The Intersection of Marketing and Human Resource Disciplines: Employer Brand Equity as a Mediator in Recruitment Process

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Abstract:- This study aims to examine the role of employer brand equity mediation in relation to product brands, corporate brands, corporate marketing efforts in social media and the intentions of potential candidates to apply for jobs. Developed as a hierarchical component using the reflective-reflective measurement model and assessed using PLS-SEM, the results show that all direct paths were found to have positive and significant correlations while the company's brand as a mediator construct was found to have a different mediating effect. Our research proves that in certain company sectors and product brand level can influence the intention of job applicants to apply, which is different from previous research which states that product brands do not affect the intention to apply at the level of an aggregate company with varying nature.

Keywords:- Employer Brand, Product Brand, Corporate Brand, Social Media Marketing.

I. INTRODUCTION

The proportion of intangible assets has changed dramatically over the decades. The brand as a key intangible is now a tool in the competitive battle in the service sector. In the field of marketing, companies no longer focus solely on corporate branding efforts to build their product brands and company brands (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), they also make communication efforts to recruit potential candidates as a form of internal branding (Berthon et al. 2005). The application of branding principles to the discipline of human resources was first introduced as "corporate branding" by Ambler & Barrow (1996). Branding employers represent the company's efforts, both inside and outside the company, to clearly explain what makes them different as a company and what they want as a company (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Founded in 1971 in Seattle, United States, Starbucks Coffee Company has successfully established brand equity to its customers. When customers focus on the brand and assume the brand provides a positive view in their memories, customer-based brand equity will occur (Keller, 1993). Starbucks growth proves that the company has succeeded in making customers proud of brands, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Koapaha & Tumiwa; 2016). In addition, Starbucks has also been able to increase the pride of their brand equity through company brands so that highly sought-after employees can be retained (Morocco & Uncle, 2008).

Starbucks Coffee opened its first overseas store in Jakarta, Indonesia under the auspices of PT. Sari Coffee Indonesia as a licensee in 2002. Since it was first launched, the growth of Starbucks Coffee in Indonesia has been very rapid. In the past sixteen years, Starbucks Coffee Indonesia has opened 380 stores in more than 25 cities. Starbucks Coffee Indonesia success in expanding its business is in line with success in recruiting talented employees, this is indicated in the past five years, the number of their employees for store level increased by 74 percent. The brand values that inherent in Starbucks are potentially giving a recruiting advantage for Starbucks Coffee Indonesia as an employer to attract candidates and retain the best human capital (DelVecchio et. al, 2007).

The company brand was established in line with the company's corporate brand and product brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Although the two have something in common, there are major differences between each other. First, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) emphasizes corporate brands that characterize a company's identity as a company or as a good place to work (Ewing et al. 2002; Lievens, 2007; Minchington; 2010), and second, product brand values are output from marketing and advertising creativity, while corporate brand values are based on the affinity of company founders, owner management and organizational members (Banerjee et al. 2018).

Several previous studies have drawn the relationship between corporate branding and the intention of job applicants to apply for a job (Sovina & Collins, 2003; Agrawal & Swaroop, 2009; Ong, 2011; Sokro, 2012). In some ways, the use of social media has been explored as a moderator in preference for employer brands (Aslam, 2015; Sivertzen et al. 2013) because the popularity of social media is changing the point of view of brand management and companies inevitably have to use new ways to deal with stakeholders their externals (Jayasuriya et al. 2018).

In an evolving world where social networking is gaining importance, Starbucks Coffee Indonesia has a very strong presence on social media platform such as instagram. Firms use Instagram not only to attract the attentions of all the users but also to create engagement with brands and establish a visual image for products and service (Lim & Yazdanifard, 2014; Amaral, 2015). Social media marketing as a branding effort is widely being used by both small and big businesses world-wide due to its vast and targeted (Vinaika & Manik, 2017).

Ambler & Barrow (1996) systematized the concept of employer branding at the intersection of human resource management and marketing using brand management theory. Their research brought separate disciplines into a single conceptual framework. However, their research was not obtaining to prove the case of the employer brand concept but to test its acceptability. Moreover, Banerjee, Saini and Kalyanaram (2018) were developed an extended research to prove the case in multinational companies by measured product brand at an aggregate (company) level. Thus, it became their limitations to comment on specific effects of product brand for each multinational company.

