

EMPLOYER ATTRACTIVENESS, SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, AND INTENTION TO APPLY AMONG FRESH GRADUATES IN MADIUN CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply with Social Media Platforms as a mediating variable among fresh graduates in Madiun City, focusing on Valory Service HP Madiun. The study was motivated by increasing unemployment among higher education graduates, changes in job-search behavior toward digital media, and the limited number of studies focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises. This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative design. The sample consisted of 170 fresh graduates selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using SEM-PLS with SmartPLS 4. The results show that Employer Attractiveness has a positive effect on Social Media Platforms and Intention to Apply. Social Media Platforms also has a positive effect on Intention to Apply and partially mediates the effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply. Future research is suggested to examine different objects, regions, and respondent characteristics.

Keywords: Employer Attractiveness, Social Media Platforms, Intention to Apply, Fresh Graduate

A. INTRODUCTION

Employment issues among higher education graduates in Indonesia have become a concern, as the unemployment rate among individuals with higher education continues to increase. Based on data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the national Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) reached 4.76% in February 2025, equivalent to approximately 7.28 million people. Among graduates with Diploma IV, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees, the unemployment rate increased from 5.25% in February 2024 to 6.23% in February 2025. This condition indicates that higher education does not fully guarantee that graduates will obtain employment within a short period (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025).

This condition is related to changes in job search behavior. The development of digital technology has made social media not only a means of entertainment and communication but also a source of information about companies and employment opportunities. The Digital 2026 Indonesia report shows that as of October 2025, Indonesia had 180 million active social media user identities. This condition demonstrates the substantial potential of social media as a communication channel between companies and prospective employees (We Are Social, 2025).

Changes in job search behavior also present challenges for small and medium-sized enterprises. Limited resources and budgets mean that smaller companies may not have the same capabilities as large companies in developing employer branding (Subbarao et al., 2022). Therefore, the use of social media can serve as an alternative means of communicating company-related information to prospective applicants. In this context, Valory Service HP Madiun is a small and medium-sized smartphone repair service company that utilizes Instagram and TikTok to promote its services and establish communication with the public. These social media platforms can also display the company's work activities, work environment, and organizational culture, which can be observed by prospective employees.

The concept of Employer Attractiveness refers to prospective applicants' perceptions of an organization as an attractive place to work (Berthon et al., 2005). El-Menawy and Saleh (2023) explain that employer attractiveness is associated with economic benefits, social value, reputation, and opportunities for personal development. Meanwhile, Social Media Platforms serve as digital communication channels that enable companies to convey information about their organization, work culture, reputation, work environment, and career opportunities to prospective applicants (Subbarao et al., 2022).

The relationship among these three variables can be explained through Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973). Companies act as signalers that communicate information about their organizational characteristics, while prospective applicants act as receivers who use such information to reduce uncertainty when evaluating potential employers. In this study, Employer Attractiveness represents the values and benefits offered by the company, Social Media Platforms serve as the channel through which signals are communicated, and Intention to Apply

represents the prospective applicants' behavioral response after evaluating the information received.

El-Menawy and Saleh (2023) found that Employer Attractiveness has a positive effect on Social Media Platforms and Intention to Apply, while Social Media Platforms mediate the relationship between Employer Attractiveness and Intention to Apply. Similarly, Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2025) found that social media can enhance Intention to Apply through the mediating role of Employer Attractiveness and Person-Organization Fit, while Khan (2024) demonstrated the mediating role of social media in the relationship between Employer Branding and job application intention. Their study was conducted among final-year students and fresh graduates in Egypt. The present study replicates their model in a different context, namely fresh graduates in Madiun City, with Valory Service HP Madiun as a small and medium-sized smartphone repair service company.

Furthermore, a research gap remains in terms of differences in research contexts and the limited number of studies focusing on small and medium-sized companies and medium-sized cities. Previous studies have predominantly focused on large companies, while research on small and medium-sized service companies in Indonesia remains relatively limited (Habasaron & Rachmawati, 2024). Therefore, this study is expected to expand the application of the relationship model among Employer Attractiveness, Social Media Platforms, and Intention to Apply within this context. Based on the foregoing discussion, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1: Employer Attractiveness has a positive effect on Social Media Platforms.

H2: Social Media Platforms has a positive effect on Intention to Apply.

H3: Employer Attractiveness has a positive effect on Intention to Apply.

H4: Social Media Platforms mediates the effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply.

