
Your Future Employer: Employer Branding, Reputation, and Social Media

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Abstract

This study examines employer branding and the relationship between corporate reputation, social media, and the intention of potential applicants to seek future employment. The researchers deployed a structured questionnaire to gather data from national service personnel in Ghana via the WhatsApp platform using a Google Form hyperlink. The proposed conceptual framework was tested based on 581 generated responses. The researchers depended on ADANCO 2.1 software for analysis. This helped in producing the PLS-SEM. The results indicate that the application value, development value, and social value positively impact reputation, which successively influences the intent to apply. The findings also reveal that, where social media influence intention to apply, it does not positively impact corporate reputation. The limitation of this study and directions for future studies are presented.

Keywords: *Employer branding; corporate reputation; social media; employer*

Introduction

Employer branding and organisational attractiveness are increasing emerging themes among human resource management practitioners and within academic scholarships (Cappelli, 2001; Brannan *et al.*, 2015). Over the last couple of decades, human resource (HR) managers have integrated the brand management concept into HR functions, described as employer branding, to attract highly qualified applicants (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Cappelli, 2001). Researchers like Agrawal and Swaroop (2009) and Edwards (2010) have observed that organisational attractiveness has the potential of attracting top-notch employees. An organisation's attractiveness to potential employees is a significant predictor of the firm's capacity to recruit them (Agrawal and Swaroop, 2009). Previous studies attribute the employer attractiveness, employer repute, and social media engagement with potential applicants (Priyadarshini *et al.*, 2017; Müller and Piepenstock, 2016; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Lievens, 2007) as the process of influencing prospective employees to be enticed to seek a job opening or anticipate seeking a vacant job position within an organisation (Broek, 2015; Jiang and Iles, 2011; Roberson *et al.*, 2005; Wang, 2013).

Since competition for scarce pools of talented employees is increasing (Priyadarshini *et al.* 2017), employing a talented workforce as a basis of competitive advantage has become more imperative (Franca and Pahor, 2012). As a result, businesses are expending ample financial resources on developing comprehensive employer branding campaigns and recruitment communication strategies to attract highly qualified employees (Bhatnagar and Srivastava, 2008). Nonetheless, finding the preferred potential employees is a difficult task since numerous organisations desire the

same skill sets in their employees. It is, therefore, critical for employer organisations to appreciate factors that attract potential job hunters to companies (Ng and Burke, 2006; Cappelli, 2001) as a means of positioning their firm to appeal to the most suitable applicants (Barrow and Moseley, 2005).

The academic scholars elucidate employer brand to consist of the functional, economic, and psychological benefits that an organisation offers, which become the defining traits of the organisation (Ergun and Tatar, 2016; Park and Zhou, 2013; Jain, 2013; Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Thus, employers create their brands along three dimensions, functional benefits, psychological benefits, and economic benefits (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). They argue that people seeking vacant job positions are attracted to an organisation based on the perceived attributes of the company, the brand image, and the benefits they would derive. Subsequently, Berthon *et al.* (2005) incorporate other factors into the actual three dimensions and call it the five-factor model for employer attractiveness, called EmpAt. Thus, the EmpAt consist of five measurements, interest value, social value, economic value, application value, and development value (Ergun and Tatar, 2016; Pingle and Sharma, 2013; Singh, 2011; Berthon *et al.*, 2005). Additional factors job applicants consider when seeking employment include firm reputation, company image, and brand equity (Sivertze *et al.*, 2013; Berthon *et al.*, 2005; Collins and Stevens, 2002). Thus, strong employer brands influence job applicants' intentions and decisions to take the first step in applying for a job and shapes the projections of what it is like working for the firm (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). Furthermore, numerous firms continue to employ social media for employer branding crusades to attract talented applicants (Sivertze *et al.*, 2013).

Studies conducted from developing countries' perspectives examined the employers' brands on employment experiences and retention in a specific industry (Ganu and Abdulai, 2014; Sokro, 2012). However, at the frontier of the staffing process is the ability of a firm to invite potential employees to apply for an existing or potential job vacancy or use unsolicited applications that potential employees submit. Within this context, this study seeks to extend knowledge and develop insight into employer branding by examining employer branding and the intervening effect of reputation and social media usage among potential employees within Ghana. We also test how firm reputation and social media influence the intention of potential applicants and provide ideas that will inform employer attractiveness and branding strategies on how to entice competent employees. On the theoretical contribution, this study lends its voice to previous scholars like Berthon *et al.* (2005), Aggerholm *et al.* (2011), Foster *et al.* (2010), Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), Sivertze *et al.* (2013), and Edwards (2009) by expanding the frontiers of knowledge regarding understanding employer attractiveness and employer branding by developing and testing a research framework (see Figure 1) from the perspective of a future employee. The rest of the research was organised as follows: 1) literature review; 2) methodological approach; 3) empirical findings and discussions; and 5) conclusion and recommendations.

