

Public relations perspectives: Linking corporate brand and product brand to employer branding

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ABSTRACT

Background: Mass layoffs in digital platform companies have intensified public scrutiny of employer branding, particularly within the sharing economy, where corporate reputation, social responsibility, and workforce relations are closely interconnected. In the case of PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk., employment termination decisions have raised questions about how corporate and product brands are interpreted by prospective employees. In this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a part of Public Relations communication approach, emerges as a strategic communication resource that may mediate the relationship between brand reputation and employer branding. **Purpose:** This study examines the influence of corporate brand and product brand on employer branding and analyzes the mediating role of CSR within a sharing economy business context. **Methods:** This research adopts a quantitative explanatory approach using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Survey data were collected from 138 job seekers who were familiar with PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk. Corporate brand and product brand were treated as exogenous variables, employer branding as the endogenous variable, and CSR as a mediating variable. **Results:** The findings show that corporate brand, product brand, and CSR have a positive and significant influence on employer branding. CSR demonstrates the strongest direct effect and fully mediates the relationships between corporate brand and employer branding, as well as between product brand and employer branding. **Conclusion:** The study indicates that employer branding in the sharing economy is not shaped solely by corporate or product reputation but is substantially strengthened through perceived CSR practices, which translate brand meaning into employer attractiveness. **Implications:** This research suggests the integration of CSR into corporate and product brand communication as an employer branding strategy. Academically, it contributes to public relations and employer branding literature by positioning CSR as a mediating variable in the sharing economy.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility; corporate brand; product brand; employer branding; sharing economy business

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of technological modernization, global society has experienced significant transformation across multiple industrial sectors, including technology, economics, transportation, education, and digital business ecosystems. The rapid advancement of information technology has not only reshaped production systems and service delivery but also transformed the interaction and work patterns of individuals (Akbar & Hoffmann, 2023; Gerlich, 2023; Minami et al., 2021).

These changes have also shifted employment relationships and employee expectations. Global competition for quality talent is intensifying, particularly in the technology and digital economy sectors. This situation is pushing companies to position employer branding as a crucial corporate communications strategy (McDonnell et al., 2017).

In the current businesses, employer brand strength influences recruitment effectiveness, talent quality, and long-term organizational sustainability. The sharing economy remains a rapidly expanding yet contested concept. It generates innovation and economic opportunity, but it also raises concerns regarding labor precarity and regulatory governance. Rymarczyk (2022) suggests that the technological

paradigm shift underpinning the sharing economy may rival the industrial revolution in scale. Amid these structural shifts, CSR has gained increasing concern as a reputational instrument. CSR is no longer perceived only as a philanthropic activity detached from business strategy but rather as a legitimizing narrative that strengthens stakeholder trust and corporate ethical identity (Hall et al., 2023). CSR now functions as a strategic communication platform through which organizations demonstrate accountability and societal contribution. It plays a critical role in employer branding among younger workforces. Millennials and Generation Z increasingly evaluate employers based on sustainability commitments, social justice, and societal impact.

Authentic CSR engagement improves reputation, trust, and job attractiveness (Gandasari et al., 2024; Tkalac Verčič & Verčič, 2025). Indonesia provides a relevant empirical context for examining these dynamics, particularly through the growth of PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk. Originating from ride-hailing services, Gojek operates through a sharing economy model connecting independent drivers, merchants, and consumers via an integrated digital platform. Rather than owning transportation assets, the company coordinates service provision digitally. This platform model brings about rapid expansion and positions

the firm as a decacorn. Through its super-app ecosystem, GoTo integrates transportation, payments, logistics, and e-commerce services (Eka, 2020). However, macroeconomic instability has challenged platform growth. Global shocks—including inflation, geopolitical conflict, pandemic recovery disruptions, and supply-chain imbalances—have reshaped corporate financial strategies (Elkhishin & Mohieldin, 2021; Fischer & Storm, 2023). In response, GoTo implemented workforce restructuring in late 2022, laying off approximately 1,300 employees (12% of its workforce). Such downsizing inevitably influences employer reputation and workforce trust. This context highlights the importance of employer branding resilience. Layoffs test whether corporate reputation, product strength, and CSR commitments can sustain employer attractiveness amid organizational turbulence. Employer branding represents the intersection of corporate communication, marketing, and human resource strategy. It communicates functional, psychological, and economic employment benefits (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). For employers, it integrates culture, talent strategy, and reputation. For employees, it reflects anticipated workplace experience (Kalińska-Kula & Staniec, 2021). Corporate brand constitutes the collective identity communicated through organizational

values, leadership credibility, and institutional reputation. Prior studies demonstrate that corporate brand strength positively influences employer attractiveness (Rinaldi & Sunaryo Putra, 2022). A strong corporate identity signals stability, ethical governance, and career opportunity. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1. Corporate brand has a positive and significant influence on the employer branding of PT. GoTo Gojek Indonesia Tbk.

