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The Influence of Employer Branding and Work-Life Balance on Job Application Interest with Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) as a Mediating Variable at Rocketindo (A Study on Generation Z)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how work-life balance and company branding affect the interest in job applications, using electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) as a mediating factor among Rocketindo's Generation Z. 96 members of Generation Z were given questionnaires as part of the quantitative technique used in the study. SEM-PLS, or structural equation modeling with partial least squares, was the method used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that interest in job applications is positively and significantly impacted by both work-life balance and corporate branding. Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) was shown to be unable to moderate the impact of work-life balance and corporate branding on interest in job applications. According to these results, work-life balance and corporate branding are important factors in luring in Generation Z job searchers, while electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is ineffective in improving perceptions.

Keywords: Employer Branding; Work-Life Balance; Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM); Interest in Applying for Jobs.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of e-commerce in Indonesia has demonstrated rapid growth, driven by advances in digital technology, changes in consumer behavior, and increasingly widespread internet access. One of the key brand enabler companies playing an important role is Rocketindo, which successfully achieved a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of USD 170 million in 2023. The intense competition with competitors such as AnyMind Group and Sirclo requires Rocketindo to continuously improve its recruitment strategies and retain young talents, particularly Generation Z, who currently dominate the labor market in Indonesia.

Table 1. Business Comparison with Number of Employees

Marketplace	Transaction Revenue	Number of Employees	Employee-to-Revenue Ratio
Rocketindo	USD 170 million	200 people	0.001176
AnyMind Group	USD 200 million	1,000 people	0.005
Sirclo Group	USD 227.6 million	1,049 people	0.0046

Source: Company Websites (Processed Data by Author, 2024)

The data in table 1 shows that Rocketindo's employee-to-revenue ratio is lower compared to its competitors, which indicates that the interest in applying for jobs at Rocketindo is still limited. Generation Z has unique characteristics when it comes to choosing a workplace. They tend to consider employer branding, work-life balance, and the company's reputation, which is often spread through electronic word of mouth (EWOM) on social media. Employer branding plays a crucial role in shaping an attractive company image, while work-life balance is considered a primary need for the younger generation. On the other hand, reviews and employee experiences shared digitally also influence potential applicants' perceptions of a company.

The issue arises because previous research on the influence of employer branding, work-life balance, and electronic word of mouth (EWOM) on interest in applying for jobs still shows mixed results. Tsabita (2024) and Putri Sekar Purborini (2022) found that employer branding significantly influences job application interest, while Soeling et al. (2022) and Kurnia (2024) reported no significant effect. Mostafa (2022) and Shah (2024) argued that work-life balance has a significant effect on job application interest, while Sthapit & Shrestha (2020) reported otherwise. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024), Osburg et al. (2020), and Susilo (2022) stated that electronic word of mouth (EWOM) can mediate interest in applying for jobs, whereas Damayanti (2022) found that EWOM could not. Given these research gaps, this study was conducted to reconfirm the relationships between the variables in the context of Generation Z at Rocketindo.

Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze: (1) The influence of employer branding, work-life balance, and electronic word of mouth (EWOM) on interest in applying for jobs. (2) The influence of employer branding and work-life balance on electronic word of mouth (EWOM). (3) The mediating role of electronic word of mouth (EWOM) in the relationship between employer branding, work-life balance, and interest in applying for jobs among Generation Z at Rocketindo. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for companies in designing more effective recruitment strategies, as well as theoretical contributions to enrich the study of human resource management related to younger generations in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Employer Branding

Employer branding refers to the company's reputation as a workplace, namely how the organization is perceived as an attractive work environment and how it promotes itself to attract and retain talent (Soeling et al., 2022). According to Alcantara et al. (2024), employer branding has five main dimensions: economic value, development value, application value, interest value, and social value.

2.2. Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is the condition of equilibrium between professional and personal life that contributes to employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention (Mostafa, 2022). Shah (2024) emphasized that work-life balance is associated with lower stress levels, higher job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Its dimensions include time allocation, physical health, and environmental support (Arditya Afrizal et al., 2022).

2.3. Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)

Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) refers to digital-based word-of-mouth communication, such as reviews, comments, or employee experiences shared via social media and digital platforms (Osburg et al., 2020). EWOM has a significant power in shaping the company's image in the eyes of potential applicants (Osburg et al., 2020). Its dimensions include brand mediation, perceptions of the company, and information elaboration.