Employer Branding, Corporate Reputation, and Social Media: An Overview

There is continuous research on applicants' perceptions of organisational factors that influence their decisions when searching for employment and deciding to apply for the work (Chapman *et al.*, 2005). The theory of employer branding developed from branding strategy, which also associates with applicants' job-searching behavioural intentions (Gomes and Neves, 2010). Employer branding refers to bundles of functional, economic, and psychological utilities an organisation delivers, offers, or provides in employment, which becomes its established corporate identity (Neill, 2016; Gupta, 2014; Ambler and Barrow, 1996). It epitomises the efforts a company makes to promote its unique and invaluable characteristics. It represents a marketing tool that enables a firm to build and project its exceptional corporate identity to job seekers, position itself as a unique work environment, and being the best employer (Saini *et al.*, 2014; Ewing *et al.*, 2002; Bergeron, 2001; Sullivan, 2004). Thus,

developing an employer brand concerns establishing a differentiated identity that can attract embryonic personnel as well as retaining current employees (Müller and Piepenstock 2016).

Researchers, such as Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), categorise employer branding into external and internal brands. External employer branding is designed primarily to build a discernible and distinctive employer character, which aims at attracting targeted potential talent towards the organisation (Sengupta *et al.*, 2015; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Latent applicants, then, cultivate and nurture some expectations that will reflect the value systems of the employing firm and exhibit the same values when they are finally engaged and remained engrossed with the corporate brand (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Organisations pursuing internal employer branding cultivate strong moral corporate values, nurture the principles of dependence between the employer and employees, and make sure that workers are thrilled to be part of the firm by honouring any offers or promises made to the applicant during the selection process and achieving their psychological contracts (Frook, 2001; Moroko and Uncles, 2008). Both external and internal employer branding requires that the employing firm demonstrates an aptitude to ensure that the firm succeeds by appealing to and retaining the desired calibre of people, creating an environment for workers to live the brand, and improving performance indexes in business spheres like staffing, engagement, and retention to achieve distinct competitive advantage (Feron, 2008). The essence is that latent employees may use any information about the firm to create a perceived opinion about the organisation which forms the basis of working conditions with the said company (Turban *et al.*, 1998).

Related to employer branding is the concept of corporate reputation. Reputation is an asset or resource in achieving competitiveness and emanates from the apparent previous invaluable corporate conduct and complimentary stakeholder attitudes (Gaultier-Gaillard and Louisot, 2006). It shows compelling evidence that a firm, based on its previous performance, satisfies the needs of stakeholders (Fombrun *et al.*, 2000). Present and impending employees recognise such reputation as a replica of history and the competitiveness of the values and qualities of its offering (Kimpakom and Tocquer, 2009; Yoon *et al.*, 1993).

As noted by Borstorff *et al.* (2007), many companies are increasingly using the internet to recruit and select prospective workers. Likewise, many firms are using social media applications to invite and hire new employees (Cullen, 2001). Social media represents internet applications organisations use to invite and hire new employees (Cullen, 2001; Meiselwitz, 2015; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The cumulative usage of social media, especially by younger probable applicants, persuades firms to engage such mediums to actively promote their corporate identity for social media recruitment (Sivertze *et al.*, 2013; Henderson and Bowley, 2010; Correa *et al.*, 2010; Perdue, 2010). Features of social media platforms allow employers to keep in continual touch with prospective employees (Borstorff *et al.*, 2007; Perdue, 2010). An essential attribute of social media advertising is its dialogic potential, which positively impacts the reputation of a firm (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). It has transformed the way potential applicants and employing organisations interact (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011) and has lessened the energies people exert in seeking jobs (Sivertze *et al.*, 2013; Chauhan *et al.*, 2013). Such is the importance of advertising which Oparinde and Agbede describe as a common strategy used to capture the attention of an audience.

Conceptual Framework

The researchers developed constructs that examine the EmpAt model (interest, social, economic, application, and development) and how reputation and social media moderate the intention of the future workforce to apply for employment with a specific entity.

The constructs upon which the framework was developed were all based on literature. Figure 1 exhibits the conceptual framework for this research.