Consumers often become job seekers, and their product experiences inform employer evaluations. High-quality, innovative, and prestigious products generate organizational pride and aspirational value (Santiago, 2019; Santos et al., 2015). Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Product Brand positively influences Employer Branding.

CSR further strengthens employer attractiveness by embedding ethical meaning into brand reputation. Potential employees prefer socially responsible organizations as CSR signals fairness, stakeholder care, and societal contribution (Dögl & Holtbrügge, 2014).

H3: CSR positively influences Employer Branding.

Despite growing scholarship, most prior studies position CSR solely as a direct antecedent. Limited research examines CSR as a mediating mechanism, translating brand

reputation into employer attractiveness. Therefore,

H4: CSR mediates Corporate Brand

→ Employer Branding.

H5: CSR mediates Product Brand

→ Employer Branding.

GoTo's CSR initiatives illustrate this mediation pathway. Through the #BangkitBersama movement, the company empowers MSMEs, promotes digitalization, and supports inclusive economic recovery.

Over four million MSMEs joined the GoTo ecosystem during the pandemic (Karim et al., 2023; Lindawati, 2022), strengthening corporate legitimacy and employer pride. Accordingly, this study examines the integrated roles of Corporate Brand, Product Brand, and CSR in shaping Employer Branding within Indonesia's sharing economy platform. Therefore, it is important to recognize that employer branding in the sharing economy cannot be separated from stakeholder perceptions and platform governance dynamics.

Unlike traditional corporations, platform-based firms operate within multi-sided ecosystems involving drivers, merchants, consumers, investors, regulators, and digital communities. As a result, employer attractiveness is shaped not only by internal employment conditions but also by how the organization treats its external partners and

ecosystem contributors. Ethical treatment of gig workers, fairness in algorithmic management, and transparency in platform policies increasingly influence how prospective employees evaluate organizational legitimacy.

From a stakeholder theory perspective, employer branding emerges as the cumulative outcome of value creation across stakeholder groups. Organizations perceived as equitable, inclusive, and socially accountable are more likely to cultivate trust not only among customers but also among talent markets. This is particularly relevant in the sharing economy, where organizational identity is co-created through digital interactions and public discourse. Furthermore, signaling theory provides an important lens for understanding how job seekers interpret corporate communication cues.

In digital labor markets, applicants often lack direct experiential knowledge about organizational working conditions. Consequently, they rely on observable signals such as corporate reputation, product success, sustainability programs, and media narratives to infer employer quality. CSR initiatives, sustainability reporting, and community engagement campaigns function as high-credibility signals that reduce informational uncertainty. This signaling function becomes critical in a post-crisis, such as layoffs.

Workforce restructuring may generate reputational dissonance if stakeholders perceive disagreement between corporate values and organizational actions. In such situations, CSR communication can bring back reputation by reaffirming corporate commitment to societal welfare beyond internal workforce adjustments.

In the case of GoTo, CSR initiatives such as MSME empowerment, digital literacy training, environmental sustainability programs, and inclusive financial services could rebuild organizational legitimacy. Programs embedded within the #BangkitBersama movement reinforce the company's narrative as a socially embedded technology platform. By enabling small businesses to digitalize operations and access broader markets, GoTo positions itself as an enabler of national economic resilience. From an employer branding standpoint, such initiatives cultivate organizational pride among employees. Individuals increasingly seek employment in organizations whose missions resonate with personal values. This alignment between corporate purpose and individual identity strengthens affective commitment and organizational identification.

In addition, the mediating role of CSR within this study resulted in inconsistencies in prior employer branding research. Earlier models predominantly examined corporate brand and product brand as independent

predictors of employer attractiveness. These relationships are empirically supported in the previous research, but they do not completely explain the psychological mechanisms through which brand perceptions translate into employment desirability. By positioning CSR as a mediating construct, this research introduces an ethical-value transmission pathway. Corporate and product reputations acquire employment meaning when interpreted through the lens of social responsibility. For example, a technologically advanced platform may attract admiration, but its employer appeal strengthens significantly when stakeholders perceive that innovation is accompanied by social contribution.

This mediation logic is relevant in emerging economies, such as Indonesia, where socio-economic inequality, MSME vulnerability, and digital transformation gaps remain prominent. Technology firms are expected not only to innovate but also to contribute to inclusive development. Consequently, CSR becomes embedded within corporate legitimacy frameworks. Moreover, the expansion of digital labor markets has intensified competition for purpose-driven talent, particularly among Millennials and Generation Z. These cohorts prioritize organizational ethics, sustainability practices, and diversity commitments when making employment decisions. Employer

branding strategies that fail to incorporate CSR narratives risk being perceived as inauthentic or purely promotional.