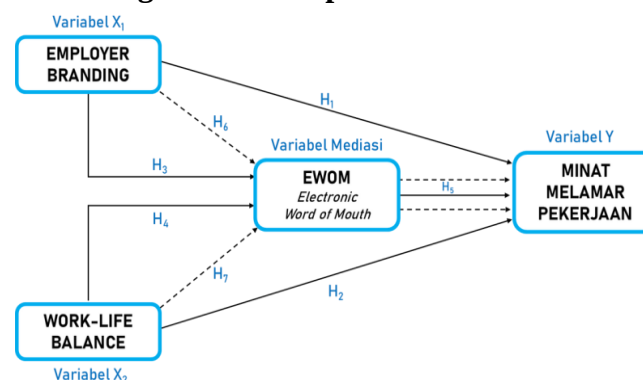
2.4. Interest In Applying For Jobs

Interest in applying for jobs is an individual's motivation to apply for a position in an organization based on their assessment of company attributes, others' experiences, and the alignment with personal career goals. According to Manao et al. (2024), job application interest can be understood through three stages: information seeking, alternative comparison, and decision making.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and previous studies, the conceptual framework for this research is formulated as follows:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Processed by author, 2024

Hypothesis:

H1: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on interest in applying for jobs.

- H2: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on interest in applying for jobs.
H3: Employer branding has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth (EWOM).
H4: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth (EWOM).
H5: Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) has a positive and significant effect on interest in applying for jobs.
H6: Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) mediates the effect of employer branding on interest in applying for jobs.
H7: Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) mediates the effect of work-life balance on interest in applying for jobs.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach with a survey method to test the hypotheses regarding the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. The population of the study consisted of Generation Z individuals who are familiar with Rocketindo. A total of 96 respondents were obtained using the simple random sampling technique proposed by Ahmed (2024). Respondents aged 18–25 years were categorized as Generation Z. Data were collected through online questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale. The research instruments were developed based on theoretical indicators of each variable: employer branding, work-life balance, electronic word of mouth (EWOM), and job application interest.

The formula by Ahmed (2024) was used when researchers were interested in the proportion of the population possessing certain attributes. A larger sample size reduces the margin of error (E), thereby providing estimates closer to actual values. The commonly used formula is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}n &= \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{E^2} \\n &= \frac{(1,96)^2 \cdot 0,5 \cdot (1-0,5)}{0,1^2} \\n &= \frac{3,8416 \cdot 0,5 \cdot (0,5)}{0,01} \\n &= \frac{0,9604}{0,01} \\n &= 96\end{aligned}$$

Explanation :

n = required sample size

Z = associated with the desired confidence level (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence)

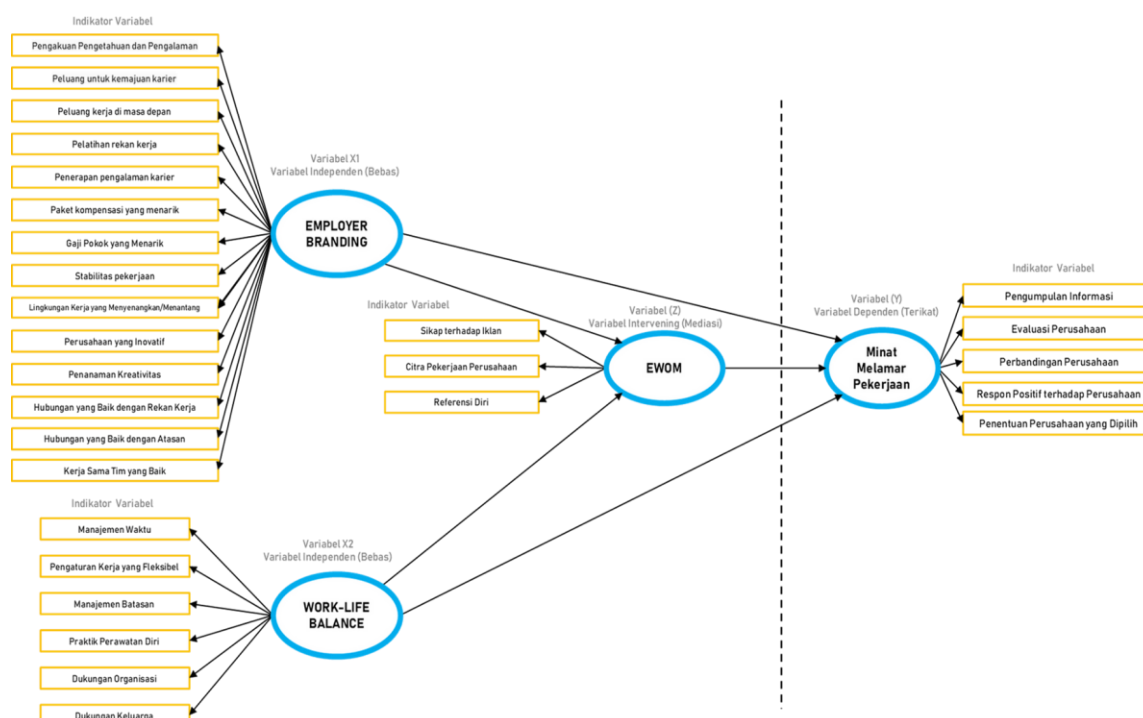
p = estimated population proportion (use p = 0,5 if unknown to maximize variability)

