

## **A Synthesized Framework Explaining Job Application Among IT Graduates in Malaysia**

Symbat Ashimkhanova, Abdullah Sarwar\*, Vincent Oh Kim Seng

Faculty of Management, Multimedia University, Cyberjaya, Selangor, Malaysia  
*1191401327@student.mmu.edu.my, sunabdullah@gmail.com (Corresponding Author),  
ksoh@mmu.edu.my*

**Abstract.** This empirical research paper investigates the determinants of job application among IT graduates in Malaysia by applying Impression Management Theory and Signaling Theory. The primary objective of the study is to propose solutions to address the challenges faced by employers in the Malaysian IT industry when it comes to attracting high-quality talent to their organizations. The factors under investigation include employer brand and organizational attractiveness. The employer brand factor consists of sub-factors, such as the enthusiasm dimension, capabilities dimension, and digital branding. On the other hand, the organizational attractiveness factor comprises sub-factors including development value, application value, economic value, and social value. The study also explores the role of social networking sites, which are internet-based platforms facilitating various networking activities, in the job application process. By conducting statistical tests using SPSS, the empirical findings indicate that employer brand capabilities and the digital brand dimension positively influence jobseekers' intention to apply for vacant positions. Furthermore, social networking websites moderate the relationship between the employer brand and the intention to apply. The study also reveals that development value, application value, social value, and economic value significantly impact the intention to apply. However, no significant relationship was found between employer brand enthusiasm and the intention to apply for vacant positions. Additionally, the study concludes that social networking websites do not moderate the relationship between organizational attractiveness and the intention to apply for vacant positions. The utilization of social networking sites is highlighted as highly beneficial for employers seeking to advertise job vacancies and for job seekers searching for opportunities. The results of this study can assist recruiting organizations in enhancing their employer brand and organizational attractiveness by effectively utilizing social networking sites. This enables employers to advertise job vacancies more successfully, while graduates gain access to comprehensive and competent job opportunities more efficiently. In summary, this research contributes valuable insights into the factors influencing job application behavior among IT graduates in Malaysia. The study emphasizes the importance of employer brand, organizational attractiveness, and social networking sites in attracting and matching quality talent with available job vacancies. The findings can guide recruiting organizations in improving their recruitment strategies, ultimately benefiting both employers and job seekers alike.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Employment, IT Graduates, Malaysia, Social Networking Sites, Employer Brand, Organizational Attractiveness

## 1. Introduction

The topic of employer branding is an interesting topic that has not been given the attention that it deserves by researchers and academics and therefore, the problem associated with the lack of ability of Malaysian IT (Information Technology) organizations to attract quality talent and retain them is still rather scarce and the literature is full of gaps. One of the main problems faced by employers within the IT industry in Malaysia is the problem of not being able to have what it takes to attract top-quality graduates to work at the organization. The IT industry in Malaysia is a very competitive industry and Malaysian institutions of higher learning have produced high-quality graduates who are employed very fast by IT companies and therefore, the job market can be described as being very competitive (Zhang, 2015).

It is stated that there were 5.36 million graduates in Malaysia in the year 2020 (DOSM, 2021). The number of employed graduates was 4.35 million and this was an increase of 5.6% from 4.12 million persons in the year 2019. Statistics have shown there is a spike in the unemployment rate among graduates by around 4.4% and in the year 2019, the unemployed graduates were almost 200,000 persons (DOSM, 2021). The statistics show that the number of unemployed graduates within the IT sector is increasing. This shows there is a problem with companies in the IT industry when it comes to attracting graduates and keeping them employed with them. 5.1% of these graduates are employed less than three months before leaving the workplace (DOSM, 2021). Therefore, those reports indicate that employers confront challenges in attracting and retaining graduates.

The fact is that it is not easy for organizations in the IT industry in Malaysia to be able to get access to the best quality talent, and hence, employers must take the initiative to understand what kind of factors make their employer brand stand out in the industry and attract graduates to work for them by providing them with better productivity and competitiveness (Wright & Ulrich, 2017). What is needed here is a very strong employer brand that can attract quality employees very effectively.

The main motivation of the study is to provide empirical evidence based on an emerging economy perspective like Malaysia about the deployment of organizational attractiveness and employer brands, as well as the moderating effect of social networking sites to push greater job application among graduates, in particular IT graduates. The branding activities of the organization can have implications on the level of unemployment rate and this is because when a company's brand is perceived as attractive, then it follows that fresh graduates would choose to remain unemployed rather than work for a company they do not like. This is a problem that does contribute to a higher level of unemployment among fresh IT graduates in Malaysia as they are unable to find a company whose brand they can associate with.

There are several gaps that this study aims to close and these gaps need to be filled to ensure that the state of literature in Malaysia about the research topic can become complete. There are no comprehensive past studies relating to employer branding and how brands can be enhanced to increase the likelihood of Malaysian IT graduates applying to work in IT organizations in Malaysia. Most existing studies do not address matters relating to employability among graduates and employer branding from a Malaysian perspective. The researcher aims to use the Impression Management Theory and Signaling Theory to close this research gap. In essence, past studies that were done do not specifically address IT graduate intention to apply for employment in Malaysia and how the brand of the employer affects such an intention, as moderated by social media sites.

Provided below are the main research objectives (RO) of the study:

RO1: To investigate the relationship between enthusiasm and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO2: To investigate the relationship between the capabilities dimension and intention for

employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO3: To investigate the relationship between the digital brand dimension and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO4: To investigate the relationship between application value and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO5: To investigate the relationship between application value and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO6: To investigate the relationship between economic value and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO7: To investigate the relationship between social value and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO8: To investigate how social networking websites moderate the relationship between employer brand and intention for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

RO9: To investigate how social networking websites moderate the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Employer branding and motivation to employment of it graduates**

The present trend among many IT graduates in Malaysia is for them to look for job opportunities that are lucrative and that can provide them with long-term sustainability. Many of these graduates are very talented and of good quality and employers who can hire them are usually very lucky and such employers would benefit from such talent (Elder, 2018). However, those employers who are unable to higher-quality talent will suffer from a lack of skills as well as talents within the organization and this would reflect in them performing very badly (Dolnicar, Grün & Leisch, 2018).

Therefore, it is a very important matter to ensure that an organization designs a very sophisticated and effective employer brand that can enable them to attract the best talent and retain them for the long-term (Lin, & Sanders, 2017). The essence of a strong and formidable employer brand is an employer who can provide these graduates with ease of employment, attractive salaries, and remunerations as well as a very conducive work environment (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). In essence, employees are likely to work for an organization and remain in employment with them for a long period if they believe that working for such an organization would enable them to able to satisfy their career-related objectives (Rajenderan & Zawawi, 2019).