Another dimension reinforcing CSR's mediating role is internal employee perception. Employees who perceive their organizations as socially responsible demonstrate higher organizational commitment, engagement, and advocacy behaviors. They become brand ambassadors who communicate positive employment experiences externally. This internal-external reputation loop highlights the symbiotic relationship between CSR and employer branding. Responsible organizational conduct enhances employee pride, which in turn amplifies employer attractiveness through word-of-mouth communication and digital storytelling.

Additionally, platform firms must manage reputational complexity arising from hybrid workforce structures. Gig workers, freelancers, and contractual partners often evaluate platform fairness through CSR lenses, including welfare protection, income stability, and community development initiatives. Negative perceptions within these groups may spill over into broader employer branding narratives. Therefore, CSR within the sharing economy extends beyond philanthropy toward ecosystem responsibility. Organizations must demonstrate accountability not only to employees but also

to all participants within their digital value chains. From a strategic communication perspective, integrating CSR into employer branding requires narrative alignment across corporate, product, and recruitment messaging. Corporate storytelling should emphasize how technological innovation contributes to societal progress. Product branding should highlight sustainability and ethical sourcing. Recruitment communication should translate these values into workplace meaning. This integrative storytelling approach ensures consistency across stakeholder touchpoints. Furthermore, macroeconomic instability promotes CSR in employer branding. Economic downturns, layoffs, and organizational restructuring often erode trust. Firms that maintain visible social commitments during crises signal resilience and ethical continuity. Such signals mitigate reputational damage and sustain employer attractiveness even amid operational contraction.

Theoretically, this expanded framework contributes to employer branding literature by integrating stakeholder theory, signaling theory, and platform ecosystem perspectives. It advances understanding of how employer attractiveness is constructed through internal HR practices and socio-economic engagement. Empirically, situating this model within Indonesia's sharing economy context enriches developing-country

scholarship, which remains underrepresented in employer branding research. Platform firms in emerging markets operate under heightened societal expectations to drive inclusive growth.

Accordingly, this study positions Corporate Brand, Product Brand, and CSR as interdependent constructs within a reputational ecosystem that shapes Employer Branding. By examining CSR's mediating role, the research explains how brand strength translates into employment desirability in digitally mediated economies.

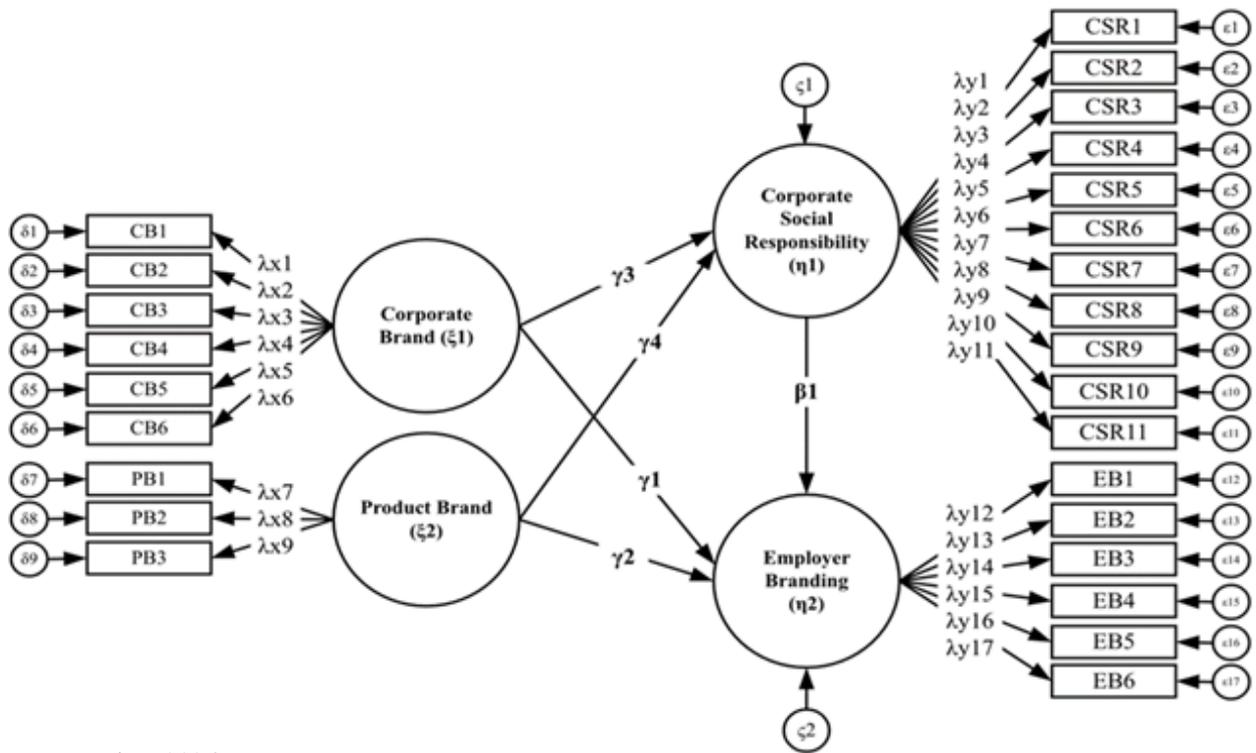
Furthermore, examining employer branding through the integrative lens of corporate brand, product brand, and CSR mediation explains the construction of digital platform organizations toward sustainable talent ecosystems. In sharing economy environments characterized by fluid labor arrangements and reputational volatility, employer attractiveness becomes dependent on multidimensional brand coherence. Organizations are not only evaluated based on their technological capabilities or market dominance but also on how consistently they align innovation with ethical governance and social contribution.