The formation of our research has led by the previous research that not systematically addressed the specific issues at multinational company. By examining the product and corporate brands that have been attached to a specific multinational company coupled with marketing efforts through social media, the mediating role of Starbucks Coffee Indonesia's employer brand equity is considered could affect the intentions of potential candidates to apply.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand equity theory is used as the main theoretical foundation in recent studies (Theurer et al. 2018; Ambler & Barrow, 1996; and Banerjee et al.2018). Brands consist of different identifiers that include names, designs, terms, signs, symbols, or other tangible product features (Keller, 1993; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Theurer et al. 2018). The modern approach to brands overlaps conventional understanding of brands and also includes tangible identifiable product features, including intangibles, such as consumer subjectivity or utility expectations (Davcik & Silva, 2015). Cable & Turban (2001) as cited in Banerjee et al. (2018) generalize the concept of brand owners into the context of the selection process and expect that the company's efforts to select potential candidates and the company's efforts to get similar consumers.

➤ *Employer Brand, Product Brand and Corporate Brand*

Since the corporate brand is the function of corporate communications, marketing has been responsible to communicating the product brand to the market (Balmer, 2008). Several previous studies (Kim et al. 2011; DelVecchio et al. 2007; Banerjee et al. 2018) emphasized that product brand is the factor of the job seeker's application intentions and decisions. Thus, many people recognized the value of bringing some of the disciplines of marketing into the HR functions (Barrow & Mosley, 2007). Kim et al. (2011) proves that the link between the firm's product and customer can influence a potential applicant to apply the job. Similarly, they find corporate brand also

considered to be a component of overall brand equity to drives job applicant's decisions.

To show active interest in potential and existing employees, developing company products and brands is superior to competition calls (Barrow & Mosley, 2007). In general, product brands are a key driver of sustainable competitive advantage and employees are seen as an integral part of the company's efforts to build strong brands by generating value in the minds of consumers (Fernandez-Lores et al. 2015; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999 ; Bellou et al. 2015). So, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Product brand have positive correlation influences the employer brand.

Hypothesis 2: Corporate brand have positive correlation influences the employer brand.

➢ *Social Media Marketing and Employer Brand*

In the modern view of recruitment, business firms are returning their traditional model of recruitment and becoming more sensitive to establish employer branding through the new trends of social media presence (Katiyar & Saini, 2016). On the other hands, Katiyar & Saini (2016) shows that business firms may adopt social media strategies as an important tool to build employer brand equity or attract the greatest talent. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Social Media Marketing have positive correlation influences the employer brand.

Hypothesis 7: Employer brand fully mediates the relationship between social media marketing and intention to apply.

➢ *Mediating Role of Employer Brand*

Banerjee et al. (2018) found some past research in the field of human resource management through research related to brand equity marketing to get concepts about employer brands and job seeker application behavior (Katiyar & Saini 2016; Collins 2007; Cable & Turban 2001; Collins & Stevens 2002; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Collins & Stevens (2002) states that brand awareness is one of the dimensions of a company's brand equity. Applicants must know the company before they consider applying for a job. Awareness is an important key to a company's brand

due to the memory node of job applicants for storing more typical associations (Collins & Kanar, 2013). At the same time, entrepreneurial interest is also closely related to the concept of employer branding (Aslam et al. 2015). Employer interest is the benefit shown by job applicants in a job in a particular business enterprise (Berthon et al. 2005). When business companies announce job openings, job applicants prefer companies that are closer to what they consider to be superior companies (Bellou et al. 2015). In the context of the recruitment process, Wilden et al. (2010) found that job applicants evaluate employers' interests through product perceptions and service brand portfolios.

Banerjee et al. (2018) hypothesized the employer's brand as a mediating variable between the product and the company's brand for intention to implement. They revealed that the company's brand fully mediates the relationship between the company's brand and intention to use it because the product brand has no impact on the company's brand.

Another previous research (i.e. Collins, 2007; Saini, Rai & Chaudhary, 2014; Santiago, 2018; Ergun & Tatar, 2016; Aslam, 2015) showed that employer brand significantly increased intention to apply of job applicants, and it is central for sustainable recruitment. Thus, we conceptualize:

Hypothesis 4: Employer brand have positive correlation influences the intention to apply.

Hypothesis 5: Employer brand fully mediates the relationship between product brand and intention to apply.