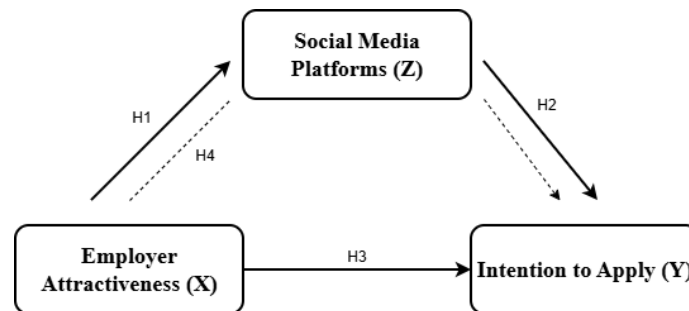


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

B. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative research design. The design was used to examine the causal relationships between Employer Attractiveness as the independent variable, Social Media Platforms as the mediating variable, and Intention to Apply as the dependent variable. Data were collected through an online survey using a questionnaire distributed to fresh graduates in Madiun City.

The population consisted of fresh graduates domiciled in Madiun City, defined as Diploma (*D3/D4*) or Bachelor's (*S1*) graduates who had completed their education within the previous two years and were currently seeking employment or interested in applying for jobs. The sample was selected using non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique. The respondent criteria included being domiciled in Madiun City, having graduated from a *D3/D4* or *S1* program within the previous two years, not having permanent employment or currently seeking employment, having viewed or accessed Valory Service HP Madiun's social media, and being willing to participate as a respondent.

The sample size was determined based on the number of research indicators (Hair et al., 2021). The study consisted of 34 indicators, comprising 13 indicators for Employer Attractiveness, 12 indicators for Social Media Platforms, and 9 indicators for Intention to Apply. Based on the sampling criteria used in the study, a minimum sample of 170 respondents was obtained. The data were subsequently analyzed using 170 respondents who met the specified criteria.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire adapted from El-Menawy and Saleh (2023) and adjusted to the research context. Employer Attractiveness was measured using

the dimensions of Economic Value, Social Value, Reputation, and Development–Interest Value. Social Media Platforms were measured using Informativeness, Credibility, Interaction, and Accessibility. Meanwhile, Intention to Apply was measured using Desire to Seek Information, Intention to Submit Application, and Interest to Work. The variables were measured using a four-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree.

Data were analyzed using *Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares* (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4 (Hair et al., 2021). Model evaluation consisted of the *outer model* and *inner model*. The *outer model* was evaluated using *outer loading*, *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE), *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio* (HTMT), *Composite Reliability*, and *Cronbach's Alpha*. The *inner model* was evaluated using *Variance Inflation Factor* (VIF), *coefficient of determination* (R^2), *effect size* (f^2), *model fit*, and hypothesis testing using *bootstrapping*.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS [Times New Roman 12, Bold]

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 170 fresh graduates as respondents. Based on gender, 102 respondents (60.0%) were female and 68 respondents (40.0%) were male. In terms of age, respondents aged 23–25 years constituted the largest group, with 72 respondents (42.4%), followed by those aged 20–22 years with 69 respondents (40.6%), and those aged over 25 years with 29 respondents (17.1%). Based on educational attainment, the respondents were predominantly Bachelor's degree (*S1*) graduates, totaling 124 respondents (72.9%), while Diploma (*D3/D4*) graduates accounted for 46 respondents (27.1%). In terms of graduation year, the largest group consisted of 2025 graduates, totaling 92 respondents (54.1%), followed by 2026 graduates with 40 respondents (23.5%) and 2024 graduates with 38 respondents (22.4%).

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Frequency Total	Percentage (%)	Percentage Total
Gender	Female	102	170	60%	100%
	Male	68		40%	

Age	20–22 years	69	170	40,6%	100%
	23–25 years	72		42,4%	
	>25 years	29		17,1%	
Educational Attainment	Diploma (D3/D4)	46	170	27,1%	100%
	Bachelor's (S1)	124		72,9%	
Graduation Year	2024	38	170	22,4%	100%
	2025	92		54,1%	
	2026	40		23,5%	

Source: Primary Data Processed (2026)

Measurement Model Evaluation

The initial model consisted of 34 indicators. Following the evaluation of *outer loadings*, indicators that did not meet the required criteria were eliminated while maintaining the theoretical representation of each dimension. In the final model, the retained indicators had *outer loading* values above 0.70. The *outer loading* values for Social Media Platforms ranged from 0.717 to 0.792, while those for Intention to Apply ranged from 0.727 to 0.820. These results indicate that the retained indicators adequately represent their respective constructs.