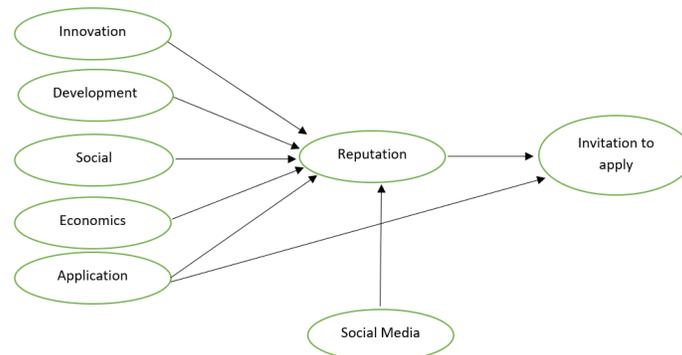


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Hypotheses and Research Model

Model 1: The direct relationship between the EmpTA model and corporate reputation

Graduate job seekers will consider multiple factors to form distinct impressions about their potential employers' reputations when searching for employment (Lemmink *et al.*, 2003). Several researchers identify differential characteristics of what makes an organisation attractive based on the anticipated utility a prospective worker is likely to derive from working with a recognised firm. Previous studies suggest that a firm with distinctive employer brand identity attracts many competent job seekers (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Cable and Graham, 2000; Cable and Turban, 2003; Ployhart, 2006; Arachchige and Robertson, 2011). The five characteristics of employer attractiveness, which serve as predictors of corporate reputation, are interest value, social value, economic value, development value, and application value (Cable and Graham, 2000; Cable and Turban 2003; Sivertzen *et al.* 2013). Whereas interest value comprises an innovative and creative work setting, social value denotes the state of the work environment and how employees relate. Economic value alludes to utilities such as reasonable compensation, and development value entails career growth opportunities (Berthon *et al.*, 2005). Finally, the application value covers the prospect of the job applicant to use the skills, knowledge, and abilities acquired previously in the organisation. It enables latent employees to use scholarships, skills, and abilities acquired prior in their potential workplaces (Berthon *et al.*, 2005; Vasavada-oza and Bhattacharjee, 2016).

The EmpAt scale alludes to the connection between interest value, development value, application value, economic value, and social values and reputation on one hand, and reputation and intent to seek employment on the other hand (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Berthon *et al.*, 2005). Based on the same scale, other researchers also confirm how the spectrum of employer attractiveness and reputation of a company are related (Sivertzen, 2013; Cable and Turban, 2003). Thus, it is critical for employers to recognise elements that create a virtuous dint for an organisation and then craft branding strategies skewed towards projecting the attractiveness of the organisation (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the researchers hypothesised that:

Model 1a: Application value predicts corporate reputation.

Model 1b: Development value affects corporate reputation.

Model 1c: Social value relates positively to corporate reputation.

Model 1d: Interest value affects corporate reputation.

Model 1e: There exists a connexion between economic value and reputation.

Model 2: Corporate reputation and intention to apply

Myriads of evidence suggests the reputation of a firm enhances its competitiveness and surges its attractiveness to talented employees (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Chapman *et al.*, 2005). Since the perceived reputation of a firm governs job pursuit intentions, reputation emerges to generate initial awareness of a firm as an employer (Da Camara, 2013; Cable and Turban, 2001). Thus, job seekers consider reputation as a key indicator of work characteristics, which, invariably shapes the gratification that individuals anticipate by being a member of the organisation. A significant number of previous research studies reveal that the reputation of a firm plays an essential role when an applicant is seeking employment (Vasavada-oza and Bhattacharjee, 2016; Edwards, 2010; Turban and Cable, 2003). Thus, a potential applicant will pursue a job position or accept a job position based on the reputation and attractiveness of the firm (Edwards, 2010; Gomes and Neves, 2010). Empirical studies have affirmed the impact of reputation and the intent of prospective candidates to seek a job with a firm (Clardy, 2005; Collins and Han, 2004; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Gatewood *et al.*, 1993). In a study of how reputation influences intention outcomes, Cable and Turban (2003), for example, concluded that probable employment seekers might opt for a given job position in a firm associated with a positive reputation. Thus, latent employees would pursue employment with a company exhibiting a positive (Christians, 2013) and superior reputation than its competitors (Edwards, 2010). Therefore, the researchers hypothesised that:

H2: Corporate reputation predicts intention to apply.