Hypothesis 6: Employer brand fully mediates the relationship between corporate brand and intention to apply.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research model designed as a hierarchical component using reflective-reflective measurement model shown in Figure 1, it includes nine observable lower order components (LOCs), followed by the three unobservable higher order components (HOCs) to reduce complexity of our model and get more theoretical parsimony (Wong, 2019). Specifically, the first unobservable HOC is corporate brand that holds a reflective relationship with its observable

LOCs such as customer orientation, reliable and financially strong organization, and social and environmental responsibility. The second unobservable HOC is social media marketing that holds a reflective relationship with its LOCs (i.e., Entertainment; Interactive; Informative) and the third HOC is employer brand that holds a reflective relationship with employer brand awareness, employer brand attractiveness and perceived job attributes. Moreover, our conceptual research model postulates the exogenous variables (i.e., product brand, corporate brand and social media marketing), mediating variable (i.e., employer branding) and endogenous variable (i.e., intention to apply) based on the past research proposed by Banerje et al. (2018) and Katiyar & Saini (2016).

To provide better representation of phenomenon, online survey was collected simultaneously from 400 potential candidates who joined walk-in interview held by Starbucks Coffee Indonesia. The main reasons for selecting these respondents were based on the several assumptions; (1) the respondents were the potential candidates who involves hiring process and well-known about Starbucks Indonesia, (2) the variety of respondent domiciles in Indonesia, (3) the respondents have already bought the Starbucks' products, (4) the respondents were Instagram users who involves with social media activities of Starbucks Coffee Indonesia.
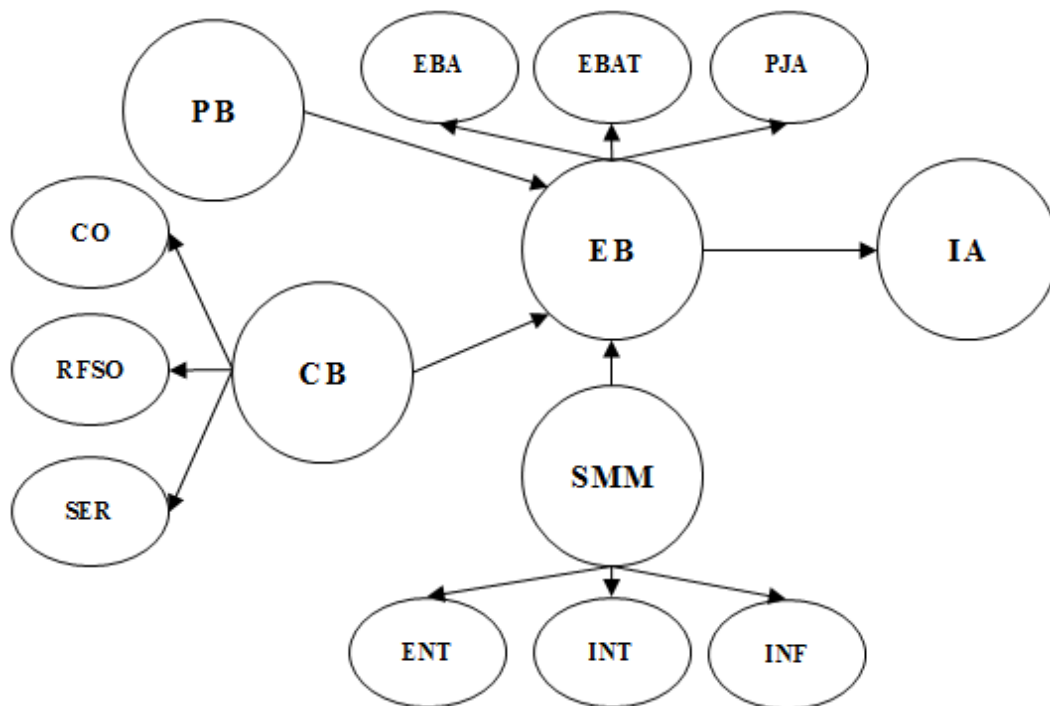

Fig 1:- Conceptual Research Model

Endogenous : IA (Intention to Apply)
Exsogenous : PB (Product Brand), CB (Corporate Brand) and SMM (Social Media Marketing)
Mediator : EB (Employer Brand)
Lower Order Components : EBA (Employer brand awareness), EBAT (Employer brand attractiveness, PJA (Perceived job attributes), CO (Customer orientation), RFS O (Reliable and financially strong organization), SER (Social and environmental responsibility), ENT (Entertainment), INT (Interactive) and INF (Informative)