There are certainly many different issues and challenges facing IT industry employers in Malaysia, especially concerning employer branding and this particularly affects IT graduates who often find difficulty in locating a proper job that fits them (Wright & Ulrich, 2017). The problem stems from the fact that certain employer brands tend to be quite unattractive to potential employees and besides, other employer brands within the market might be quite attractive but the brands are not very well projected to the right target market to have the desired effect (Zhang, 2015). Usually, employers are known to launch marketing campaigns to project a sound image of the brand to attract graduates to apply for work at the organization (Yousf & Khurshid, 2021). There are numerous instances when such employers are unable to engage in very comprehensive marketing of their brand and as a result, they would be incapable of satisfying the quest for talent (Getie Ayaneh, 2020).

This is because these talented graduates are unable to get access to information about the employer's brand and as a result, they are unable to learn about how the employer is capable of satisfying

employment-related needs (Getie Ayaneh, 2020). It is a fact that the job market in the IT industry in Malaysia continues to be plagued with certain problems and one of these is the fact that many graduates who work in the industry complain about the fact that their rewards and remunerations as an IT professional are not satisfactory enough (Hinings, Gegenhuber, & Greenwood, 2018). Besides, they claim that many of the employer brands in this industry are not as attractive as they should be and there needs to be something done about this so that a more sophisticated and effective branding initiative can be undertaken by these employers to create a sound employer brand image that is capable of attracting quality talent (Seeck, & Diehl, 2017).

As far as the literature on this topic is concerned, there is indeed a lack of past studies in this area about this particular research topic and the variables associated with it (Rajenderan & Zawawi, 2019). It is observed from analyzing past studies that the theories, as well as methodology, used by these research papers were not very comprehensive, to begin with, and the results obtained by such papers were not very conclusive and did not address this problem from the perspective of the Malaysian IT industry (Matej & Kenda, 2018). There are several research gaps that this particular study is aimed at closing by conducting a new research analysis about the topic of employer branding and how brands can be enhanced to increase the likelihood of top-quality graduates applying to work for a particular employer brand that stands out in the job market (Rajenderan & Zawawi, 2019).

In analyzing the various past studies that were conducted in this area of research, there do seem to be various flaws and limitations that are observed to be present within these past studies and this concerns the kind of theories that are being used (Elder, 2018). In other words, the past studies on this research topic did not use very comprehensive and precise theories to address this research problem. This present study will use more comprehensive theories that are more relevant to the research topic on employer branding and these include the signaling theory, as well as the Impression Management theory, which concerns organizational attractiveness and branding (Tang, 2017). The theory that is used in a study is very essential in guiding the study in the right direction and for it to bring about very conclusive and comprehensive empirical findings. If the theories that are used are not very precise and on point, such as the theories used in past studies on this research topic, then the outcome of the research would be flawed (Wright & Ulrich, 2017).

For example, in research carried out (Dolnicar, Grün & Leisch, 2018), there was an absence of the element of digital technology in the form of social networking in terms of how social networking sites can have a moderating effect on employer branding. This is a very important gap that this current research paper would like to address. The researcher aims to utilize certain theories to assist with addressing this research gap and these include the signaling theory and impression management theory. The theories aim to provide a better understanding of how various aspects of employer branding can result in fresh graduates applying to work for a certain organization, as moderated by social networking sites. These theories can help in establishing important employer branding-related factors which will be described in the following part of this article in more detail (Hinings, Gegenhuber, & Greenwood, 2018).

The various components of the proposed framework of this research are described. Firstly, there will be a description of two main general independent variables with subcategories, and these are employer brand and organizational attractiveness variables. These subcategories of the employer brand-independent variable comprise enthusiasm, capabilities dimension, and digital branding (Oberoi, Patel, & Haon, 2017). The subcategories of the organizational attractiveness independent variable are developmental value, application value, social value, and economic value. The moderating variable is social networking sites and the dependent variable is the motivation for employment among IT graduates (Seeck & Diehl, 2017). This particular framework will be underpinned by the signaling theory and impression management theory. The signaling theory would create a basis for the researcher to be

able to show how the independent variables of employer brand and organizational attractiveness can influence the dependent variable which is the decision of IT graduates in Malaysia to apply for a job. Besides, the impression management theory can also have an important role in explaining the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Both these theories intend to show here how the dimensions of employer brand and organisational attractiveness can affect the motivation for employment among IT graduates in Malaysia and how this relationship is moderated by social networking sites (Ai, 2015). The proposed framework is graphically represented below:

The first theory to be used is the impression management theory which when applied to this research, would involve an employer trying to alter the perception of the potential jobseeker following the objectives of the first entity (Ai, 2015). This means that the theory is about how the employer would present themselves to the potential jobseeker, but it should be done in a way that satisfies the needs and objectives of the employer (Getie Ayaneh, 2020). The second theory to be used is the signaling theory and this theory involves a belief that positive information on the image, reputation, and well-being of an organisation will be used by an employer to send a message to the receiver, which in this case would be the potential graduate (Ai, 2015). It involves communicating a set of positive aspects about the brand of the employer and the organisational attractiveness to the potential jobseeker to provide them with a positive impression of the organisation and thus attract the candidate to make an application to work for such an organisation (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2017).

## **2.2. Motivation to apply for job vacancy**

The motivation to apply for a job vacancy is essentially the willingness and intention on the part of a fresh graduate to apply to work for a particular employer within the IT industry (Rajenderan & Zawawi, 2019). Such a motivation to apply for a job vacancy can be influenced by a variety of different factors and these can include factors such as the employer's brand, the attractiveness within the organisation, and also whether these attributes of the employer can be projected and magnified via interactive and innovative social media sites over the Internet (Lin & Sanders, 2017). Within the proposed framework, the motivation to apply for a job vacancy in the IT industry will be the dependent variable.

The concept of employer branding plays an important role in supporting the well-being and viability of the organisation (Rajenderan & Zawawi, 2019). When an organisation has a very sophisticated and attractive employer brand, it will be able to attract quality talent to work at the organisation thus providing the organisation with better competencies and capabilities that will generate a stable human resource function in the organisation (Tang, 2017). The creation of a strong and stable employer brand would require a lot of effort taken by the organisation to nurture the brand so that positive attributes of the brand can be projected to the right target market and thus attract employers to work for the organisation (Ai, 2015).

The creation of a very effective employer brand would help create a strong competitive advantage for the organisation when it comes to recruiting employees and this will be helpful to attract quality talent and minimize costs associated with having to siphon through bad-quality applicants (Tang, 2017). An organisation that has a very effective employer brand will be able to attract top talent away from other companies and thus create a competitive advantage for itself via the superior talent base that it has (Lin & Sanders, 2017). In essence, many studies have shown that a very strong and healthy employer brand is regarded as a tool that can create a strong employee database for the organisation and thus create better human resource efficiency and better revenues as well (Bi, 2016).

The employer branding initiatives of the organisation are indeed required to generate strong ability on the part of the organisation to overcome competition in the industry by attracting talent and retaining (Tang, 2017). There is a need for various initiatives to be taken by the organisation to create an employer

brand that can project a sound, comprehensive, and attractive image of the organisation as an employer of choice and an image that potential graduates and job applicants find comfortable and which will make them have a positive motivation to apply to work for such an organisation (Elder, 2018).

