

E-RECRUITMENT AND APPLICANT EXPERIENCE: THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS ON EMPLOYER BRANDING AND CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the effect of e-recruitment on candidate experience and employer branding at Agasha Collection, a company that implements a digital recruitment system. The background of this study is based on technological advances that have driven transformation in human resource management, particularly in the recruitment process. This study uses a quantitative approach to test the causal relationship between variables. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to applicants who participated in the e-recruitment process at Agasha Collection and analyzed using multiple regression and mediation tests. The results reveal that e-recruitment has a positive effect on both candidate experience and employer branding. These results indicate that the use of digital technology in recruitment not only improves efficiency but also strengthens the company's image as a modern and attractive workplace. This study contributes to the development of digital-based human resource management strategies and enriches the literature on the relationship between candidate experience and organizational image in the era of digital transformation.

Keywords: E-Recruitment; Candidate Experience; Employer Branding; Digital Recruitment; Human Resource Management.

1. Introduction

The shift to digital platforms automatically places two central concepts in the spotlight: Candidate Experience (CX) and Employer Branding (EB). CX encompasses the entire journey that job seekers go through, including their perceptions, emotions, and attitudes during their interactions with the recruitment process. A digital experience that is designed to be seamless, transparent, and respectful is crucial, especially with the increasing use of advanced technologies such as AI in the process (Tursunbayeva, Franco, & Pagliari, 2025). In fact, negative experiences, even those of rejected candidates, have the potential to significantly damage a company's image.

Meanwhile, Employer Branding is the reputation of an organization as a workplace. In this digital age, e-recruitment platforms serve as the main point of contact that directly shapes the perception of the brand. If the e-recruitment system feels difficult, slow, or unresponsive, this can directly undermine the organization's efforts to project a modern, efficient, and candidate-friendly image (Reis, Sousa, & Dionísio, 2021; Turhamun, Nugraha, & Setiadi, 2025).

Although previous studies have acknowledged the role of digital transformation in HR functions (Putro & Siswanto, 2025), recent research (2023–2025) shows that important gaps remain. Studies on digital recruitment emphasize the relevance of platform usability, transparency, and AI-assisted features in shaping candidate perceptions (Tursunbayeva et al., 2025; Ruiz et al., 2024), yet they do not provide empirical evidence that directly links these specific e-recruitment attributes to the mediating role of Candidate Experience in influencing Employer Branding. Moreover, existing studies focus largely on large organizations, leaving SMEs especially in the

fashion sector underexamined, despite their unique constraints and reliance on digital aesthetics. This creates a clear gap that the present study aims to address.

Based on this background, this study was conducted with the following main objectives: (1) To analyze the direct impact of e-recruitment platform characteristics, particularly usability and transparency, on the quality of the Candidate Experience; (2) To examine the influence of Candidate Experience on strengthening Company Image; and (3) To provide evidence-based recommendations for organizations to optimize their e-recruitment strategies in order to build a strong and attractive employer brand.

2. Research Method

The study uses a quantitative causal approach. The population includes all applicants who participated in the e-recruitment process at Agasha Collection. A purposive sampling technique was applied with two inclusion criteria: applicants must (1) have applied through the digital recruitment platform and (2) completed the required recruitment stages. A total of 43 qualified respondents were obtained. This design allows testing the direct effect of E-Recruitment on Candidate Experience (H1) and its indirect effect on Employer Branding

The study uses quantitative data obtained from a Likert-scale questionnaire completed by Agasha Collection applicants. The instrument was adapted from validated scales: e-recruitment (Reis et al., 2021), candidate experience (Tursunbayeva et al., 2025), and employer branding (Turhamun et al., 2025). Sample items include “The platform is easy to use”, “Information provided was clear”, and “The company gives a positive impression.” Adaptations were made to fit the study context, and the resulting data were analyzed to test causal relationships.

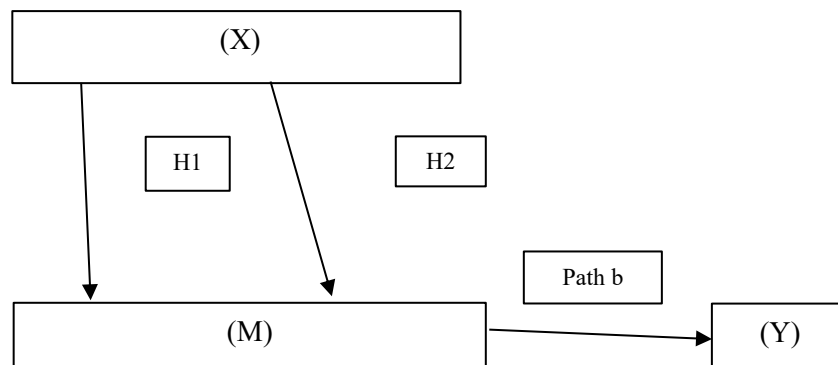


Figure 1. Research Model

This research model serves to visualize the logical flow of causality between variables that will be tested in this quantitative study. This model is based on the framework that E-Recruitment affects Employer Branding, both directly and indirectly through the mediation of Candidate Experience.