The online survey returns 80 percent (320 responses) of responds rate for analysis. The average age of respondents was 21 years old since the criteria of candidates were the age between 18 and 24 years old. There were 191 (60 percent) males and 129 (40 percent) females. Educational background of respondents were dominated by 248 (78 percent) candidates graduated from high school followed by 47 (15 percent) candidates graduated from bachelor's degree and 25 (8 percent) graduated from

associate's degree. The online survey was carried out by 128 (40 percent) candidates from DKI Jakarta and 100 (31.3 percent) from Semarang followed by 31 (9.7 percent) Depok, 13 (4.1 percent) Bekasi, 13 (4.1 percent) Yogyakarta, 8 (2.5 percent) Tangerang, 7 (2.2 percent) Bogor, 6 (1.9 percent) Bali and 14 (4.4 percent) from others cities.

The number of respondents who followed Starbucks Coffee Indonesia's Instagram accounts was captured to know the involvement of respondents on social media activities. Starbucks Coffee Indonesia has three official accounts (i.e. @starbucksindonesia, @sbuxpartnersid and @karirstarbucksindonesia) that used to communicate with their different stakeholders in the Instagram. There were 319 (99.7 percent) of respondents involved with @starbucksindonesia, another 43 (13.4 percent) were involved with @sbuxpartnersid, and 255 (79.7 percent) were involved with @karirstarbucksindonesia.

To extend previous research conducted by Banerjee et al. (2018), product brand was assesed using the 14 items scale adapted from Yoo & Donthu (2001), while corporate brand was assesed using the scales given by Walsh & Beatty (2007). Since Walsh & Beatty (2007) proposed five-dimensions for corporate brand, we retained three-dimensions to eliminate repetition, because, extended research (Saini & Kalyanaram, 2018) had already captured the good employer characteristics, as well, product and service quality characteristics, thus, only three-dimensions of five-dimensions (i.e. customer orientation, reliable and financially strong company, and social and environmental responsibility) were retained and assessed using the 19 items.

Employer brand was assesed using the scales given by Cable & Turban (2001) and Collins (2007). There are three-dimensional construct of employer branding (i.e. employer brand awareness, employer brand attractiveness, and perceived job attributes). The employer brand awareness and perceived job attributes were assesed using the 8 items from Collins (2007) while employer brand attractiveness was assesed using the 8 items from Cable & Turban (2001). Intention to apply was assesed using the 5 items proposed by Highhouse et al. (2003). Following Katiyar & Saini (2016), social media marketing was assesed using three-dimensional construct (i.e. entertainment, interactive and informative). We used 10 items scale given by Kim & Ko (2012). All construct were assesed using a 7 point scale type from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The research method uses the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique through SmartPLS Software 3. The model specification involves structural models and measurement models. Sarstedt & Cheah (2019) explained that the structural model shows the path between constructs, while the measurement model shows the relationship between each construct and its indicators.

Indicators of reliability and validity are the first step to check and guarantee that related indicators have a lot in common that is captured by latent constructs (Wong, 2019). However, after we assessed convergent validity by examining the external loading of each latent construct, 12 of the 64 indicators were removed because their external loading was lower than the threshold level of 0.7 proposed by Hair et al. (2014). The remaining indicators are maintained because their external loading is higher than the threshold level 0.7.

	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Intention to Apply	0.783	0.931	0.931	0.947
Employer Brand	0.640	0.949	0.950	0.955
Employer Branding Awareness	0.735	0.820	0.820	0.893
Employer Brand Attractiveness	0.785	0.908	0.913	0.936
Perceived Job Attributes	0.685	0.933	0.934	0.945
Product Brand	0.699	0.957	0.957	0.962
Corporate Brand	0.651	0.964	0.965	0.968
Customer Orientation	0.711	0.898	0.905	0.925
Reliable and Financially Strong organization	0.662	0.926	0.929	0.940
Social and environmental responsibility	0.762	0.896	0.896	0.927
Social Media Marketing	0.701	0.939	0.940	0.949
Entertainment	0.904	0.894	0.894	0.950
Interactive	0.841	0.811	0.811	0.914
Informative	0.754	0.891	0.895	0.924

Table 1:- Convergent Validity

Convergent validity that shown in Table 1 refers to the ability of the model to explain the indicator's variance, the values of AVE provides evidence for convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981 as cited in Wong, 2019). the values of AVE were also higher than 0.5 threshold level (Hair et al. 2006) and exceed the corresponding cut-off criteria. The reliability of each latent construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, however, instead of using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, one should consider using "rho_A" coefficient to ensure the reliability of PLS construct scores, as defined in Dijkstra & Henseler (2015). The Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliabilities were higher than the 0.70 threshold level (Fornell & Larcker, 1981 as cited in Wong, 2019) while rho_A value of 0.7 or larger is approved to demonstrate its composite reliability.