E = desired margin of error or precision

3.2. Operationalization of Variables

The operationalization of variables aims to determine the measurement of independent and dependent variables used in this study.

Figure 2. Operationalization of Variables



Source: Processed by author, 2024

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

Descriptive of Respondent Characteristics

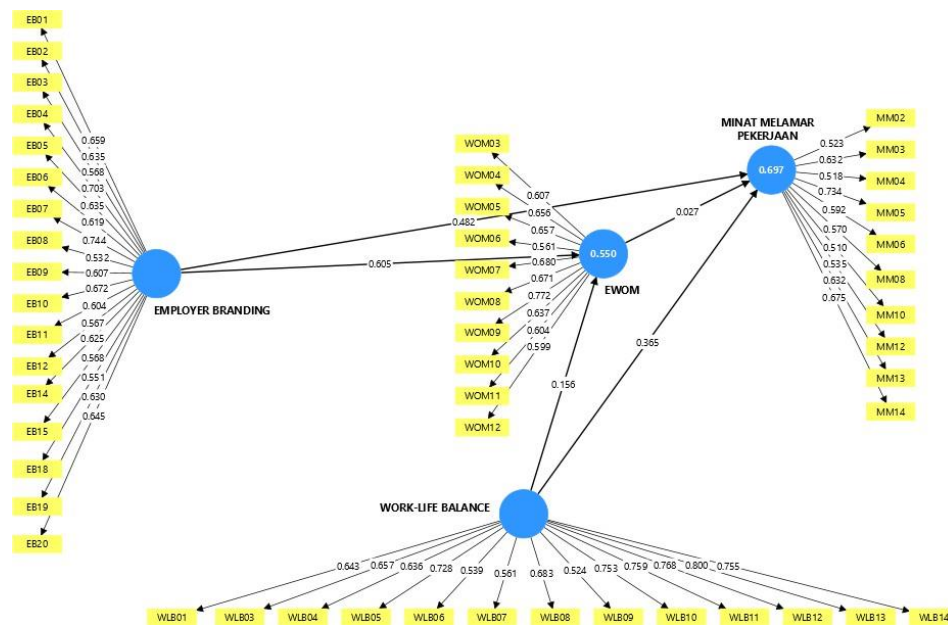
Table 2. Descriptive Test Results of Respondent Characteristics

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	20	20,8%
	Female	76	79,2%
	Total	96	100%
Age	18 – 21 tahun	15	15,7%
	22 – 25 tahun	81	84,3%
	Total	96	100%
Education	Senior High School/Vocational School	25	26%
	Diploma	13	13,6%
	Bachelor's Degree	58	60,4%
	Postgraduate	0	0%
	Total	96	100%

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Convergent Validity Test

Figure 3. Convergent Validity Test Results



Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on Figure 3, indicators are considered valid as constructs if they have a factor loading value above 0.5. Indicators with values below 0.5 were removed from the model (Hair Jr. *et al.*, 2021).

Discriminant Validity Test

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Test Results

Variable	Employer Branding	EWOM	Job Application Interest	Work-Life Balance
Employer Branding				
EWOM	0.810			
Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.950	0.734		
Work-Life Balance	0.929	0.716	0.911	

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the processed data, it can be seen that several variables had a confidence interval (CI) ≤ 0.85 . Thus, these constructs were valid based on discriminant validity using the HTMT calculation. Meanwhile, other variables were found invalid under the same test.