Model 3: Application value and intention to apply

A declaration of intention of a would-be employee to seek employment describes the individual's aspiration to render an application of employment, partake in a job interview, or demonstrate a readiness to partake in the selection process (Chapman *et al.*, 2005). Thus, the application value and intention to seek employment connect based on a personal aspiration of an applicant to seek employment (Gomes and Neves, 2011) because of their knowledge, skills, and abilities previously learned. The researchers, therefore, hypothesised that:

H3: Application value associates positively with the intention to seek employment.

Model 4: The direct relationship between social media and intentions to apply

Organisations use social media to attract would-be workers and ultimately invite applicants to seek employment (Cappelli, 2001). Features of social media platforms allow employers to design and communicate their organisational identity and stay connected to job seekers (Smith and Kidder, 2010; Olivas-Lujan and Bondarouk, 2013). Researchers have stated the critical roles social media plays to influence the intentions of potential job candidates to purposefully request employment with a firm (Wei *et al.*, 2016; Franca and Pahor, 2012). Indeed, employers and recruiting firms are increasingly deploying social media to recruit and select aspiring workers. Thus, companies with high media exposure are most appealing to potential workers (Turban and Greening, 1997). Recent studies also reveal that employers use social media to provide information about job openings or to attract potential candidates (Caers and Castelyns, 2010).

Consequently, empirical studies found that job advertisement and the active use of social media impact a graduate's application intentions significantly (Chu *et al.*, 2013; 2011; Lemmink *et al.*, 2003). In contrast, the interaction effects of social media were unconfirmed to substantially associate with the intent of potential candidates to seek employment (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013). The researchers contend that potential applicants who do not have sufficient knowledge of a company or its reputation may equally and directly tender job applications for vacant positions cited on social media, which contradicts the expectation of Sivertzen *et al.* (2013) that social media markedly affects the association of reputation and intention to seek employment rather than having an independent connection to intention to apply (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Keh and Xie, 2009). The researchers, therefore, state the following hypothesis:

H4: Social media and the intention to apply are directly linked.

Model 5: Social media and reputation

Companies are increasingly deploying social media for online reputation management (Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015) because they improve trustworthiness, brand attitude, and increase employee commitment as well as reaching potential job seekers (Walker *et al.* 2011). Since students, job seekers, and professionals often use these social media platforms, they enable an employer to project their corporate identities (Smith and Kidder, 2010; Henderson and Bowley, 2010). In describing online reputation management, the researchers adopt the position of Jones *et al.*, (2009), as the mechanism of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking, and listening as a firm transparently communicates with multiple stakeholders online. The process embroils relating with persons online, evaluating what they say, and following through on shared opinions on social media. Hence, because of the proliferation deployment of social media by companies, it is critical to access its consequences on corporate reputation (Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015). Recent empirical findings posit a material association of social media activities with the reputation of a firm (Davison *et al.*, 2011; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015; Priyadarshini *et al.*, 2017). Since many firms in developing countries are continuously using social media for branding and recruitment, it is worth evaluating the material effects of social media application on corporate reputation in the Ghanaian context. Therefore, the researchers hypothesised that:

H5: Corporate use of social media directly affects corporate reputation.

Research Design

Survey and data

When students in Ghana complete their undergraduate studies, they are posted to various organisations to do mandatory national service for eleven months. Some of the graduates have the opportunity of being posted where they have selected, and others usually go to where they are posted. Generally, because of the increasing graduate unemployment in Ghana, some of the national service personnel seek employment with the organisations where they undertook their national service. Thus, the target respondents for this study were National Service personnel who undertook their mandatory national service in 2019-2020. However, only the data from the service personnel who desire to be retained by their service organisation was relevant and used for this study. This is critical because only respondents who have the desire to continue in their service of employment with a particular firm may do so.

The researchers used a cross-sectional survey research design and a mixed approach to data analysis in this study. A structured online questionnaire was developed using Google Form. The Google hypertext link of the questionnaire was sent to the official WhatsApp platforms of the National Service Personnel Association across the country. The researchers also maintained high levels of research ethics procedure by informing participants about the purpose of this exercise and they were encouraged to help in filling out the questionnaire. The respondents were informed that they could decline to respond to the questionnaire any time they desired to do so. Research participants were to respond to several statements with the opportunity of selecting strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree (neutral), agree, or strongly agree, as was applicable to them. It took an average of five to six minutes for a participant to complete the questionnaire. The data was collected in the 10th month after the commencement of national service. Out of 2324 responses received, only 581 responses were validly processed and analysed. The 581 responses represented the number of service personnel who expressed the desire to continue in employment with their respective service organisation.