This expanded perspective is relevant as digital platform firms transition from hyper-growth phases toward sustainability-oriented business models. During such transitions, workforce restructuring, operational efficiency

initiatives, and investor accountability pressures may generate reputational tension. CSR, therefore, functions as a stabilizing reputational asset that preserves organizational legitimacy while signaling long-term societal commitment. In addition, integrating CSR into employer branding strengthens organizational resilience by fostering trust among both internal employees and external stakeholders. Employees who perceive alignment between corporate values and social impact initiatives demonstrate strong engagement, advocacy, and retention behaviors. Simultaneously, prospective applicants interpret CSR engagement as an indicator of organizational integrity and workplace fairness. Accordingly, positioning CSR as a mediating variable can advance theoretical discourse and suggest actionable implications for strategic communication, talent acquisition, and reputational risk management within sharing economy platforms operating in emerging markets.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is quantitative as mentioned by Saunders et al. (2020), using research data in the form of numbers and statistics. Then, it is conducted to identify the level and nature of causal relationships. According to Saunders et al.



Source: Author, 2026

Figure 1 Research Framework

(2020), causal research explains the causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Two independent variables for this research are corporate brand and product brand, with two dependent variables: CSR and employer branding. Figure 1 shows that the research model and its notation adapted from (Putra, 2022). The notation used in this study is ξ (latent exogenous); η (latent endogenous), β (path coefficient of endogenous variables to endogenous variables); γ (path coefficient of exogenous variables to endogenous variables); x (manifest measurement variable of a latent exogenous variable); y (manifest measurement variable of a latent endogenous variable); ζ

(residual of latent endogenous variable). The two structural equation models of this research:

$$\text{Structural Equation I: } \eta_1 = \gamma_3\xi_1 + \gamma_4\xi_2 + \zeta_1$$

$$(1)\text{Structural Equation II: } \eta_2 = \gamma_1\xi_1 + \gamma_2\xi_2 + \beta_1\eta_1 + \zeta_2 (2)$$

The CSR variable in this study was defined as a traditional perspective, which confirmed that PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia, Tbk. must have provided quality services and maximized stakeholder benefits to fulfill their social responsibilities (Chang & Lee, 2020). The CSR variables were measured using indicators adapted from Özcan and Elçi (2020) through (1) social and nonsocial stakeholders'

Table 1 Gender Profile

Respondents	Amount	%
Male	89	64
Female	49	36
Total	138	100

Source: Author, 2024

Table 2 Education and Expenses Profile

Respondents' Profile	Amount
High School Degree or Equivalent Expenses less than Rp3 million/month	93

Source: Author, 2024

responsibility, (2) employee responsibility, and (3) legal and ethical values responsibility.

The corporate brand variable was defined as a strategy implemented by the company, utilizing GoTo as a brand for promotional activities across all communication channels, which could exert a long-term influence on brand strength (Andriani et al., 2019; Rinaldi & Sunaryo Putra, 2022). This variable was measured using indicators adapted from Rinaldi and Putra (2022), through (1) Customer Orientation, (2) Reliable and Financially Strong Company, and (3) Social and Environmental Responsibility.

Furthermore, the product brand was defined as the use of names, terms, symbols, or designs to give identity to GoTo products. The existence of a product brand makes GoTo products different from competitors (Andriani et al., 2019; Rinaldi & Putra, 2022). This variable was measured using three indicators adapted from Rinaldi and Putra (2022).