Table 2. Summary of Outer Model Evaluation

Construct	Outer Loading	AVE	HTMT	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Employer Attractiveness	>0.70	0,546	0.599–0.625	0,917	0,930
Social Media Platforms	0.717–0.792	0,556	0.597–0.625	0,920	0,932
Intention to Apply	0.727–0.820	0,604	0.597–0.599	0,906	0,924

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output, Processed (2026)

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for Employer Attractiveness, Social Media Platforms, and Intention to Apply were 0.546, 0.556, and 0.604, respectively. All values exceeded 0.50, indicating that convergent validity was established. Discriminant validity based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was also established. The HTMT values between Employer Attractiveness and Intention to Apply, Employer Attractiveness and Social Media

Platforms, and Social Media Platforms and Intention to Apply were 0.599, 0.625, and 0.597, respectively. All values were below 0.90, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

The reliability results also indicated satisfactory internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha values for Employer Attractiveness, Social Media Platforms, and Intention to Apply were 0.917, 0.920, and 0.906, respectively. The Composite Reliability values were 0.930, 0.932, and 0.924, respectively. All values exceeded 0.70, indicating that the three constructs were reliable. The final measurement model after indicator elimination is presented in Figure 2.

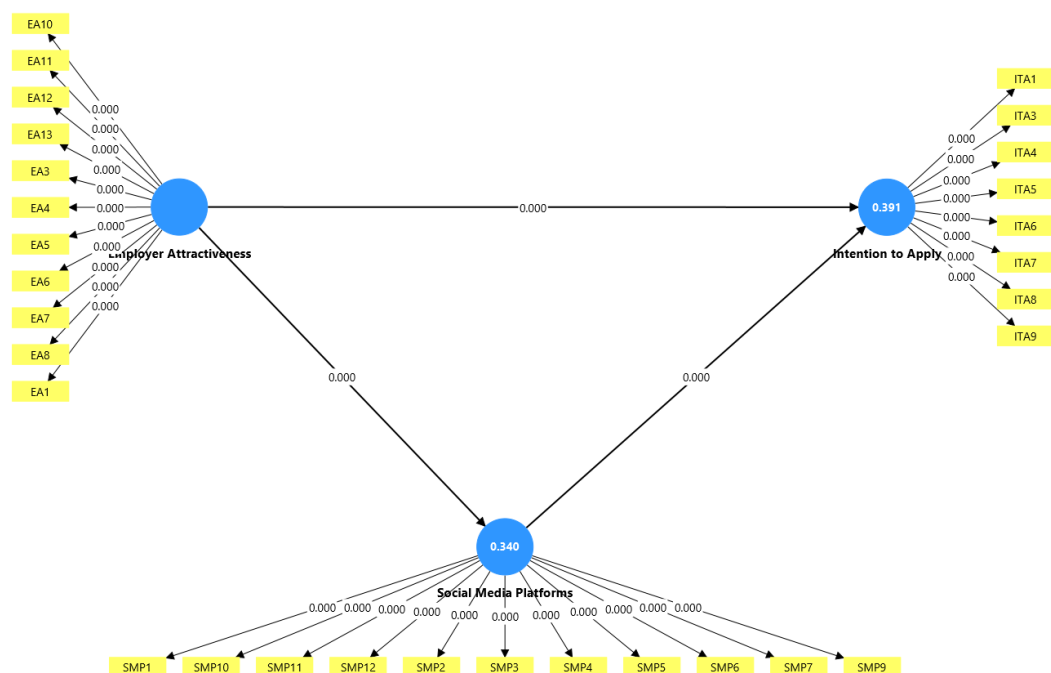


Figure 2. Final PLS-SEM Model with Bootstrapping Results

Structural Model Evaluation

The inner VIF results showed a value of 1.000 for the relationship between Employer Attractiveness and Social Media Platforms and 1.514 for the relationships involving Intention to Apply. All values were below 3.00, indicating that there was no critical collinearity issue in the structural model. The R^2 value for Social Media Platforms was 0.340, while the R^2 value for Intention to Apply was 0.391. This indicates that Employer Attractiveness explained 34.0% of the variance in Social Media Platforms. Meanwhile, Employer Attractiveness and Social

Media Platforms jointly explained 39.1% of the variance in Intention to Apply. The remaining variance was explained by other factors outside the research model.