The demographic characteristics of respondents are exhibited in Table 1. The data shows that most of the service personnel sampled were between 22 and 25 years, constituting 58.7 per cent of the sample. Additionally, 39.1 per cent were between 26 and 30 years, while 2.2 per cent ranged between 31 and 35 years. Out of the 581 respondents, 58.5 per cent were male and 48.5 per cent were female. Table 1 provides the details.

Table 1: Sample Demographics (N = 581)

Characteristics	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Age		
22-25	341	58.7
26-30	227	39.1
31-35	13	2.2
Gender		
Male	340	58.5
Female	241	48.5
Do you desire to work with your service organisation?		
Yes	581	25.0
No	1743	75.0

Measures

Except for the demographic information, all the constructs were grounded on validated measures. The measures for Interest, Development, Social, Economic, and Application values were adapted from Berthon *et al.* (2005); Reputation was taken from Turban *et al.* (1998); Social media was also sourced from Collins and Steven (2002); and Intention to apply was fished from Highhouse *et al.* (2003). The 5-point-Likert scale was employed, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Descriptive statistics of each of the questionnaire item used is exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Constructs	Items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Innovation	Innov1	4.37	.843	1	5
	Innov2	4.49	.796	1	5
	Innov3	3.72	1.253	1	5
	Innov4	4.30	.829	1	5
Development	Develop1	4.27	.795	1	5
	Develop2	3.69	1.099	1	5

	Develop3	4.12	.895	1	5
	Develop4	4.22	.875	1	5
Social	Social1	3.52	1.138	1	5
	Social2	4.07	.836	1	5
	Socail3	4.10	.812	1	5
	Social4	4.07	.847	1	5
Economic	Economic1	4.10	1.107	1	5
	Economic2	4.52	.870	1	5
Application	Application1	3.84	1.204	1	5
	Application2	4.05	.887	1	5
Social Media	SocialMedia1	3.68	1.320	1	5
	SocialMedia2	4.09	1.175	1	5
	SocialMedia3	3.85	1.237	1	5
Reputation	Reputation1	3.31	1.272	1	5
	Reputation2	3.78	.944	1	5
	Reputation3	4.68	.693	1	5

Analytical Tool

The researchers depended on ADANCO 2.1 software for the analysis. This is because of the software's ability to analyse complex relations. Hair *et al.* (2017) have accentuated that ADANCO 2.1 provides a more accurate and reliable analysis alternative to other PLS-SEM software, especially when it comes to complex analysis. In carrying out such a complicated relationship in a developing country like Ghana where these tools are still at their infant stage of exploration and application, it is prudent to use this tool for our analysis for future scholars who would be interested in referring to this study for their studies. Another reason why the researchers decided on the ADANCO 2.1 software is that in a developing country like Ghana where the relationship of most of these empirical variables in this line of work is underresearched it is only prudent the researchers use PLS-SEM. Principally, the researchers' goal for this empirical study rests more on prediction than theory confirmation and this is, noticeably, explorative. Consequently, PLS-SEM was used as the most expedient tool for analysis. The researchers employ ADANCO software to analyse the data since it is user-friendly for testing complex relations (Henseler and Djisktra, 2015).

Test for Common Method Bias (CMB)

This study has addressed the concerns of CMB. The complexity of the conceptual framework used in this study resolves the problem of CMB (Chang *et al.*, 2010, as cited in Ciunova-Shuleska *et al.*, 2017). Apart from this, two main essential procedures were employed. First, the identity of the respondents was classified at the instrument design stage. Second, no answer was deemed to be correct or incorrect (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Concurrently, scholars such as Spector (2006) and Conway and Lance (2010) have suggested that the issue of CMB has been overstretched in the academic exercise, especially with a survey that depends on self-reported data, although the empirical results remain valid (Doty and Glick, 1998; Amegbe and Osakwe, 2018). In conclusion, the researchers are convinced that the steps we took have reduced any substantial concerns about CMB.