The motivation of an employee to find employment is a factor that is affected by various other elements and circumstances that affect the fresh graduate. Certain graduates may not be very motivated to find employment whereas other graduates may be very keen on searching for stable, long-term, and quality employment (Rajenderan & Zawawi, 2019). Whether or not the graduates are motivated to find employment depends a lot on the situation as well as the attractiveness of the employer brand (Tang, 2017). It is only likely for a graduate to find employment if they know that there is a good chance of being employed by a very reputable and stable organisation and thereby earning a lucrative salary (Ai, 2015).

This means that graduates are likely to become motivated to find employment if they are exposed to an employer brand that they find to be attractive and that they believe to be able to satisfy their needs (Ai, 2015). Such graduates are likely to choose an employer brand that can satisfy their various employment needs. This means that positive motivation to employment is likely to be exhibited by fresh graduates if they come across an employer brand that is presented to them in a way that attracts them and this means that such a brand must be a brand that they believe to be worth it (Elder, 2018).

The motivation to employment for the graduate will be negative if the graduate believes that there are no worthy employer brands in the job market at the moment and also if they believe that the brands of employers that are being advertised in the job market may not be worth their effort because they may not satisfy their requirements (Seeck, & Diehl, 2017). When this is the case, the employer may lose out on capturing that particular graduate, and as a result, they will not benefit from the talent (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016). This is attributed to a low-quality branding initiative by the employer that is unable to project the main attributes of the employer via its brand. As a result, these employers will not be able to secure quality talent to work for the organisation (Ai, 2015).

Hence, for these employers to be able to attract quality talent, they must be able to create a very sophisticated, positive, and valuable brand for themselves and which can be projected to these graduates using a flexible and dynamic platform from which these graduates will be able to access information about all of the attributes of the brand (Bharadwaj et al., 2022). In a very competitive job market, this can be quite challenging and what is needed is for these employers to engage in branding initiatives using digital platforms such as social networking sites (Oberoi, Patel, & Haon, 2017).

From a Malaysian perspective, there were studies carried out concerning job application behaviour among graduates in Malaysia. For example, the study by Ismail et al (2019) addressed the employment skills that are required by such graduates from a gender perspective. The study addressed matters from a gender perspective and focused more on the employability skills of the graduates and not on the employer brand.

In another study by Mahmud et al., (2022), the researchers investigated career information-seeking behaviour among graduates for their education and career, as a process of their career development. The study was primarily about how information-seeking behaviours can be influenced positively by counseling at universities but not by employer branding.

Another Malaysian study analysed here is a study by Ma'dan et al., (2020) and this study was about analysing the various strategies that enhance graduate employability. The study findings highlight the importance of changes and reforms at the institutional level to support competency and employability among graduates. It does not evaluate or address employer branding. Based on the studies carried out in Malaysia, it is very evident that there is a significant research gap in the sense that there are no past

studies that were done in Malaysia which specifically address IT graduate intention to apply for employment and how the brand of the employer affects such an intention.

This study will be focused on closing such a research gap by conducting a study among IT graduates from the Malaysian employer's perspective.

### **2.3. Factors affecting motivation to apply for job vacancy**

These factors comprise the main independent variables of the study and these include employer brand and organizational attractiveness.

#### **2.3.1. Employer Brand**

The first independent variable here is employer brand and this is described as the employer's image within the IT industry as being an employer that has a brand of choice and will be an employer that is preferred by fresh graduates (Yang, 2016). It comprises the brand image of the employer as perceived by the potential job applicant and that can affect the intention of the job seeker to apply to work for a particular employer after perceiving positive aspects associated with the brand image (Lin & Sanders, 2017). Practically speaking, a brand of the employer that is very well known and famous for its attributes will have a likelihood of attracting job seekers at a higher rate in contrast to brands that are obscure and unpopular (Tang, 2017). The research will examine the independent variable of employer brand and the way that it is moderated by social networking sites, hence generating a positive motivation to make an application for a job vacancy by graduates (Cvjetković et al., 2023a).

##### **2.3.1.1 Enthusiasm Dimension**

The enthusiasm dimension of this proposed framework involves the ability of the employer brand to be nurtured in a certain way that would enable very important brand-related attributes of the employer to project the enthusiasm of the organization in satisfying the employment needs of the potential job applicant (Oberoi, Patel & Haon, 2017). There is a very important component of an employer brand because the brand that portrays itself as having a higher-level enthusiasm in satisfying the needs of the employees would be an employer brand that will be well recognised and popular (Lin & Sanders, 2017). The elements of the enthusiasm dimension will essentially motivate the job applicants to apply to work for such an organisation because they know that the organisation is enthusiastic and dedicated to catering to their needs (Drūteikienė et al., 2023). In essence, it gives them a perception of enthusiasm on the part of the organisation in enabling these job applicants to secure very stable and effective employment (Alhajjar, Kassim, Raju & Alnacheh, 2018). It has a lot to do with the brand personality of the employer and such enthusiasm dimension is capable of giving positive signals to the potential applicants about the positivity associated with the brand of the employer and how it can satisfy their employment needs (Lin, & Sanders, 2017).

The enthusiasm dimension is related a lot to certain symbolic attributes of the employer and the personality of the brand in question. Such a brand would provide a perception of enthusiasm on the part of the employer as supported by elements like openness, high capabilities, integrity, sincerity as well as reputation (Seeck & Diehl, 2017). Research shows that many positive aspects of the employer can be exhibited in the enthusiasm dimension which shows the level of enthusiasm of the employer in creating a very conducive and positive work package for the potential job applicant (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2017). Such an enthusiasm dimension can help graduates to have an idea about what are the capabilities of the organisation in terms of welfare and how the organisation can provide these graduates with positive opportunities when they start working for the organisation (Alhajjar, Kassim, Raju, & Alnacheh, 2018). The enthusiasm dimension is responsible for highlighting the features of the employer that the graduates would find to be essential for them to be able to work for the organisation productively and

effectively (Tang, 2017).

The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between enthusiasm and intention for employment:

Hypothesis 1: There is a linear relationship between enthusiasm and intention for employment

### **2.3.1.2 Capabilities Dimension**

The ability to create a very strong employer brand depends a lot on the capabilities of the brand in question. This means that the brand of the employer must be capable of projecting superior capabilities and which can attract potential job applicants to apply to work for such an organisation (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018). An employer brand must be portrayed as being a brand that is very capable and such capabilities come in the form of the brand being able to cater to the diverse needs of its employee base (Cvjetković et al., 2023b). As such, the capabilities dimension is indeed a very important constituent of the employer brand because it provides suggestions about the attributes of the brand which are attractive to employees (Tang, 2017). In essence, this means that the brand of the organisation needs to exhibit very positive brand-related attributes of the employer in terms of being a very capable and efficient employer that can provide them with a lot of advantages (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2017). Studies have shown that there are numerous capabilities of an employer which are valued by the employees and which a jobseeker would like the employer brand to exhibit for them to have a positive intention to work for such an employer (Tang, 2017).