Composite Reliability Test

Table 4. Composite Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)
Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.795	0.845
Employer Branding	0.901	0.915
EWOM	0.846	0.877
Work-Life Balance	0.902	0.918

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are considered reliable because they have values greater than or equal to 0.70.

R-Square Test

Table 5. R-Square Test Results

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
EWOM	0.550	0.541
Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.697	0.687

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the table above, the adjusted R-square value for EWOM is 0.550, indicating that Employer Branding and Work-life Balance as independent variables can explain 55% of EWOM, while the rest is influenced by other factors outside the model. Meanwhile, the adjusted R-square value for Interest In Applying For Jobs is 0.697, showing that Employer Branding and Work-life Balance along with EWOM as a mediating variable can explain 69.7% of Job Application Interest, with the remaining explained by other variables outside the model.

F² Test

Table 6. F² Test Results

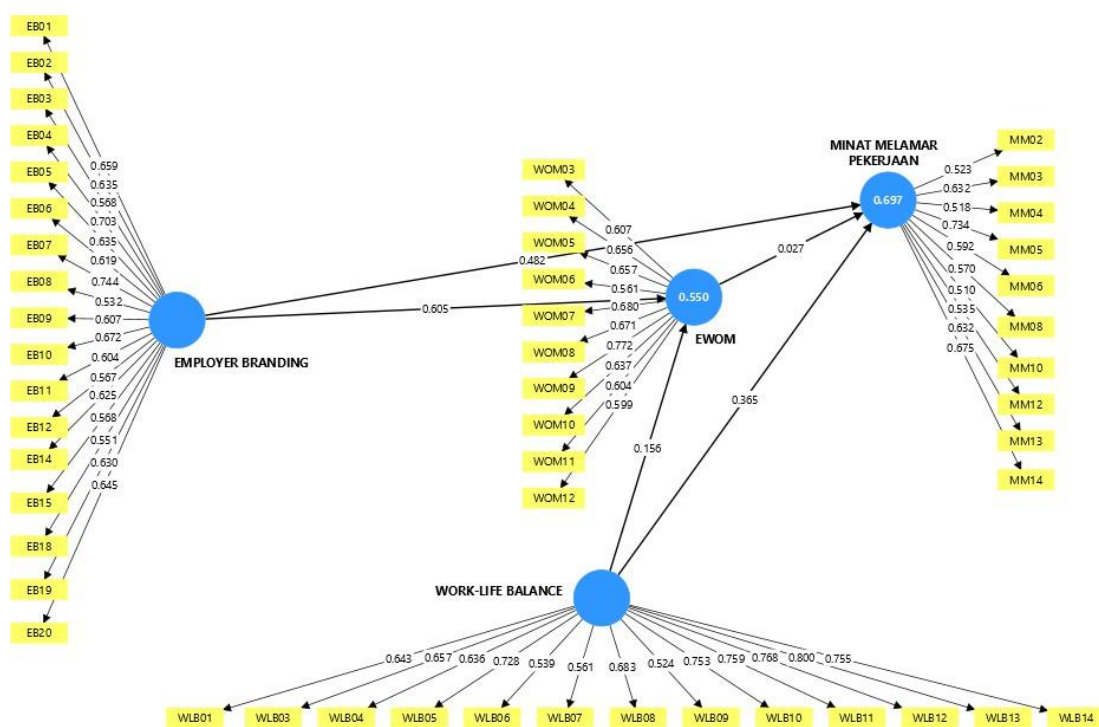
Variable	F-Square
Employer Branding -> EWOM	0.230
Employer Branding -> Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.176
EWOM -> Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.001
Work-Life Balance -> EWOM	0.015
Work-Life Balance -> Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.122

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the table above, the following conclusions can be drawn. The Employer Branding variable as an independent variable has a high effect size ($f\text{-square} = 0.230$) on EWOM as a mediating variable and a medium effect size ($f\text{-square} = 0.176$) on Interest In Applying For Jobs as a dependent variable. The EWOM variable as a mediating variable has a small effect size ($f\text{-square} = 0.001$) on Interest In Applying For Jobs as a dependent variable. The Employer Branding variable as an independent variable has a small effect size ($f\text{-square} = 0.230$) on EWOM as a mediating variable.