The next variable in this study is employer

branding, defined as the sum of the efforts of PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk. to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is the desired workplace (Andriani et al., 2019; Rinaldi & Putra, 2022). This variable is measured using indicators adapted from Rinaldi and Putra (2022) through (1) Employer Brand Awareness, (2) Perceived Job Attributes, (3) Employer Brand Attractiveness.

The research focused on individuals who applied to work at the company, with an unidentified number of the applicants. This work adopted a purposive sampling to gather data from those most informed about the topic. Another factor supporting this choice was that some applicants did not fully meet the conditions linked to what the study aimed to observe. Therefore, purposive sampling set specific rules: first, only individuals looking for work; second, those familiar with PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk; third, knowing PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk well.

Based on the questionnaire that was

distributed, as many as 138 respondents had filled out the research questionnaire; this number met the minimum criteria determined by Hair et al. (2018), which is 5 times the number of indicators. Out of 162 people, just 152 stayed within the allowed range (93.8%). Moving on, those same 152 had to match the next condition too; only 144 fit (94.7%). Later, from the 144 who made it through once more, 138 also cleared all three rules (95.8%). Table 1 and 2 explain further on the respondents profile.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The measurement model or outer model evaluates the validity and reliability of the model. The outer model in PLS-SEM is the study measurement model and consists of associations between indicators and latent variables (Hair et al., 2018). As explained by Hair et al. (2018), the loading factor value must be more than 0.70 to evaluate convergent validity. Henseler et al. (2015) noted that if the reflecting indicator loading factor is more than 0.50 (reflective indicator loading factor > 0.50), it may be regarded as a useful indication of latent variables.

So you might place the maximum allowable load outside at about 0.60. To check how well things match up, researchers calculated an average value - say, average variance extracted - needing it above half a point, roughly 0.50.

During testing for accuracy, every item showed weights higher than 0.7 while p-values stayed under 0.05. Because of this, the model's predictions tend to be trustworthy. One way to check if convergent validity holds up is by looking at average variance extracted (AVE), needing it cross 0.5 but better if possible. That number shows hidden variables explain over half - exactly 50 percent plus - of what the backward-looking indicator displays.

The test results demonstrated that all values satisfied the criteria for a loading factor and an AVE above 0.50, allowing the claim that each latent variable may be measured using this value as its measurement. The next phase is to examine issues with discriminant validity for each concept, with correlation values between components in the model because there are no convergent validity issues (Hair et al., 2021). The Fornell Larcker Criterion, HTMT, and Cross Loadings are common names for this approach.

Henseler et al. (2015) found that the Fornell-Larcker Criterion technique does not identify discriminant validity in most significant situations. Henseler et al. (2015) proposed utilizing the heteroite-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) to evaluate discriminative validity. Using a bootstrapped sample of 5000 helped check for discriminant validity issues. A result under or exactly 1.00 was set as the target

Table 3 Construct Validity and Reliability

Variable	Item(s)	Loadings	CA	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Corporate Brand (X1)	CB1	0.834	0.935	0.935	0.948	0.754
	CB2	0.877				
	CB3	0.919				
	CB4	0.843				
	CB5	0.868				
	CB6	0.866				
Product Brand (X2)	PB1	0.803	0.819	0.832	0.892	0.734
	PB2	0.904				
	PB3	0.860				
Corporate Social Responsibility (M)	CSR1	0.747	0.940	0.942	0.949	0.627
	CSR2	0.794				
	CSR3	0.763				
	CSR4	0.834				
	CSR5	0.782				
	CSR6	0.812				
	CSR7	0.804				
	CSR8	0.827				
	CSR9	0.789				
	CSR10	0.805				
	CSR11	0.751				
Employer Branding (Y)	EB1	0.909	0.933	0.935	0.948	0.751
	EB2	0.887				
	EB3	0.905				
	EB4	0.817				
	EB5	0.840				
	EB6	0.836				

Source: Authors, 2024

confidence level. Each dimension’s confidence interval for the variable value in this work came out at either 5.0% or 95.0%. Therefore, each supporting indicator has no issues with discriminant validity.

Reflective indicators may also be detected in the cross-loading between indicators and their constructs in discriminant validity testing. If an indicator has a loading factor on other constructions, it is deemed genuine. As a result,

latent conceptions are better than others in predicting indicators in their block (Hair et al., 2018). The table above demonstrates that each targeted construct’s loading value is higher than the others. All indicators are reliable, and discriminant validity is unhampered. Following a validity assessment of the indicators, each latent construct’s reliability is assessed using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability values. According to Dijkstra and Henseler

(2015), composite reliability must be greater than 0.7, and Cronbach's alpha must be greater than 0.6 to guarantee the reliability of PLS construction scores. This research concluded that all structures were reliable.

