable: Job Application Intention of Generation Z Students

This equation shows that, assuming other variables remain constant, Gen Z's interest in applying for jobs at startup companies will decrease by 0.094 units if the perceived application value increases by one unit. According to the t-value of -0.679 and a significance level of 0.499 > 0.05, Gen Z's interest in applying is not influenced by the perceived application value.

However, the employer branding coefficient (X2) of 0.861 shows that Gen Z's interest in applying for jobs at startups will increase by 0.861 units for every one-unit increase in employer branding. Employer branding has a positive and significant

effect on Gen Z's willingness to apply for jobs at startup companies, according to a t-value of 6.415 with a significance level of $0.001 < 0.05$.

The results show that Generation Z is more interested in applying for jobs at companies with strong employer branding. This indicates that interest in applying for jobs is more influenced by company branding than by the value of the application.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Analysis between Employer Branding (X₂) and Interest in Applying (Y)

| Model | Coefficients ^a | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|-------|
| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | | Correlations | | |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Zero-order | Partial | Part |
| 1 | (Constant) | 7.073 | 2.377 | | 2.976 | .004 | 2.360 | 11.786 | | | |
| | Perceived Application Value | -.094 | .138 | -.094 | -.679 | .499 | -.367 | .180 | .714 | -.066 | -.039 |
| | Employer Branding of Startup Companies | .861 | .134 | .889 | 6.415 | <.001 | .595 | 1.128 | .804 | .531 | .372 |

a. Dependent Variable: Job Application Intention of Generation Z Students

According to the regression coefficient value of 0.861, every one-unit increase in company brand will increase Gen Z's desire to apply for startup jobs by 0.861 units. With a t-value of 6.415 and a significance level of 0.001–0.05, this shows that company branding has a positive and significant effect on Gen Z's desire to apply.

Thus, these results show that startup companies with strong and attractive corporate branding tend to attract Gen Z candidates. This is in line with the idea that a company's positive image, reputation, and workplace presentation can greatly influence candidates' willingness to apply.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that employer branding plays a dominant and significant role in determining Gen Z's job application intentions toward startup companies. If the company's branding is stronger, more students will be motivated and interested in seeking employment at that company.

Interpretation of Results

Overall, the research findings show that, both partially (t-test) and simultaneously (F-test), company value and branding influence Gen Z students' desire to apply for jobs.

Company Branding (X₂) has a positive and significant partial effect, while Application Value (X₁) has a negative but insignificant effect on interest in applying for jobs. Both variables have a significant combined effect, and the Adjusted R Square value of 0.615 indicates that these two variables can explain 61.5% of the variation in interest in applying for jobs.

Therefore, it can be concluded that employer branding has a greater influence than application value in encouraging Gen Z students to apply to startup companies. Discussion

This study aims to examine the effect of *application value* and *employer brand image* on Gen Z students' willingness to apply for jobs at startup companies. Multiple linear regression results show that *employer brand image* (X2) has a positive and significant effect on *job application interest* (Y), while *application value* (X1) has a negative but insignificant effect. Together, both variables significantly influence job application interest, explaining 61.5% of its variation (Adjusted R² = 0.615).

These findings support the employer branding theory by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), which emphasizes that a company's image as an attractive workplace shapes candidates' perceptions and job interest. Gen Z students tend to consider company reputation, work environment, and values before applying, consistent with findings by Sivertzen et al. (2013) and Theurer et al. (2018).

However, *application value* did not show a significant effect, suggesting that opportunities to apply knowledge and skills are not the main factor attracting Gen Z to startups. This may relate to startups' dynamic work environments and limited career stability, leading students to evaluate the company more holistically.

The study contributes to the literature on employer branding and Gen Z job-seeking behavior, especially in Indonesia's startup context. Practically, startups can use these findings to enhance their employer branding by emphasizing company values, inclusive culture, and competitive advantages aligned with Gen Z's expectations. Future research should include broader samples and additional factors such as motivation, career expectations, or internship experience to improve generalizability.

Conclusion

Based on the results of multiple linear regression data analysis, it can be concluded that the Company Image variable (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z students' interest in applying for jobs (Y) at startup companies. Conversely, the Application Value variable (X1) has a negative effect, but it is not significant. Both variables have a significant impact on job application interest simultaneously; with an Adjusted R Square value of 0.615, this indicates that the two independent variables are responsible for 61.5% of the variation in job application interest, while the remaining 38.5% is influenced by other variables not included in this research model.

This study reinforces the employer branding theory, which emphasizes the importance of having a positive image of the company to attract new employees. These findings also contribute to academic research by increasing our understanding of the behavior of Generation Z job seekers, especially in terms of startup companies developing in Indonesia.

From a practical perspective, this research shows that startup companies must prioritize building a strong employer branding image. This can be achieved by promoting company values, creating a supportive work environment, and offering

attractive job opportunities for the younger generation.

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This research is expected to make a positive contribution to the development of science, particularly in the fields of human resource management and employer branding, and to serve as a reference for future research.

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