Therefore, it is stated by researchers that an organisation must be capable of providing those who they employ with superior rewards, proper work-life balance, fringe benefits, and also positive work environment, among other factors (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018). Studies show that one of the most important capabilities dimensions that can be exhibited by the employer brand is the ability of the employer to provide their employees with financial security and career development, and this should be reflected in the employer brand (Matej & Kenda, 2018). Employers in these present times look for all these important capabilities in their future employer and if the employer brand projects these important attributes, then it is likely that they will apply to work for such an organisation (Ai, 2015). Such attributes need to be very prominent in the employer brand and the brand must be designed in a way that shows a very positive image and reputation of the organisation as being a very capable employer that provides them with superior employment (Bi, 2016).

The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between the capabilities dimension and intention for employment:

Hypothesis 2: There is a linear relationship between the capabilities dimension and intention for employment

### **2.3.1.3 Digital Branding**

Regarding the concept of digital branding, the digital brand of the employer is also regarded as something very essential when it comes to attracting job seekers to apply to work for the organisation (Matej, & Kenda, 2018). Digital branding is indeed a very important constituent of the employer brand because in this time and age when everyone has become very Internet savvy and digitized, it becomes important for the employer brand to also exhibit elements of digitization (Bharadwaj et al., 2022). Employer brands that are perceived to be more digitized are likely to be viewed as more attractive to potential job applicants (Tang, 2017). As it is known now, many job seekers look to the Internet to find suitable employers to work for and therefore, an employer who exhibits a very sound and comprehensive digital brand would stand out from others that do not. It follows that an employer that has a positive digital brand will be very favoured by these job applicants because such a brand would



have a positive online reputation (Seeck, & Diehl, 2017). Hence, for an employer to be able to succeed in attracting quality talent over the Internet, it must have a superior digital brand that is attractive enough to make job seekers make an application to work for such an organisation (Lin & Sanders, 2017).

It is only through having a very reputable and attractive digital brand that such organisations will be able to make themselves stand out and be able to bring in quality talent (Getie Ayaneh, 2020). This is because digital branding is a contemporary method of branding that can enable organisations to achieve a very sophisticated level of branding effectiveness because of the vast availability of online branding tools which can facilitate the process (Ai, 2015). The digital branding capabilities of the employer can assist the employer to create a very sophisticated and value-adding brand for itself and project it over several different platforms on the Internet thereby having a very integrated and far-reaching effect on the psyche of the fresh graduates (Bi, 2016). Therefore, such branding initiatives will enable fresh graduates to get a better grasp of the attributes of the employer brand and perhaps explore the opportunities with that particular employer (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016).

The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between the digital brand dimension and intention for employment:

Hypothesis 3: There is a linear relationship between the digital brand dimension and intention for employment

### **2.3.2 Organisational Attractiveness**

The attractiveness of the organisation is also an important factor that motivates the jobseeker to apply to work for such an organisation (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). The attractiveness of the organisation can come in several forms and it can include the attractiveness of the organisation from the perspective of its remuneration policy, its work-life balance policy, or even its employer relations activities (Elder, 2018). Researchers show that an organisation that is very attractive and can project such attractiveness within its brand will be able to attract quality jobseekers to work for the organisation at a greater level (Tang, 2017). There are many different attributes of an organisation that can enhance its effectiveness and these attributes are required to be incorporated within the brand of the organisation and such a brand must be projected in a positive way to the target market of job applicants (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2017).

There are several different brand attributes that researchers claim to help enhance the attractiveness of the organisation's brand and these are economic attributes, functional attributes as well as psychological attributes (Ai, 2015). They claim that all these attributes must be present within the brand of the employer for it to be able to attract quality job applicants to apply to work for the organisation (Bibi, Ahmad & Majid, 2018). Many of these researchers find that an employer brand that can convey to the potential jobseeker about the attractiveness of the organisation will be an employer brand that performs very well in the job market in attracting talent for the benefit of the organisation (Ai, 2015).

#### **2.3.2.1 Development Value**

Research shows that persons looking for jobs are likely to be attracted to an employer brand where the employer rewards and recognizes them for the effort and talent that they invest in the company (Seeck & Diehl, 2017). Development value translates to mean the value which an employee at the organisation will enjoy in terms of developing themselves (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). This is a very important constituent of organisational attractiveness because the ability of the organisation to provide superior development opportunities to its employees is viewed as a factor that can draw all quality applications (Ai, 2015). An organisation that has a brand image that exhibits such developmental value will be more popular among those looking for a job (Zhang, 2015). Such developmental value can result in an

employee being able to develop their careers in the organisation and thus improve their positions as well (Matej & Kenda, 2018). If an employer provides a high level of developmental value to the employee, this will result in the employee being able to achieve better personal development and thus become more attached to the organisation (Lin & Sanders, 2017).

The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between development value and intention for employment:

Hypothesis 4: There is a linear relationship between application value and intention for employment

Many employees are likely to work for an organisation that provides them with such value and as a result, an employer brand that projects superior developmental value will be a brand that attracts potential jobseekers much better (Ai, 2015). It is claimed that when an employer brand shows a high level of developmental value, it will give potential candidates confidence in the fact that they can ensure better development opportunities when they start working in the organisation and this can make them more inclined to work for such an organisation (Matej & Kenda, 2018). Many studies have shown a positive association between the developmental value of the employer brand and the motivation of the candidates to apply to work for such an organisation (Elder, 2018).

### **2.3.2.2 Application Value**

Many researchers recognize that when a person is looking for a job, they are usually likely to find employment with an employer where they can take advantage of lucrative opportunities which can result in them being able to apply their skills and talents productively and which can enhance their abilities and the productivity of the organisation (Yang, 2016). In essence, application value is defined as the value that an organisation can provide to the employees to apply skills and talents for their benefit and the benefit of the organisation as well (Lin & Sanders, 2017). Application value is also an important constituent of organisational attractiveness because when organisation provides opportunities that enable employees to apply their skill sets and capabilities, this makes the employees more satisfied and more productive in terms of their work. This can act as a factor that attracts quality job applications in the job market (Ai, 2015). Organizations that have a high level of application value would invariably allow the employees working for them to have a lot of freedom at using their talents and skills and applying them to the day-to-day work to improve performance (Elder, 2018).

An organisation that provides application value in their brand will send out a positive message to their employees that would make the employees feel more comfortable to work for such an organisation because employees would become empowered while working for the organisation and they will also acquire better ownership and responsibility for the work they carry out (Lin & Sanders, 2017). Such application value is attributable to the high level of innovation shown by such employees (Tang, 2017). An employer brand that demonstrates high application value will be favoured by employees because these employees know that if they work for such a brand, they will be able to engage in superior self-development and also create better employment opportunities for themselves at the organisation (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega, & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016).