The researchers tested the structural model after the estimated model satisfied the validity and reliability requirements. Predicting the link between latent variables was the goal of this evaluation. To evaluate the structural (inside model), Hair et al. (2021) recommended examining the inner VIF values, coefficient of determination, model appropriateness, and predictive relevance. To evaluate multicollinearity in the structural model, the researchers employed inner VIF values. No perfect or significant association between the independent variables was discovered in this study. As advised by Hair et al. (2018), the correlation value between the observed variables (VIF) was less than 10.00. The variable correlation matrix produced by the VIF value shows the procedure used to check for multicollinearity. According to the examination of the coefficient of determination, the exogenous variable of employer branding, which is 74.5% (0.745), may account for the endogenous variable of employer branding. The remainder, however, is explained by external factors not included in this analysis.

In this study, the R-square value for CSR

is 0.720. According to these findings, 71% of the variance in the endogenous CSR variable is explained by exogenous factors, and the remaining portion is explained by other exogenous variables not included in this study. The predictive significance of the structural model was then assessed (Q2), which gauged how well the observed values were produced. The PLS pathway model has predictive validity for a concept if the Q2 value for certain endogenous latent variables is larger than zero (Putra & Ardianto, 2022). This study used the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normal fit index (NFI) test values to evaluate the model's fit. According to Hair et al. (2021), the model is considered a good fit if the SRMR value is below 0.10.

To check whether the idea behind the research hypothesis holds true or not, this research looked at the size of the path coefficient along with the T-Statistic result. That's where clues appeared about what really fit the data. The result showed that employer branding received a boost from how the company was seen. A score of 0.240 linked corporate image to job ads, nearly matching total impact potential. Beyond numbers, significance kicks in - p dropped below 0.05. With a t-statistic crossing the 1.96 mark, proof was built that the original claim held ground. Therefore, evidence supported H1. One step further, when corporate

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing

Direct Path		O	M	STDEV	O/STDEV	P
H1	Corporate Brand (X1) -> Employer Branding (Y)	0.240	0.233	0.102	2.348	0.019
H2	Product Brand (X2) -> Employer Branding (Y)	0.287	0.293	0.100	2.862	0.004
H3	Corporate Social Responsibility (M) -> Employer Branding (Y)	0.401	0.400	0.097	4.157	0.000
Specific Indirect Path		O	M	STDEV	O/STDEV	P
H4	Corporate Brand (X1) -> Corporate Social Responsibility (M) -> Employer Branding (Y)	0.234	0.232	0.065	3.594	0.000
H5	Product Brand (X2) -> Corporate Social Responsibility (M) -> Employer Branding (Y)	0.121	0.123	0.044	2.770	0.006

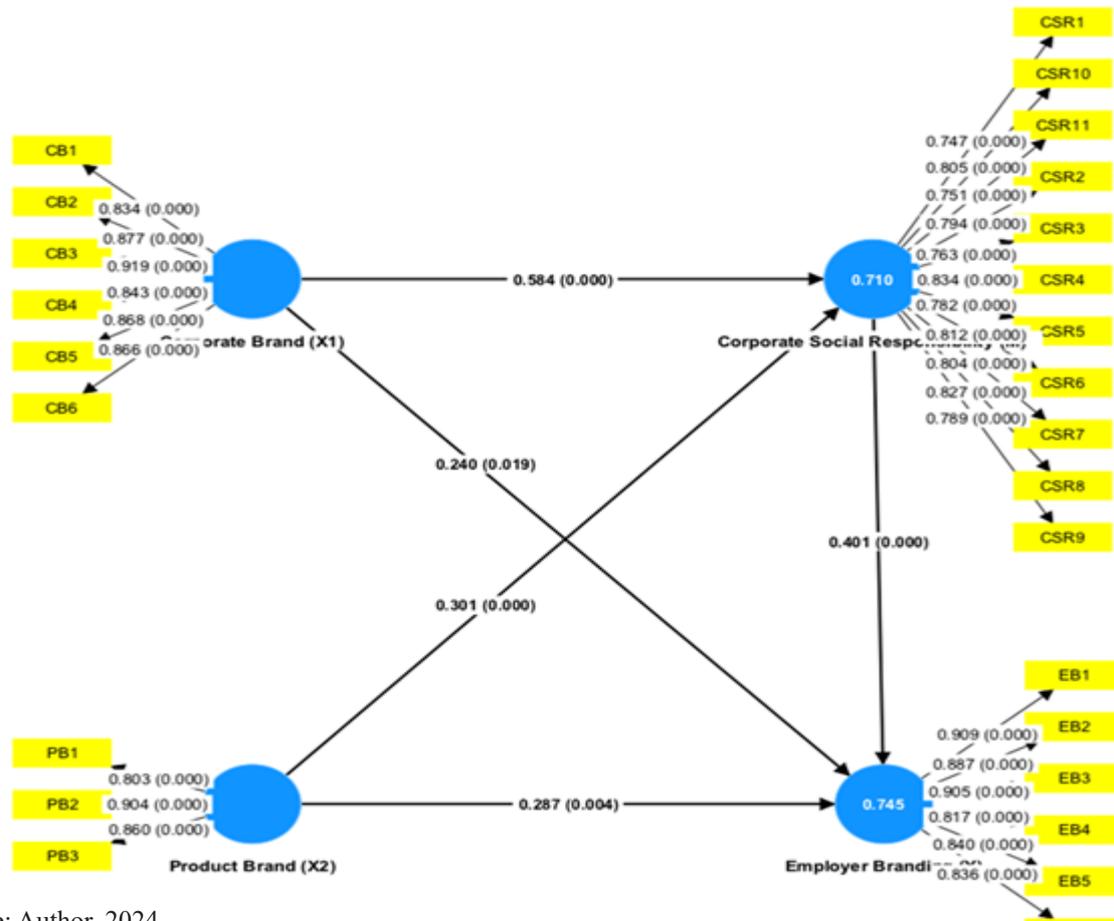
Note. O indicates original sample. M indicates sample mean. STDEV indicates standart deviation. O/STDEV indicates t-statistics. P indicates p values.