Measurement Model Assessment

The researchers performed confirmatory factor analysis using ADANCO 2.1 software and all the factor loadings were > 0.5 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Kosiba *et al.* 2018; Parihar, 2018) indicating convergent validity. The Cronbach's α values and Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c) exceed 0.70, and also, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs was greater than 0.50 (Linuesa-Langreo *et al.*, 2017; Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The discriminant validity captured is based on the procedure Fornell and Lacker (1981) proposed and the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations propounded by Henseler *et al.* (2015). Further, the cross-loadings analysis aligns with erstwhile

scholars and statistically confirms the discriminant validity of the research paradigms. Generally, the outcomes reveal that the research paradigm of this study is the most reliable and constructs independently depart substantially. This is annotated in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

Construct	Intentions to Apply	Reputation	Social Media	Innovation	Develop	Social	Economic	Application
Intentions to Apply								
Reputation	0.8608							
Social Media	0.5531	0.2908						
Innovation	0.7213	0.7480	0.5972					
Develop	0.8110	1.0765	0.3210	0.8581				
Social	0.5606	1.0076	0.2059	0.7467	0.8973			
Economics	1.0921	0.7404	0.7621	0.9758	1.0104	0.7252		
Application	1.0506	1.2310	0.6153	1.1603	1.3174	8	1.057	N/A N/A

Table 4: Discriminant Validity of Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	Intentions to Apply	Reputation	Social Media	Innovation	Develop	Social	Economics	Application
Intentions to Apply	0.9602							
Reputation	0.5178	0.5608						
Social Media	0.2379	0.0644	0.7269					
Innovation	0.4181	0.3936	0.1726	0.6531				
Develop	0.4216	0.5348	0.0509	0.4362	0.4851			
Social	0.2073	0.4398	0.0217	0.3957	0.3914	0.5452		
Economic	0.7312	0.3163	0.2597	0.4345	0.3405	0.2272	0.6580	
Application	0.4661	0.4552	0.1444	0.5296	0.4873	0.3464	0.4459	0.6328

Squared correlations; AVE in the diagonal.

Table 5: Measurement Model Assessment

Constructs	Indicators	Loading	Indicator Reliability	CR(ρA)	AVE
Innovation	Innov1	0.6979	0.4871	0.8763	0.6531
	Innov2	0.8155	0.6651		
	Innov3	0.7832	0.6134		
	Innov4	0.9202	0.8469		
Development	Develop1	0.8102	0.6565	0.6799	0.4851
	Develop2	0.7004	0.4905		
	Develop3	0.5071	0.2572		
	Develop4	0.7323	0.5362		

Social	Social1	0.6986	0.4881	0.7226	0.5452
	Social2	0.7439	0.5534		
	Social3	0.7432	0.5523		
	Social4	0.7662	0.5871		
Economic	Economic1	0.9549	0.9119	0.9003	0.6580
	Economic2	0.6357	0.4041		
Application	Application1	0.7243	0.5246	0.4525	0.6328
	Application2	0.8608	0.7409		
Social Media	Social Media1	0.8174	0.6681	0.8160	0.7269
	Social Media2	0.8880	0.7886		
	Social Media3	0.8509	0.7240		
Reputation	Reputation1	0.6818	0.4648	0.6198	0.5608
	Reputation2	0.8581	0.7364		
	Reputation3	0.6936	0.4811		
Intention to apply	Intention to apply1	0.9792	0.9589	0.9593	0.9602
	Intention to apply2	0.9806	0.9615		

Structural Model Assessment

In the model assessment, using ADANCO 2.1 software, the researchers used a nonparametric bootstrapping technique to analyse the proposed tenet effects (Amegbe *et al.*, 2019). The result shows that R² value for Reputation was 0.63 and the focal construct intentions to apply are 0.65. The R² value of 65 per cent for intentions to apply suggests a strong explanatory power of reputation to explain the variance in intentions to apply (see Table 6). The researchers also depended on earlier work on Cohen's f², a scale impact magnitude, as Tables 5 and indicated, and recommending the parameters of effect amount of 0.02 as having an insignificant effect, 0.15 as exhibiting moderate impact, and 0.35 as having a consequential impact (see table 6 for more details on this).

Table 6 Test of R-Squared Statistic and Cohen's Effect Size

Effect	Beta	Coefficient of determination (R ²)	Indirect effects	Total effect	Cohen's f ²	f2 Interpretation
Reputation -> Intentions to	0.4765			0.4765	0.3543	Significant effect
Social Media -> Intentions to	0.2683		0.0066	0.2749	0.1763	Midrange effect
Social Media -> Reputation	0.0139			0.0139	0.0004	Small effect
Innov -> Intentions to			0.0118	0.0118		
Innov -> Reputation	0.0248			0.0248	0.0006	Small effect
Develop -> Intentions to			0.1777	0.1777		
Develop -> Reputation	0.3729			0.3729	0.1558	Midrange effect
Socia -> Intentions to			0.1286	0.1286		
Socia -> Reputation	0.2699			0.2699	0.1006	Midrange effect
Economics -> Intentions to			0.0324	0.0324		
Economics -> Reputation	0.0680			0.0680	0.0054	Small effect
Application -> Intentions to	0.2593		0.0890	0.3483	0.0959	Small effect
Application -> Reputation	0.1868			0.1868	0.0331	Small effect
Intentions to apply		0.6508				
Reputation		0.6350				