Hypothesis 5: There is a linear relationship between application value and intention for employment  
The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between development value and intention for employment

### **2.3.2.3 Economic Value**

Researchers have also recognized that an employer brand that demonstrates superior economic value is preferred by jobseekers. Such economic value is typically related to the rewards and recognition provided to employees working in the organization for the contributions they make (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega, & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016). A candidate is likely to be attracted by an employer

brand that provides them with superior economic outcomes in the form of attractive salaries, compensation, superior leadership skills, a high level of job security as well as opportunities to promote themselves in the organisation (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). All these factors are regarded as very important economic value factors that can help attract employees to work for a particular organisation. There is also a psychological factor at play here that gives employees a feeling of compensation equity as well as better self-worth when the brand demonstrates good economic value (Lin & Sanders, 2017).

Employers who can provide employees with superior economic value would make employees become more satisfied and achieve better performance as well (Wright & Ulrich, 2017). Researchers have continuously emphasized the importance of employers having an employer brand that demonstrates a high level of economic value because when such is the case, jobseekers would have an incentive to apply to work for such organisations because they know that they are going to get better value in terms of remuneration (Tang, 2017). On the other hand, if the economic value of the employer brand is low, then it would become unattractive and jobseekers would be unlikely to work for such an organisation (Matej & Kenda, 2018). Researchers also confirmed that quality talent is likely to be attracted to brands that promise high economic value because they know that working with such an organisation would result in them achieving greater employment outcomes (Seeck, & Diehl, 2017).

The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between economic value and intention for employment:

Hypothesis 6: There is a linear relationship between economic value and intention for employment

### **2.3.3 Social Value**

Employers are starting to recognize the importance of providing social value to their employees and such kind of social value needs to be reflected in the employer brand as well (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021). In essence, social value has the effect of elevating employee loyalty and also makes the employee trust the employer's brand more and this brings about a higher level of retention (Seeck & Diehl, 2017). Social value is an important constituent of organisational attractiveness as this value ensures that the organisation enables employees working within it to have a productive and inclusive social life at the workplace (Bharadwaj et al., 2022). This is viewed as an important attribute of the organisation and which makes the employees satisfied with their work (Yousf & Khurshid, 2021). Therefore, many researchers recommend that an employer brand needs to have a lot of social value attached to attract candidates to apply to work for such an organisation (Tang, 2017). When a candidate looking for a job comes across an employer brand that they know has good social value, this will motivate the candidates to apply to work for such an organisation because they know that if they work for such an organisation that has a high level of social value, the organisation will be very supportive of them, it will provide a good work-life balance and better equality (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2017).

In essence, many researchers recommend that this kind of social value needs to be integrated into the employer brand and advertised to the job market and this can enable the organisation to attract quality candidates who show appreciation for the social value provided by the organisation and therefore can result in a better ability to attract talent (Tang, 2017). Positive social value associated with the organisation can be exhibited by the employer by conveying to the potential job applicant about the kind of social atmosphere that they are likely to encounter when they work for the organisation (Clark, Algoe, & Green, 2017). The initiatives must exhibit the positive social aspects of working for the organisation and this can help attract the candidates to work for the organisation (Ai, 2015). This is because when the potential candidate is looking for a job, they are likely to be attracted to work for an organisation that can provide them with a positive environment that is socially conducive and sound as this will enable them to work in a very amiable and positive environment thus enhancing their

productivity as well as making them more comfortable and easily acclimatized to the workplace (Jung, 2017).

The following would be the hypothesis proposed to investigate the relationship between social value and intention for employment

Hypothesis 7: There is a linear relationship between social value and intention for employment

#### **2.4. Social networking sites**

Social networking sites are a set of digital platforms by which fresh graduates can access employment opportunities. Many modern fresh graduates tend to access these social networking sites to satisfy the intention of looking for employment (Dolnicar, Grün & Leisch, 2018). Studies have shown that social networking sites are an ideal place to start looking for job vacancies because of their ease of access and also its ability to allow job seekers to access a wide range of opportunities (Alhajjar, Kassim, Raju & Alnachef, 2018). The interactivity and ease of use of social networking sites enhance the effectiveness and potency of these sites to attract quality talent to use such sites to find suitable employers (Tang, 2017). Many employers are also turning to social networking sites to advertise job vacancies and recognize that even the highest quality talent that graduates from top universities turn to the Internet to find job opportunities and to be left out, these employers use social networking sites to advertise their employer brand (Zhang, 2015).

Practically speaking, social networking sites are a set of websites that have become very trendy among fresh graduates when it comes to job searching and many of the sites have a history of assisting graduates to find suitable employers and also the same time, it also allows employers to find quality graduates (Elder, 2018). Social networking sites are an ideal opportunity that can be used to the advantage of employers for them to create a very sophisticated brand image of themselves and such a branding initiative carried out on the social networking sites would highlight important attributes of the organisation and be capable of highlighting the attributes of the employer brand and the attractiveness of the organisation as well (Tang, 2017). This improves the chances of the organisation being able to attract quality jobseekers to apply to work at the organisation. Social networking sites are very popular and their use in satisfying the job-searching capabilities of the graduates is quite apparent (Alhajjar, Kassim, Raju & Alnachef, 2018).

The fact is that many employers still do not fully understand the capabilities of social networking sites in enabling them to advertise job vacancies more effectively (Jung, 2017). They need to understand that social networking sites can highlight the most important features and attributes of the employer brand in a very effective way to graduates who are looking for jobs on the site (Alhajjar, Kassim, Raju & Alnachef, 2018). Employees need to have a strong presence on these social networking sites so that they can engage in superior planning activities and create an employer brand that is very successful in attracting top talent to work at the organisation (Zhang, 2015).

The variable of social networking sites is meant to serve as a moderator variable and the moderating effect of social networking sites on the motivation of graduates to apply for employment is a factor that has been researched in many other studies (Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega & Jimenez-Martinez, 2016). Studies have shown that an employer who is capable of utilising social networking sites intelligently and strategically will be able to secure the superior talent for itself (Zhang, 2015). It is claimed by researchers that social networking sites can help develop the employer brand in a very effective way because they can provide these employers with the tools, competencies, and capabilities they require to create a strong employer brand and they can also use these attributes of the social networking sites to highlight the benefits of the employer brand which are valued by jobseekers (Kotarba, 2018).

The inability to capitalise on the benefits of social sites makes it quite difficult for modern-day employees to access top-quality graduates because most of these graduates are now likely to use social networking sites to look for lucrative job opportunities (Lin & Sanders, 2017). Therefore, it is very essential that employers of these present times utilise social networking sites creatively and innovatively and from which they can put out very sophisticated and effective job vacancy advertisements that are likely to project the most important attributes of the employer brand (Bi, 2016). Studies prove that social networking sites tend to have a very strong moderating effect on the variable of motivation to the employment of graduates and this is because of its various benefits and characteristics that result in the creation of an employer brand image that is attractive enough to captivate the attention of potential jobseekers (Zhang, 2015).