Wong (2019) mentioned that there are two steps to ensure discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). Fornell-Larcker Criterion, the traditional approach that proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981) can be used to establish discriminant validity. However, Henseler et al. (2015) preffered to conducting heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations rather than the Fornell-Larcker criterion because it fails to identify the issues of discriminant validity in the most majority of cases. Henseler et al. (2015) also suggested to conduct the HTMT$_{inference}$ analysis to involves the multiple testing problem proposed by Miller (1981). As the first step to conduct HTMT$_{inference}$ analysis, the bootstrapping procedure allows for constructing confidence intervals for the HTMT, if confidence interval (CI) including the value one, it can be indicated that discriminant validity is lack (Henseler et al. 2015). The HTMT values as shown in Table 2 were passed the threshold level indicating the discriminant validity has been confirmed and there is no lack.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	CI (2.5%)	CI (97.5%)
EBA → CO	0.781	0.774	0.652	0.868
EBAT → CO	0.806	0.801	0.688	0.885
EBAT → EBA	0.753	0.748	0.618	0.854
ENT → CO	0.676	0.676	0.564	0.777
ENT → EBA	0.702	0.700	0.551	0.819
ENT → EBAT	0.693	0.693	0.582	0.792
INF → CO	0.808	0.807	0.734	0.874
INF → EBA	0.759	0.756	0.636	0.853
INF → EBAT	0.824	0.822	0.749	0.884
INF → ENT	0.883	0.883	0.813	0.939
INT → CO	0.629	0.631	0.539	0.719
INT → EBA	0.634	0.633	0.497	0.743
INT → EBAT	0.626	0.625	0.517	0.720
INT → ENT	0.925	0.925	0.852	0.985
INT → INF	0.908	0.908	0.846	0.963
PJA → CO	0.786	0.781	0.666	0.868
PJA → EBA	0.716	0.712	0.585	0.818
PJA → EBAT	0.829	0.828	0.758	0.888
PJA → ENT	0.683	0.682	0.580	0.776
PJA → INF	0.778	0.777	0.688	0.853
PJA → INT	0.611	0.611	0.507	0.709
RFSO → CO	0.967	0.966	0.929	0.989
RFSO → EBA	0.776	0.770	0.642	0.865
RFSO → EBAT	0.841	0.838	0.750	0.903
RFSO → ENT	0.703	0.703	0.593	0.799
RFSO → INF	0.816	0.815	0.739	0.882
RFSO → INT	0.634	0.635	0.535	0.726
RFSO → PJA	0.756	0.751	0.629	0.846
SER → CO	0.889	0.885	0.803	0.942
SER → EBA	0.756	0.750	0.614	0.856
SER → EBAT	0.789	0.786	0.671	0.875
SER → ENT	0.716	0.716	0.584	0.833
SER → INF	0.788	0.785	0.682	0.867
SER → INT	0.643	0.643	0.531	0.743
SER → PJA	0.693	0.687	0.547	0.799
SER → RFSO	0.970	0.968	0.934	0.994

Table 2:- Discriminant Validity (HTMT$_{inference}$ analysis)

For years, it has been argued that the overall goodness-of-fit failed to reliably distinguish valid from invalid models in partial least square (Wong, 2019). Thus, we conducted Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) to tested model fit. Ramayah et al. (2017) defined SRMR as the difference between the observed correlation

and the model implied correlation matrix, it can be considered a good fit if the values less than 0.08. The SRMR shows value of 0.069, which is slightly below the 0.08 threshold; this suggests a strong theoretical model fit. Meanwhile, predictive relevance (Q^2) is important because it ensures if the indicators in the reflective measurement model can be predicted accurately (Wong, 2019). The results shows values of 0.402 for employer brand and 0.574 for intention to apply, thus, our the predictive relevance (Q^2) values larger than zeroit can be indicated the PLS path model has predictive relevance (Hair et al. 2017).