The *effect size* results showed that the effect of Employer Attractiveness on Social Media Platforms was 0.514 and categorized as large. The effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply was 0.128 and categorized as small, while the effect of Social Media Platforms on Intention to Apply was 0.140 and categorized as small, approaching the moderate category. Model fit evaluation showed an SRMR value of 0.057. This value was below 0.08, indicating an acceptable model fit based on the criterion used. Meanwhile, the NFI value was 0.837, which was below 0.90. Therefore, the model could not be considered to have a perfect fit. In PLS-SEM, model fit serves as a supporting evaluation, while the primary assessment is based on the quality of the measurement model, path coefficients, explanatory power, and predictive ability of the model.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using *bootstrapping* with 10,000 subsamples at a 5% significance level. A hypothesis was considered supported when the *t-statistic* exceeded 1.96 and the *p-value* was below 0.05. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 5 and show that all four proposed hypotheses were supported.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	Employer Attractiveness → Social Media Platforms	0.583	12.021	<0.001	Supported
H2	Social Media Platforms → Intention to Apply	0.359	4.251	<0.001	Supported
H3	Employer Attractiveness → Intention to Apply	0.344	3.573	<0.001	Supported
H4	Employer Attractiveness → Social Media Platforms → Intention to Apply	0.209	3.884	<0.001	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 Output, Processed (2026)

The first hypothesis (H1) was supported, indicating that Employer Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Social Media Platforms, with a path coefficient of 0.583, a *t-statistic* of 12.021, and a *p-value* of <0.001. This result indicates that the higher the perceived

attractiveness of the company among fresh graduates, the more positively they evaluate the company's social media presence. Thus, a strong perception of the company as an attractive employer is associated with a more positive perception of its social media platforms.

The second hypothesis (H2) was also supported. Social Media Platforms have a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply, with a path coefficient of 0.359, a *t-statistic* of 4.251, and a *p-value* of <0.001. This finding indicates that social media platforms that provide informative, credible, interactive, and accessible information can increase fresh graduates' intention to apply for a job. Therefore, the quality of information and communication provided through social media can contribute to the formation of applicants' intentions.

The third hypothesis (H3) was supported, showing that Employer Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply. The path coefficient was 0.344, with a *t-statistic* of 3.573 and a *p-value* of <0.001. This finding indicates that the more positively prospective applicants perceive Valory Service HP Madiun as an attractive employer, the stronger their intention to apply for a job. Thus, employer attractiveness represents an important consideration in shaping prospective applicants' employment intentions.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) was supported, indicating that Social Media Platforms mediate the effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply. The indirect effect was 0.209, with a *t-statistic* of 3.884 and a *p-value* of <0.001. Since the direct effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply remained positive and significant, the mediation was classified as *complementary partial mediation*. This indicates that Employer Attractiveness increases Intention to Apply both directly and indirectly through Social Media Platforms.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Employer Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on both Social Media Platforms and Intention to Apply, while Social Media Platforms also positively and significantly influence Intention to Apply. These results indicate that a positive perception of Valory Service HP Madiun as an attractive workplace can strengthen how fresh graduates perceive the company's social media and increase their intention to apply. Social media also serves as an important communication channel by providing information about the company, work environment, reputation, learning opportunities, and employment

opportunities, thereby helping prospective applicants reduce uncertainty when evaluating the company (Habasaron & Rachmawati, 2024; Subbarao et al., 2022). Furthermore, Social Media Platforms partially mediate the relationship between Employer Attractiveness and Intention to Apply, indicating that employer attractiveness influences application intention both directly and through social media (El-Menawy & Saleh, 2023; Khan, 2024). This finding is consistent with *Signaling Theory*, in which companies communicate signals regarding their organizational characteristics through social media, while prospective applicants evaluate these signals when forming their employment intentions (Spence, 1973). The results also support El-Menawy and Saleh (2023), who found that Employer Attractiveness positively influences Social Media Platforms and Intention to Apply, with Social Media Platforms playing a mediating role in the relationship between the two variables.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study show that Employer Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Social Media Platforms. Social Media Platforms also have a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply. In addition, Employer Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Apply, while Social Media Platforms partially mediate the effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply. Therefore, enhancing employer attractiveness through effective communication on social media can strengthen fresh graduates' intention to apply for jobs at Valory Service HP Madiun. This study is limited by its focus on a single small and medium-sized service company and respondents who were limited to fresh graduates in Madiun City. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the characteristics and context of the research object and respondents.

E. SUGGESTIONS

Valory Service HP Madiun is advised to optimize its social media not only as a platform for promoting its services but also as a means of employer branding. Information regarding the work environment, employee activities, learning and competency development opportunities, work experiences, and job vacancies should be communicated clearly, credibly, interactively,

and accessibly to prospective applicants. For future research, it is recommended to examine the proposed model across different companies, regions, and respondent characteristics. Future studies may also consider other variables that potentially influence Intention to Apply in order to broaden the explanatory power of the research model.

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