Source: Authors, 2024

reputation climbed, the brand also rose by the same amount. Looking at how product brands shaped employer branding, the link showed a strong connection. Its path coefficient was near 1 at 0.287. That number came from data where the T-statistic hit 2.862, well over the 1.96 threshold needed for significance. A p-value measured below 0.05, specifically 0.004, supported the finding. Because those values fell inside acceptable ranges, H2 found support. In turn, it appears product reputation lifts employee attraction by about 3% per step upward. In everyday terms, moving the product brand up

by one point pushes employer visibility forward by roughly that same amount.

Ahead of schedule, results showed corporate social responsibility boosting employer branding in clear ways. The relationship between the two rested on a 0.401 coefficient - nearly full strength. Support came from a T-Statistic above 1.96, along with a p-value under 0.05, both pointing toward significance. Because of this pattern, the third hypothesis found footing, confirmed through evidence. In turn, responsibility's sway translated directly into brand growth, measured per unit change. Thus,



Source: Author, 2024

Figure 2 Hypothesis Testing

when responsibility rises, branding follows closely behind at 0.401. In terms of the structural relationship, corporate social responsibility acts as a mediating variable between corporate brand and employer branding. From the data on indirect paths, the strength shows up as 0.234, near full strength. That number ties closely to a clear result because its p-value hits below 0.05. With a T-Statistic crossing over 1.96 at 3.594, significance holds firm. Therefore, H4 is accepted.

When companies act responsibly, it shows in how they treat workers as much as customers. That connection runs both ways -

strong brands help guide fair treatment at every level. In another direction, what a product brand stands for often shapes who gets hired and how they're seen. This shift in value doesn't happen in isolation; it passes through policies around society and the environment. Looking at the secondary pathways, the researchers found a coefficient of 0.121, near the upper limit, backed by a T-Statistic of 2.770, crossing the 1.96 threshold, along with a p-value below 0.05 at 0.006. It indicated acceptance of H5. When companies act responsibly, it shapes how their products and workplace are viewed. This connection exists because responsible actions

strengthen both brand images. These outcomes happen consistently across different contexts.

Awareness is the first dimension of employer brand equity because it is an individual's first step toward employer brand presence (Acquier et al., 2019; Stuss, 2018). Employer branding is strategically developed through internal and external communication (Kalińska-Kula & Staniec, 2021).

From the data, the findings showed that CSR functions as a communicative bridge that translates brand reputation into employer meaning. In public relations terms, CSR operates not merely as an organizational activity but as a symbolic resource through which corporate values are interpreted by prospective employees. This explains why corporate brand and product brand lose their direct explanatory power when CSR is introduced as a mediator. Brand reputation alone remains abstract unless it is anchored in socially meaningful actions that can be recognized, evaluated, and trusted by stakeholders.

Recognition matters. When people notice your products, their names stick more easily. Being seen as reliable with what you make pulls future staff closer. Pride also plays a role as joining such a team often conveys a sense of affiliation with something prestigious. Similar to this finding, Thảng & Trang (2024) also showed that employer branding positively and

significantly relates to an organization's image and reputation, which in turn influences job seekers' intention to apply, especially when information on social media is available.