We assessed structural model with looking at the R^2, path coefficients and the t-values via a bootstrapping procedure with 5.000 resample as suggested by Hair et.al. (2017). The R^2 values shows values of 0.695 for employer brand and 0.800 for intention to apply, suggesting that 69% and 80% of the variance of employer brand and intention to apply could be explained by their exogenous variables.

The research hypothesis was tested based on path coefficients and the corresponding t-value is shown in Table 3, the results show that the direct path between Product Brands and Entrepreneur Brands (ie Product Brands → Entrepreneur Brands) has a positive correlation (β = 0.294) and significant (t = 2.671), supporting hypothesis 1. On the other hand, the direct path between Corporate Trademark and Employer Trademark (ie Corporate Trademark → Employer Trademark) has a positive correlation (β = 0.291) and significant (t = 2.466), supporting hypothesis 2. Besides that , the direct path between Social Media Marketing and Entrepreneur Trademark (ie Social Media Marketing → Entrepreneur Trademark) has a positive correlation (β = 0.310) and significant (t = 4.691), supporting hypothesis 3. Meanwhile, we find the Brand Equity Entrepreneur has a correlation that is very positive (β = 0.703) and significant (t = 11.284).

In line with the research hypothesis that Equity Employers fully mediate the relationship between Product Brands and Intention to Register, Company Trademarks and Intentions to Register, and Social Media Marketing (eg Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6). To test all indirect paths, Hayes (2008) suggests bootstrapping in a two-step procedure: 1) the need for direct effects to be checked using bootstrap without the presence of a mediator constructor; 2) the significance of the indirect effect related to the t-value is examined using the path coefficient when the mediator constructor is included in the model.

Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)
Direct Paths		
Product Brand → Employer Brand	0.294	2.671
Corporate Brand → Employer Brand	0.291	2.466
Social Media Marketing → Employer Brand	0.310	4.691
Employer Brand → Intention to Apply	0.703	11.284
The role of Employer Brand as Mediator		
Direct Effects		
Product Brand → Intention to Apply	0.254	2.979
Corporate Brand → Intention to Apply	-0.056	0.590
Social Media Marketing → Intention to Apply	0.033	0.573
Indirect Effects		
Product Brand → Employer Brand → Intention to Apply	0.207	2.546
Corporate Brand → Employer Brand → Intention to Apply	0.282	2.462
Social Media Marketing → Employer Brand → Intention to Apply	0.218	4.141

Table 3:- Hypotheses Testing

The results suggest that Employer Brand fully mediates both relationships between Corporate Brand and Intention to Apply; and Social Media Marketing and Intention to Apply. The direct effect of Corporate Brand and Intention to Apply had negative (β = -0.056) correlation and statistically insignificant (t = 0.590) while the indirect effect had positive (β = 0.282) correlation and statistically significant (t = 2.462). As well, the direct effect of Social Media Marketing and Intention to Apply had positive (β = 0.033) correlation and statistically insignificant (t = 0.573) while the indirect effect had positive (β = 0.218) correlation and statistically significant (t = 4.141), thus supporting hypotheses 5 and 6.

Our findings show that hypothesis 4 is not supported, since the direct effect of Product Brand and Intention to Apply had positive (β=0.254) correlation and statistically significant (t = 2.979) while the indirect effect had positive (β = 0.207) correlation and statistically significant (t =2.546), Employer Brand Equity partially mediates the relationship between product brand and Intention to Apply.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that the company's products and brands have a positive and significant correlation with the employer's brand. It can be indicated that the results of marketing companies' efforts to build strong brands as a whole have an impact on other functional areas of business. As such, we suggest implications for marketing and human resource management for integrating product brands with company brands in the recruitment aspect to build company brand equity. Meanwhile, the company's efforts in social media marketing were also found to have a positive and significant correlation on the company's brand. Because corporate brands fully mediate the relationship between corporate brands, social media marketing and intention to apply, it can be shown that corporate brands play an important role. Human resource management needs to develop the company's brand equity by integrating company brands and using social media activities, which in turn are used by potential applicants to produce conclusions about job attributes that lead to the pursuit of work. However, this study shows that corporate brands mediate some of the relationship between product brands and intention to apply for job applicants. This means that the integration of product and entrepreneur brands needs to be maximized to attract job applicants. We prove different insights from product brands that are operationalized at the level of certain product brands that affect the intention of job applicants to apply. However, several limitations must be noted. The findings of this study were handled by multinational companies. We recommend further research that can capture the theoretical framework and apply the case at the small business level.

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