The following are the hypothesis proposed to investigate these moderating relationships:

Hypothesis 8: Social networking websites moderate the relationship between employer brand and intention for employment

Hypothesis 9: Social networking websites moderate the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for employment

### 2.5. Proposed framework

This framework depicts the two independent variables which are employer brand and organizational attractiveness and their effect on the dependent variable which is job application motivation and how this relationship is moderated by social networking sites. The employer brand and organisational attractiveness independent variables are further divided into subcategories of independent variables. The employer brand variable is further divided into the enthusiasm dimension, the capabilities dimension, and digital branding. On the other hand, the organisational attractiveness variable is divided into developmental value, application value, economic value, and social value.

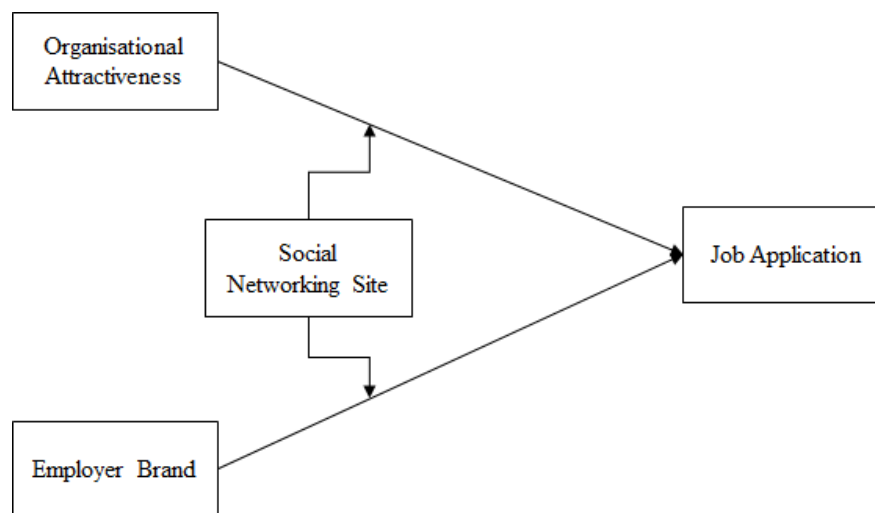


Fig.1: The Proposed Framework (Developed by authors)

The framework above shows how the elements of employer brand such as the enthusiasm dimension, the capabilities dimension, and digital branding affect the job application intention of IT graduates in Malaysia, and how elements of organizational attractiveness such as developmental value, application

value, economic value, and social value also have a linear effect on such a job application intention. Besides that, the framework also shows how social networking sites act as a moderator between employer brand and application intention, and between organizational attractiveness and application intention.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The quantitative research design was adopted in this study and this is regarded as an appropriate research design for a study like this that aims to identify relationships between variables and identify quantitative trends in data. In essence, the quantitative research design was adopted for this study and it benefitted the researcher because it brought about greater ease of data collection and analysis, and allowed for better generalizability of the results.

The data collection process was carried out using an Internet-based survey. This survey was assisted with the use of a questionnaire instrument. More precisely, the instrument that was used in this research to collect quantitative data for the empirical investigation was here the electronic survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using a quantitative research methodology, which means that it contained questions that were meant to obtain statistical data from the participants. Several best practices in questionnaire development were used such as ensuring the use of easy-to-understand language and the avoidance of jargon, formatting the questions in the questionnaire in a logical and coherent sequence, and asking questions that are on point and concise.

A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the research instrument was reliable and usable. The questionnaire was administered to 5 respondents from the target population and responses were analysed to determine whether or not the responses that were obtained were what the researcher desired. The questionnaire was administered online and face-to-face. The questionnaire administration process was assisted with the use of Google forms as well as social media networks like Facebook and Instagram. The researcher also handed out physical questionnaires to members of the target population who fit the description.

The target population was students of universities in the last year of their study of Premier Digital Technology Institutions in Malaysia. As for the characteristics of the participants, these were persons who were going to graduate from IT institutions and thus would be able to give insight about the ideal employer from the perspective of the employer brand and organizational attractiveness and how this motivates them to apply to such an organization. This research population was chosen because they fit the description of what the researcher wanted in the research respondents for this analysis.

The rationale for choosing the Impression Management Theory and Signaling Theory was to gain a proper understanding of the factors influencing IT graduates' job applications in Malaysia. These theories delve into how IT graduates strategically present themselves through impression management techniques and signals conveyed with tangible elements. Examining these strategies within the context of IT graduates' behavior during the job application process provides valuable insights into how effective these methods are in influencing IT graduate employment decisions. Such knowledge is crucial for refining recruitment practices and employer branding designed to enhance employability among Malaysian IT graduates.

The random sampling technique was used to create the sample for the study. This involved the researcher choosing the participants at random. This means that those participating in the study had taken part entirely by chance. This sampling method reduced bias, it also ensured a fairer sample and enabled the researcher to generalize the results of the larger research population adequately. The sample size that was chosen for the study consisted of 300 respondents. Such a sample size is deemed to be large enough to ensure the representativeness of the research population and to ensure adequate

statistical power.

The data analysis technique adopted here was the statistical analysis of quantitative data using SPSS and this allowed the researcher to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the quantitative trends and relationships within the data obtained. SPSS tests that were carried out include frequencies tests, correlation tests, and multiple regression testing. The use of this statistical analysis software proved to be quite successful as it brought about a lot of interesting empirical findings. The results obtained consisted of the outcome of the frequencies, correlation analysis, and multiple regression testing. The results of these test outcomes are described in the section below.

#### **4. Empirical Validation**

The process of empirical validation was done using the survey method which involved gathering data from IT graduates in Malaysia. The data were processed using SPSS. This outcome of the empirical validation was meant to strengthen the framework via practical insights into the job application behavior of IT graduates.

The frequencies analysis showed that males are the majority with a percentage of 45.0% and respondents between 26 - 35 years of age are the majority with a percentage of 59.7%. It was also found that Malays are the majority with a percentage of 45.3% and the majority earn between RM 4001-5000 with a percentage of 43%. The majority prefer working for private companies with a percentage of 59.0%.

The correlation analysis shows that there is almost no association between brand enthusiasm and intention to apply for a vacant post with a correlation of 0.04 and a significance value of 0.491 ( $>0.05$ ). It was shown that employer brand capabilities do not have a strong linear effect on the intention to apply for a vacant post, as the correlation statistics produced here is 0.052 and the significance value is also 0.372 ( $<0.05$ ). The correlation results show that employer brand digital branding has a weak linear effect on the intention to apply for a vacant post as the correlation statistics is 0.160, and the significance value is also 0.000 ( $<0.5$ ). It was found that organisational attractiveness developmental value does have a positive effect on the intention to apply for a vacant post, as the correlation statistics is 0.480 and the significance value is also 0.000 ( $<0.5$ ).