The data analysis technique used in this quantitative research is inferential statistical analysis, which aims to test the hypotheses of causality and mediation between variables.

3. Results

Quantitative analysis was conducted on 43 respondents. Although the sample is small for mediation analysis, it reflects the limited population of applicants, and this constraint is acknowledged as a methodological limitation. Prior to testing the hypothesis,

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instrument quality testing and classical assumption testing were conducted. The results of the validity and reliability tests showed that all questionnaire items for the variables of E-Recruitment (X), Candidate Experience (M), and Employer Branding (Y) were declared VALID and RELIABLE (Alpha value > 0.60)

Table 1. Reliability Test

Variables	Alpha	Description
E-Recruitment	852	Reliable
Candidate Experience	817	Reliable
Employer Branding	885	Reliable

Furthermore, the regression model was confirmed to have met the classical assumptions. The results of the Normality Test on *unstandardized residuals* using the Shapiro-Wilk test showed a significance value of 0.887. Since this value is greater than 0.05, it was concluded that the residual data was NORMALLY distributed. This is supported by descriptive residual data showing very low Skewness (.228) and Kurtosis (.486) values. The multicollinearity test also shows that the model is free from multicollinearity problems, with a VIF value of 4.828 (below 10) and a Tolerance value of 0.207 (above 0.10). Finally, the Glejser test shows no heteroscedasticity problems, as evidenced by the significance values for variables X (.804) and M (.808), both of which are greater than 0.05.

After confirming that the model passed the classical assumption test, multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesis. The Adjusted R² of .949 is exceptionally high for behavioral research, suggesting potential overfitting and heightened model sensitivity due to the small sample size. This indicates that the ability of the E-Recruitment (X) and Candidate Experience (M) variables to explain the variation in the Employer Branding (Y) variable is very high, at 94.9%, while the remaining 5.1% is explained by other factors.

The F-test (Simultaneous Test) produced an F-count value of 390.899 with a significance of <.001. Since it is < 0.05, it can be concluded that E-Recruitment (X) and Candidate Experience (M) together (simultaneously) have a significant effect on Employer Branding (Y), which means that this regression model is suitable (fit) for use.

Partial hypothesis testing (t-test) was conducted to examine the effect of each variable individually. The t-test results show important findings for mediation analysis. First, the effect of Candidate Experience (M) on Employer Branding (Y) (representing Path b) was found to be significant (t-count = 4.375; Sig. <.001). This finding proves the hypothesis that a positive candidate experience does indeed enhance the company's image. Second, the effect of E-Recruitment (X) on Employer Branding (Y) (representing Path C) was also found to be significant (t-count = 8.672; Sig. <.001). This result also proves hypothesis H2, which states that e-recruitment platforms have a strong direct impact on company image.

The key finding of this study is the occurrence of partial mediation. This is evidenced by the significance of both paths (Path b and Path C) simultaneously. This means that E-Recruitment (X) influences Employer Branding (Y) through two paths: (1) Directly, where modern and efficient digital platforms directly build a good company image; and (2) Indirectly, where these platforms first create a positive *Candidate Experience* (M), and it is this positive experience that then strengthens *Employer Branding* (Y).

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E-Recruitment Variable (X): The *Cronbach's Alpha* value obtained is 0.852. Since this value is greater than 0.60, the instrument for the E-Recruitment variable is declared RELIABLE. *Candidate Experience* Variable (M): The *Cronbach's Alpha* value obtained is 0.817. Since this value is greater than 0.60, the instrument for the Candidate Experience variable is declared RELIABLE. *Employer Branding* Variable (Y): The *Cronbach's Alpha* value obtained is 0.885. Since this value is greater than 0.60, the instrument for the Employer Branding variable is declared RELIABLE.

Table 2. Simple Regression Test Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	0.92	1.254		0.734
X (E-Recruitment)	0.751	0.06	0.89	12.529
Dependent Variable: M (Candidate Experience)				

Hypothesis 1 (H1) testing aims to analyze the effect of E-Recruitment (X) on Candidate Experience (M) (Path a).

Based on the results of simple regression analysis in Table 2, a t-value of 12.529 with a significance value of <.001 was obtained. Because the significance value (0.000) is less than 0.05, H1 is accepted.

Conclusion: There is a positive and significant effect of E-Recruitment (X) on Candidate Experience (M). The Standardized Coefficient (Beta) value of 0.890 indicates that E-Recruitment has a very strong influence on candidate experience. The validity of *Path a* is the first and main requirement that must be met to continue the mediation analysis.

Table 3. Results of the F Test (Simultaneous)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	838.716	2	419,358	390,889	<.001
Residual	42,912	40	1,073		
Total	881,628	42			

Based on the F-test table, the calculated F-value is 390.889 with a significance level of <.001. This significance value is much smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$).

Conclusion: The variables E-Recruitment (X) and Candidate Experience (M) together (simultaneously) have a significant effect on the variable Employer Branding (Y). Thus, this regression model is declared fit for use.