Table 7 Test of Direct Effect

Effect	Original coefficient	Standard bootstrap results					Theoretical support IRO Hypothesis
		Mean value	Standard error	t-value	p-value (2-sided)	p-value (1-sided)	
Reputation -> Intentions to Social Media -> Reputation	0.4765	0.4738	0.0286	16.6358	0.0000	0.0000	Supported
Reputation -> Interest -> Reputation	0.0139	0.0146	0.0383	0.3640	0.7159	0.3580	Not Supported
Reputation -> Develop -> Reputation	0.3729	0.3691	0.0476	7.8353	0.0000	0.0000	Supported
Social -> Reputation	0.2699	0.2727	0.0456	5.9168	0.0000	0.0000	Supported
Economics -> Reputation	0.0680	0.0726	0.0392	1.7352	0.0830	0.0415	Not Supported
Application -> Reputation	0.1868	0.1833	0.0473	3.9453	0.0001	0.0000	Supported

Based on the corollary for the direct effects, there is empirical support for Models 1a, development value 1b, and social value Model 1c, (see Table 7 for more details on this). Meanwhile, the result did not show empirical support for interest value and reputation Model 1d, and economic value and corporate reputation Model 1e (see figure 2).

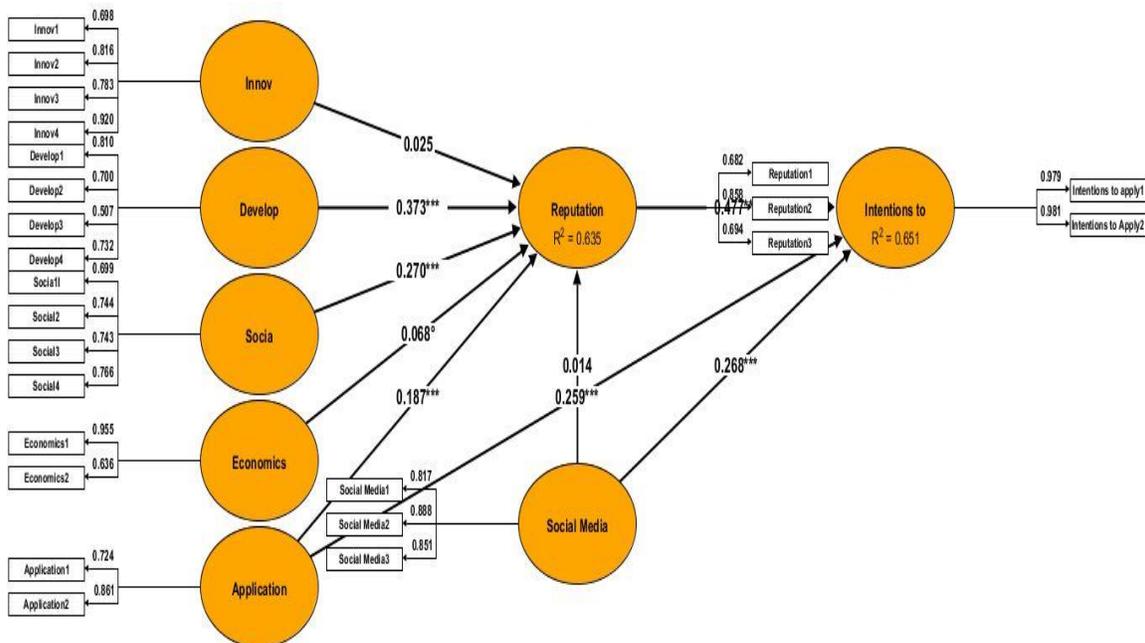


Figure 2: Outcome of the direct influence of social media on reputation and intention to apply