It was shown that organisational attractiveness application value has a linear effect on the intention to apply for a vacant post, as the correlation statistics is 0.228 and the significance value is 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ). It was found that organisational attractiveness social value has a linear effect on the intention to apply for a vacant post, as the correlation statistics is 0.145 and the significance value is 0.012 ( $>0.05$ ). It is shown that organisational attractiveness economic value has a linear effect on the intention to apply for a vacant post, as the correlation statistics is 0.138 and the significance value is 0.017 ( $<0.05$ ). The result also shows that social networking can have a positive effect on the intention to apply for vacant posts, as the correlation statistics is 0.115 and the significance value is 0.046 ( $<0.05$ ).

The multiple regression test results show that the sig value for employer brand enthusiasm is 0.481 ( $>0.05$ ); the sig value for employer brand capabilities dimension is 0.012 ( $<0.05$ ); the sig value for employer brand digital branding is 0.021 ( $<0.05$ ); the sig value for organisational attractiveness developmental value is 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ); the sig value for organisational attractiveness application value is 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ); the sig value for organisational attractiveness social value is 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ) and the sig value for organisational attractiveness economic value is 0.036 ( $<0.05$ ). From the analysis, it is shown that employer brand capabilities dimension, employer brand digital branding, organisational attractiveness developmental value, organisational attractiveness application value, organisational attractiveness social value, and organisational attractiveness economic value have a positive effect on the intention to apply for vacant posts. However, there is no statistical significance with the employer

brand enthusiasm variable = 0.481 ( $>0.05$ ). It is also shown that there is statistical significance for social networking sites as being the moderator for the relationship between employer brand and intention to apply for vacant posts = 0.032 ( $<0.05$ ). It means that employer's brand and intention to apply for a vacant post is moderated by social networking sites. The results also show that statistical significance for social networking sites as being the moderator for the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for vacant posts = 0.948 ( $>0.05$ ). It means the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for vacant posts is not moderated by social networking sites.



Table 1. Multiple Regression Test

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.539	.463		1.165	.245		
	EmployerBrandEnthusiasmIV	.038	.054	.034	.706	.481	.976	1.025
	EmployerBrandCapabilitiesDimensionIV	.095	.038	.126	2.514	.012	.915	1.093
	EmployerBrandDigitalBrandingIV	.049	.021	.115	2.318	.021	.947	1.056
	OrganisationalAttractivenessDevelopmentalValueIV	.412	.045	.454	9.194	.000	.948	1.054
	OrganisationalAttractivenessApplicationValueIV	.120	.034	.175	3.545	.000	.949	1.054
	OrganisationalAttractivenessSocialValueIV	.116	.032	.179	3.590	.000	.936	1.069
	OrganisationalAttractivenessEconomicValueIV	.074	.035	.103	2.107	.036	.962	1.040
a. Dependent Variable: IntentionApplyVacantPostDV								

Below are the results of the hypothesis testing which shows that Hypothesis 2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 are supported and Hypothesis 1 and 9 are not.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	P-value	Outcome
Hypothesis 1	0.481 (>0.05)	Not supported
Hypothesis 2	0.012 (<0.05)	Supported
Hypothesis 3	0.021 (<0.05)	Supported
Hypothesis 4	0.000 (<0.05)	Supported
Hypothesis 5	0.000 (<0.05)	Supported
Hypothesis 6	0.036 (<0.05)	Supported
Hypothesis 7	0.000 (<0.05)	Supported
Hypothesis 8	0.032 (<0.05).	Supported
Hypothesis 9	0.948 (>0.05)	Not supported

The results of the hypothesis testing offer very important insights into how aspects of an employer's reputation, attractiveness and the influence of social networking sites affect the graduates desire to apply for jobs. The results of Hypothesis 1 suggested a non-linear connection between enthusiasm and job application intention did not receive support ( $p$  value = 0.481). This outcome implies that enthusiasm may not be a factor in motivating graduates to apply for jobs. While enthusiasm is indeed important for an employer's reputation, there are other qualities or attributes that play a more substantial role in attracting potential applicants. This indicates that employers should focus on a much wider range of characteristics when establishing their reputation (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021).

On the other hand, the results of Hypothesis 2 proposed a linear link between an employer brands capabilities and job application intention ( $p$  value = 0.012). This means that an employer brands abilities, such as meeting employees' diverse needs and offering rewards, work life balance initiatives and career development opportunities, would have a positive influence on the graduates' intent to apply for employment. It highlights the importance of showcasing a company's strengths in its efforts to attract top notch talent (Yousf & Khurshid, 2021).

Hypothesis 3 which explored the link between the aspect of a brand and job seeking intention also yielded results ( $p$  value = 0.021). This discovery emphasizes how crucial it is for employers to establish a presence on social media platforms as it enhances their appeal to potential applicants (Cvjetković et al., 2023a). In today's era, having an appealing online brand is vital for standing out and catching the attention of individuals who rely on the internet for job hunting (Bharadwaj et al., 2022).

The following three hypotheses, which are Hypotheses 4, 5 and 6 focused on aspects of attractiveness and their impact on job seeking intention. All three hypotheses were supported, indicating that qualities related to development opportunities, practical application of skills and talents well as financial rewards significantly influence graduates desire to apply for employment (Cvjetković et al., 2023b). Employers who effectively communicate their dedication to providing growth opportunities along with skill utilization and economic benefits are more likely to attract high caliber candidates. Graduates are particularly drawn to organizations that offer this combination of appealing attributes (Drūteikienė et al., 2023).

Hypothesis 7 examined the relationship, between value and job seeking intention. Also received support ( $p$  value = 0.000). The discovery emphasizes the significance of building an employer brand that portrays an inclusive workplace. Graduates are more inclined to be drawn to organizations that foster an inclusive environment as it enhances their job satisfaction and overall well-being (Bharadwaj et al., 2022).

Moving on, Hypothesis 8 explored the role of networking sites in moderating the connection between employer brand and employment intentions. This hypothesis received support ( $p$  value = 0.032) indicating that social networking sites play a role in shaping how graduates perceive employers and their intentions towards them. It suggests that effectively utilizing networking sites in employer branding can amplify the impact of brand elements and factors contributing to organizational attractiveness. Employers who harness these platforms efficiently can enhance their ability to attract and engage talent (Yousf & Khurshid, 2021).

However, Hypothesis 9 which investigated whether social networking sites moderate the relationship between attractiveness and intention to apply for employment did not receive support ( $p$  value = 0.948). This suggests that while social networking sites do influence employer branding, they may not have a moderating effect on how organizational attractiveness affects graduates' intention to apply for jobs (Yousf & Khurshid, 2021). Other factors beyond networking sites may have a direct effect on how candidates perceive organizational attractiveness and shape their intentions accordingly (Keppeler & Papenfuß, 2021).

In essence, the outcomes of the hypothesis testing offer insights for both employers and graduates. The findings shed light on the significance of aspects of employer branding, such as capabilities, digital presence, growth opportunities, economic value and social impact in attracting top notch talent. Employers should take these factors into account when devising their strategies to enhance their appeal to job seekers (Bharadwaj et al., 2022).