Table 4. Results of the t-Test (Partial)

Independent Variable	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Description
Constant	-1.464	.788		-1.859	.070	
E-Recruitment (X)	.713	.082	.665	8,672	<.001	Significant
Candidate Experience (M)	.426	.097	.335	4.375	<.001	Significant

The t-test table tests two hypotheses partially, namely the direct effect of X on Y (H2) and the effect of M on Y (Path b).

1. Testing Hypothesis 2 (H2): The effect of E-Recruitment (X)→Employer Branding (Y) Based on the table, the t-value for the E-Recruitment variable (X) is 8.672 with a significance of <.001. Since the significance value of 0.000 is < 0.05, H2 is accepted. Conclusion: There is a positive and significant effect of E-Recruitment (X) on Employer Branding (Y).
2. Path b testing: The effect of Candidate Experience (M)→Employer Branding (Y) Based on the table, the t-value for the Candidate Experience (M) variable is 4.375 with a significance level of <.001. Since the significance value of 0.000 is < 0.05, it can be concluded that Candidate Experience (M) has a positive and significant effect on Employer Branding (Y). Conclusion: These findings prove that *Path b* in the mediation model is significant.

4. Discussion

This mediation model aligns with Signaling Theory, where e-recruitment signals organizational quality, and Candidate Experience Theory, which explains how applicants' experiences shape employer image. The main findings show that partial mediation occurs, whereby E-Recruitment affects Employer Branding both directly and indirectly.

4.1 Direct Effect of E-Recruitment on Employer Branding (H2)

The results confirm H2, showing that E-Recruitment (X) has a direct, positive, and significant effect on Employer Branding (Y) ($t = 8.672$; Sig. < .001). In the context of a fashion-based SME such as Agasha Collection, the e-recruitment platform becomes a primary channel through which applicants assess the organization's professionalism, modernity, and brand identity. A visually appealing, responsive, and easy-to-navigate digital platform reinforces the company's image as a well-managed and credible employer—an effect supported by recent studies showing that digital touchpoints strongly influence employer attractiveness (Reis et al., 2021; Turhamun et al., 2025; Ruiz et al., 2024). For fashion SMEs, where aesthetics and brand presentation are central to business identity, the recruitment interface functions not only as a hiring tool but also as a branding signal.

4.2 The Mediating Role of Candidate Experience (H1 and H3)

This study also confirms that E-Recruitment (X) significantly enhances Candidate Experience (M) (H1 Accepted; $t = 12.529$; Sig. < .001). In practice, a user-friendly, transparent, and well-structured digital process reduces confusion, increases trust, and provides a positive emotional response, elements emphasized in recent candidate experience research (Tursunbayeva et al., 2025; Putro & Siswanto, 2025). This is particularly important for fashion SMEs, where applicants often expect not only clear communication but also alignment between the platform's visual style and the company's brand identity.

Candidate Experience (M) also significantly affects Employer Branding (Y) (Path b; $t = 4.375$; Sig. < .001). This mediating effect aligns with Candidate Experience Theory, which argues that applicants generalize their recruitment experience into broader perceptions of organizational quality. Because all paths (a, b, and c') are significant, H3

is accepted with partial mediation. This indicates that e-recruitment strengthens employer branding both directly and indirectly: directly through positive digital impressions, and indirectly by shaping a meaningful, fair, and aesthetically consistent experience that applicants associate with the overall brand. This dual effect is consistent with findings that highlight the role of positive recruitment experiences in enhancing employer image, especially in visually driven sectors like fashion (Reis et al., 2021; Tursunbayeva et al., 2025).

5. Research Limitations

It is important to note several limitations in this study. The main limitation is the very small sample size (N=43) for multiple regression analysis. In addition, the very high Adjusted R Square value (94.9%) needs to be interpreted with caution. Although this indicates a strong model, such a high value in social research could also be a statistical artifact due to the small sample size. Further research is recommended to replicate this model with a much larger number of respondents.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the analysis, this study concludes that the proposed research model is valid and appropriate for explaining the relationship between e-recruitment, candidate experience, and employer branding. The instruments used were shown to be reliable, and the overall model met the required analytical assumptions.

The findings demonstrate that e-recruitment has both a direct and indirect influence on employer branding. A well-designed digital recruitment platform enhances the company's image directly, while also improving candidate experience, which in turn strengthens employer branding. This confirms the role of candidate experience as a partial mediator in the relationship between e-recruitment and employer branding.

From a practical perspective, companies particularly SMEs such as Agasha Collection should invest in improving the technical quality, usability, and clarity of their digital recruitment systems. At the same time, maintaining transparent communication and providing respectful feedback throughout the process is essential to creating a positive candidate experience that contributes to a stronger employer brand.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces the importance of digital recruitment practices in shaping organizational reputation. Future research is encouraged to examine additional factors not included in this model and to explore more specific dimensions of e-recruitment and candidate experience to deepen understanding of their influence on employer branding.

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