Results and Discussion

The objectives of this study were to test the relationship between the EmpTA model, firm reputation, and the role social media plays in attracting future employees. Model 1 of this research sought to examine how the five elements of employer attractiveness affect its reputation. The empirical outcomes support the link between application value (Models 1a), development value (1b), and social value (Model 1c), and corporate reputation, respectively. The statistical findings of Models 1a, 1b, and 1c are consistent with previous empirical findings in other jurisdictions (Katiyar and Saini, 2016; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Collins and Han, 2004; Cable and Turban, 2003; Collins and Stevens, 2002). However, the assumed link between interest value and reputation (Model 1d), and economic benefit and corporate reputation (Model 1e), respectively, have been rejected. Whereas the rejection of economic value outcome associates with previous empirical studies (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013), it also contrasts empirical results of other findings in diverse settings (Collins and Han, 2004; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Cable and Turban, 2003). The consequential effects of the outcomes of this study within the Ghanaian situation is that potential applicants significantly perceive application value, development value, and social value as attractive dimensions of an employer brand, which could lead to the improved reputation of the organisation rather than economic value and interest value. Thus, firms that offer perceived benefits relating to application, development, and social values are considered by potential applicants as more reputable and will positively impact the intention to apply.

As predicted, the findings of this study also support the relationship between reputation and intention to seek employment (Model 2). This outcome is consistent with previous findings (Wei *et al.*, 2016; Sivertzen, 2013; Edwards, 2010; Clardy, 2005; Collins and Han, 2004; Turban and Cable, 2003). Related research outcomes at business schools of two universities and 28 companies, respectively, revealed corporate reputation and intention to seek employment positively relate (Turban and Cable, 2003; Wei *et al.*, 2016). In context, organisational reputation is essential to prospective employees. Potential graduate employees, in particular, will intentionally seek employment with firms they consider exhibiting a positive reputation.

The empirical findings also confirm the direct relationship between application value and intention to apply (Model 3). Saini *et al.* (2014) confirm in their study of 12 firms that application value directly relates to probable workers' resolve to apply to an organisation. The findings of this study also statistically affirm the relationship between social media and intent to seek employment (Model 4), which this study posits. The results are consistent with previous empirical investigations that established that a myriad of social media engagements results in greater intention to seek employment (Katiyar and Saini, 2016; Walker *et al.*, 2011; Davison *et al.*, 2011; Borstorff *et al.*, 2007; Lemmin *et al.*, 2003; Franca and Pahor, 2012). It is arguable within the Ghanaian situation that social media correlates positively with the intentions of a potential applicant to seek employment. This is an indication for firms to invest efforts into the use of social media for corporate communication and establishing an online reputation.

Finally, Model 5, which hypothesised the relationship between social media and corporate reputation has been rejected in this study. While the findings contradict the researchers' hypothesis, other empirical surveys in other settings established that social media engagement is associated with a firm reputation (Priyadarshini *et al.*, 2017; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015; Davison *et al.*, 2011; Backhus and Tikoo, 2004). Applying this finding within the research context means that potential applicants place less emphasis on social media as a factor influencing the reputation of a firm. Thus, engaging in social media activities as a branding strategy may not directly reflect on the reputation of the firm. The outcome of this study, which shows that the interaction effect of social

media does not have a substantial association with the intention to apply for work within the Ghanaian context, can be attributed to the infant stage of social media adoption by corporate entities to attract and hire potential job applicants.

Conclusion

Attracting and hiring competitive talent has always been at the frontier of the staffing process. One of the strategies successful organisations use for achieving their staffing goals is employer branding. Many researchers have empirically studied the employer brand concept with the outcomes stressing its critical role in attracting and retaining employees. This study extends the literature on employer branding by examining whether employer brand and social media impact on corporate reputation successively influence the intent of future employees to apply for a job. The empirical findings provide several indicative tasks for human resource practitioners and managers. First, considering the war on talent, this study identified interest value, development value, and social values as employer characteristics that are attractive to prospective graduates with the consequent effect of reputation and intention to apply. These factors are critical to creating a positive employer brand and corporate reputation since prospective graduate job seekers will prefer these values to interest and economic value.

It is also important to note that potential applicants reject both innovative value and economic values, directly and indirectly, as having a consequential effect on firm corporate reputation and their intents (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013) to seek employment. Therefore, employers trying to attract and create the required pool of talent ought to direct their efforts at providing values that are perceived to make a firm reputable. Secondly, though in this study corporate reputation plays an insignificant moderating role between social media and the intention to seek employment, the relatedness of social media and intention to apply is positive. Consequently, employing firms need not discount engaging in social media activities since a firm's ability to influence the intention of prospective applicants will considerably be affected by its presence within the social media space.

Notwithstanding the vital implication of this research, it has some constraints. First, the data generated for analysis was limited to only national service personnel who expressed a willingness to continue in the employment of the firms where they were doing their mandatory national services and whether they actualised their intention. A future study may focus on employer branding by examining issues related to internal reputation, online reputation, employee engagement, word of mouth marketing, and organisational identity.

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