Hypothesis Test (Bootstrapping)

Figure 4. Hypothesis Test (Bootstrapping) Results



Source: Processed Data, 2025

Table 5. R-Square Test Results

Variable	Original Sample	T-Statistic	P Values	Results	Hypothesis
Employer Branding -> EWOM	0.605	3.580	0.000	Positive and Significant	Accepted

Employer Branding -> Interest in applying for jobs	0.482	3.099	0.002	Positive and Significant	Accepted
EWOM-> Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.027	0.210	0.834	Not Significant	Rejected
Work-Life Balance - > EWOM	0.156	0.976	0.329	Not Significant	Rejected
Work-Life Balance - > Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.365	2.721	0.007	Positive and Significant	Accepted
Employer Branding -> EWOM -> Interest in applying for jobs	0.016	0.198	0.843	Not Significant	Rejected
Work-Life Balance - > EWOM -> Interest In Applying For Jobs	0.004	0.135	0.893	Not Significant	Rejected

The hypothesis testing results indicate that Employer Branding has a positive and significant effect on EWOM ($\beta = 0.605$, $T = 3.580$, $p < 0.001$) and on Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.482$, $T = 3.099$, $p = 0.002$). Work-Life Balance shows no significant effect on EWOM ($\beta = 0.156$, $T = 0.976$, $p = 0.329$), but it has a positive and significant effect on Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.365$, $T = 2.721$, $p = 0.007$). Meanwhile, EWOM does not significantly affect Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.027$, $T = 0.210$, $p = 0.834$). Furthermore,

EWOM is not able to mediate the influence of Employer Branding on Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.016$, $T = 0.198$, $p = 0.843$) nor the influence of Work-Life Balance on Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.004$, $T = 0.135$, $p = 0.893$)

4.2 Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that Employer Branding has a positive and significant impact on both EWOM ($\beta = 0.605$, $T = 3.580$, $p < 0.001$) and Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.482$, $T = 3.099$, $p = 0.002$). This finding suggests that when companies successfully build a positive employer image, it not significant the likelihood of employees or candidates sharing favorable electronic word of mouth but also enhances applicants' willingness to pursue job opportunities. These results align with previous research (Tisu, 2022; Suprayitno, 2023; Tsabita, 2024; Ek Styvén et al., 2022), which confirms the pivotal role of employer branding in shaping both reputation and applicant behavior. On the other hand, EWOM itself does not significant influence Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.027$, $T = 0.210$, $p = 0.834$), and Work-Life Balance shows no significant effect on EWOM ($\beta = 0.156$, $T = 0.976$, $p = 0.329$). These findings indicate that while positive reviews and online impressions may enhance awareness, they are not sufficient to directly influence application decisions. Instead, Work-Life Balance plays a stronger role in attracting applicants, as shown by its significant positive effect on Job Application Interest ($\beta = 0.365$, $T = 2.721$, $p = 0.007$). This reinforces prior studies (Mostafa, 2022; Kim, 2024; Lindfelt et al., 2018) that highlight the importance of flexible working policies and organizational support in shaping employment attractiveness, especially for Generation Z.

The mediation analysis reveals that EWOM does not mediate the relationship between Employer Branding and Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.016$, $T = 0.198$, $p = 0.843$) nor between Work-Life Balance and Interest In Applying For Jobs ($\beta = 0.004$, $T = 0.135$, $p = 0.893$). This suggests that while EWOM reflects external perceptions of the company, it does not amplify the influence of employer branding or work-life balance on applicants' decisions. Therefore, direct efforts in strengthening employer branding and implementing effective work-life balance strategies remain more crucial for increasing Interest In Applying For Jobs than relying solely on electronic word of mouth.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that strong employer branding enhances both EWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) and Interest In Applying For Jobs, while weak employer branding reduces them. Work-life balance also shows a positive and significant effect on Interest In Applying For Jobs but does not significantly affect EWOM. Furthermore, EWOM itself does not significantly influence job application interest and is not proven to mediate the relationship between employer branding or work-life balance and Interest In Applying For Jobs. In other words, EWOM reflects company perceptions but does not directly drive Generation Z's decision to apply for jobs at Rocketindo. Based on these findings, the researcher suggests that Rocketindo strengthen employer branding, particularly by clarifying the competitive base salary to attract Generation Z applicants. The company should also improve work-life balance policies through flexible work arrangements and employee well-being programs, as well as enhance responsiveness to social media reviews to build stronger EWOM. In addition, Rocketindo should highlight its comparative advantages over competitors to increase job

application interest among prospective applicants. Considering the R-Square value is categorized as moderate, future research may add other variables beyond those used in this study, such as company reputation, compensation, and e- recruitment.

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