Moreover, the study underscores the role of networking sites in employer branding by revealing that these platforms can have an influence on graduates' inclination to apply for job opportunities. Employers should acknowledge the power of networking sites as tools for reaching out to and engaging with prospective employees (Cvjetković et al., 2023a; Drūteikienė et al., 2023).

In general, the results of this research highlight the relationship between employer branding attractiveness and the role played by digital platforms like social networking sites. Graduates should also recognize the importance of considering a range of factors when evaluating employers beyond mere enthusiasm in order to make well informed decisions regarding their future careers (Yousf & Khurshid, 2021).

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Main findings of the present study**

The research framework was formulated after a comprehensive review of literature sourced from past studies. This proposed framework was analysed in an empirical way using a quantitative research methodology to provide findings that will bring about benefits to the development of theory in the sphere of employer branding and motivation of fresh IT graduates to apply for jobs at organisations in Malaysia.

The results of the study have shown that employer brand capabilities dimension, digital brand dimension, and development value positively affect the intention to apply for vacant posts. It was also found that application value, social value and economic value have a significant relationship with the intention to apply for a vacant post. It was also found that social networking websites moderate the relationship between employer brand and intention to apply for vacant posts. However, social networking websites do not moderate the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for vacant posts. Neither is there a positive relationship between brand enthusiasm and intention to apply.

### **5.2. Comparison with other studies**

The results show that there is no direct and significant relationship between enthusiasm and intention to apply for vacant posts. This finding is supported by Tripathi & Srivastava (2018) who shows that brand enthusiasm does not have a positive effect on the intention to apply for the vacant post in organizations.

Next, it was found that there is a direct and significant relationship between the capabilities dimension and the intention to apply for vacant posts. This finding was supported by Hughes et al. (2018) who found that there is a positive correlation between the capabilities dimension of an employer brand and intention to employment of graduates.

The next finding shows that there is a direct and significant relationship between the digital brand dimension and the intention to apply for vacant posts. Aghazadeh, (2016) also made the same kind of findings that show that creating a digital brand that is conducive and attractive allows employers to attract top-quality candidates to apply to work for the organisation.

The findings also show that social networking websites moderate the relationship between employer brand and intention to apply for vacant posts. Such a finding was supported by Buettner, (2017) also find that social networking websites can enhance the capabilities of employers to attract top-quality talent.

The next analysis shows that there is a direct and significant relationship between development value and intention to apply for vacant posts. AlAlwan et al., (2017) also found that social networking sites used creatively and innovatively will enable employers to showcase their true potential to prospective jobseekers.

Next, it was found that there is a direct and significant relationship between application value and intention to apply for vacant posts. Esch and Mente, (2018) find that the application value of the organisation can give better discernment to potential jobseekers when looking to apply for a job.

The researcher also found that there is a direct and significant relationship between social value and intention to apply for vacant posts. Becton et al., (2019) also found that graduates look for employers who provide them with positive social as they believe that such an employer will provide them with stable employment.

The findings also show that there is a direct and significant relationship between economic value and intention to apply for vacant posts. Nikhashemi et al. (2017) also made the same kind of findings and the show that the economic value of the organisation affects jobseekers and their intention to apply to work with such an organisation.

The findings showed that social networking websites do not moderate the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for vacant posts. This finding was supported by Shrivastava (2018) who find that social networking sites may have a negative effect on the intention of graduates to apply for work.

### **5.3. Implications of Study**

One of the implications of the study is that the findings would make the research area of this topic richer by showing that employer brand and organisational attractiveness can influence the intention to apply for a vacant position by jobseekers in the Malaysian IT industry. It also shows the mediating role of social networking on the intention of jobseekers to apply for a job. From a theoretical point of view, such findings that were made in this study will enhance the information and literature on this topic to become complete and have fewer gaps. In essence, the findings made from past studies such as those by Lin & Sanders, (2017) and Ai, (2015) which are discussed in this study will have their main limitations overcome by the findings of this empirical research.

Besides, there are practical implications of the study. In essence, the findings would show important decision-makers in the IT organisations in Malaysia about how they can recruit quality talent using a sound and effective employer brand and making their organization very attractive to job candidates. The findings made here seem to support the findings made in other studies carried out such as those by Tang, (2017) and Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, (2018), which also found that the motivation to apply for employment is something that is important and can be affected by factors like organisational brand and organisational attractiveness. The findings would also give organizational decision-makers a very comprehensive recruitment strategy that would allow them to fill vacant positions with quality talent and maintain a strong talent base.

## **6. Conclusion**

The paper investigated the determinants of job application among IT graduates in Malaysia and the research was premised on the Impression Management Theory and Signalling Theory. The paper proposed solutions to solve problems relating to the difficulty of employers in the Malaysian IT industry in attracting quality talent to join the organization. These factors comprised employer brand and organisational attractiveness. From the results of the SPSS tests carried out, the findings obtained showed that employer brand capabilities and digital brand dimension positively affects the intention of jobseekers to apply for vacant post; it was shown that social networking websites moderate the relationship between employer brand and intention to apply; and it was shown that development value, application value, social value, and economic value affects the intention to apply. However, there was no significant relationship between employer brand enthusiasm and intention to apply for vacant posts; and it was found that social networking websites do not moderate the relationship between organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for vacant posts.

As for the contributions of the study, the findings contribute greatly to the sphere of theory and practice when it comes to employer branding. As for the theory aspect, such findings make enrich the research world about employer branding and give a better idea to researchers about the factors affecting the intention to the employment of IT graduates in Malaysia.

The research would also have important practical contributions, and the findings would enable employers to get a better understanding of the factors that motivate IT graduates in Malaysia to apply to work at the organisation. There will be a positive contribution to the enhancement of the ability of employers to create very effective employer brands and organisational attractiveness so that they can attract quality talent to apply and work for the organisation.

The first research limitation involves the research topic which was not as narrow as it could have been. A narrower research topic would have focused only on one facet of the Malaysian IT industry, such as the e-commerce industry.

The second research limitation involves the methodology, which was quantitative. This method meant that only numerical data was used and not textual data. The next limitation was lack of time was a significant factor that resulted in the researcher being hard-pressed for time.

The future study can use a new set of variables that consist of Industrial Revolution 4.0 technologies such as artificial intelligence. It needs to explore how the implementation of such advanced technologies in the Malaysian IT industry can moderate the relationship between the employer brand/ organizational attractiveness and the intention of the jobseeker to apply to work for such an organisation. Many Industry 4.0-type technologies can be used as a means of enhancing the motivation to apply for employment and IT organisations. These technologies can come in the form of artificial intelligence systems, deep learning techniques, machine learning, smart algorithms, and also intelligent Information Systems that can enhance and streamline work in the organisation, bus enabling employees to work

more productively, efficiently, and much faster as well. Future research must involve a narrower topic that focuses on e-commerce organisations. Besides, future research needs to use a mix method research methodology to ensure better data quality.

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