From a strategic PR perspective, this result reinforces the view that employer branding is not formed through isolated corporate messaging but through interpretive processes occurring within the public sphere. CSR functions as a legitimizing narrative that aligns organizational identity with societal expectations. In the context of the sharing economy, where public scrutiny is high and employment relations are often contested, CSR communication provides moral coherence to corporate messaging. Job seekers do not simply assess "how strong" a brand is, but rather what the brand stands for and how it behaves during periods of uncertainty.

Furthermore, a strong workplace identity often grows from how employees see the business they work for. When people notice a firm's reputation stretching beyond products, it quietly shapes what future staff believe they might become. Recognition spreads - not only sales figures but presence - and that sense of belonging rises among those looking to join. Being aware of a name helps feel part of something worth stepping into. This is relevant to the research from Reis et al. (2021) that employer branding influences external perceptions of an organization and plays a role

in corporate reputation and talent attraction. In turn, employer branding influences the intention of job seekers.

In the context of public relations, an organization's reputation can be defined as the positive impression formed by the public and potential career activists towards a company (Soeling et al., 2022). Corporate brand is a strategy implemented by companies through the company name as a brand for promotional efforts for all business identities in all communication channels, which will have a long-term impact on the strength of the brand (Erlinda & Safitri, 2020; Lindholm, 2018; Schultz et al., 2005). Previous studies support the results of this study. Several previous studies showed a significant positive relationship between employer brand equity and intention to apply (Banerjee et al., 2020; Rinaldi & Sunaryo Putra, 2022). As previously mentioned, Cable et al. (2000) conceptualize three dimensions of employer knowledge (also known as employer brand equity, analogous to consumer brand equity). Awareness is the first dimension of employer brand equity because it is an individual's first step toward employer brand presence (Acquier et al., 2017; Stuss, 2018).

Product brands are the main driver of sustainable competitive advantage, and employees are seen as an integral part of a company's efforts to build a strong brand by

generating value in the minds of consumers (Qureshi et al., 2022). Santiago (2019) shows that job seekers evaluate the attractiveness of employers based on perceptions of the employer's product or service brand portfolio. At the same time, job seekers are also consumers of products/services produced by their prospective employers, and positive perceptions of product/service quality may have spillover effects on employer brands (Santos et al., 2015). Thus, the awareness of job seekers regarding the products/services owned by the employer can signal the company's quality as an employer.

What stands out here is how responsibility shapes how companies are seen by workers. Instead of working straight from the source, think of pride as a reaction - people feel good knowing a firm values nature. That sense spreads, linking brand ideas to who ends up hired. According to Chang and Lee (2020), CSR is a traditional perspective emphasizing that companies must provide quality services and maximize stakeholder benefits to fulfill their social responsibilities. Findings from previous studies support the results of this study. Studies have shown that a genuine focus on organizational social responsibility behavior strengthens employer brands, creates a positive brand image (Okolocha, 2020), and improves the quality of life of communities and organizations (Lindholm, 2018). CSR is an

important predictor of employer branding.

The findings also imply that employer branding cannot be delegated solely to human resources or marketing functions. Instead, it requires integration within the corporate public relations strategy. CSR communication should be aligned with corporate and product brand narratives to ensure coherence across stakeholder touchpoints. Fragmented messaging risks undermining credibility, particularly in crises.

In correlation to the GoTo context, CSR initiatives such as MSME digitalization and inclusive economic recovery play a dual role: they support national development goals while simultaneously reinforcing employer branding. It shows that CSR's strategic value functions as a reputational safeguard and a talent attraction mechanism. For public relations practitioners, it suggests framing CSR not as reactive image repair but as proactive meaning construction.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that employer branding in the sharing economy is constructed through a layered reputational process rather than through isolated brand attributes. Corporate brand and product brand contribute to employer attractiveness, yet their influence becomes meaningful only when mediated by CSR. It confirms that employer branding is not merely a function of market success or corporate visibility, but

a communicative outcome shaped by how organizations demonstrate ethical responsibility and social relevance to their stakeholders.

From a public relations perspective, these results emphasize that CSR operates as a strategic meaning-making mechanism that translates organizational reputation into perceived employer value. In the context of digital platform companies facing reputational vulnerability, such as workforce restructuring, CSR communication enables organizations to maintain legitimacy by aligning business decisions with broader societal commitments. Employer branding, therefore, emerges as a reputational reflection of corporate accountability rather than a purely promotional construct.

By situating CSR as a mediating variable, this study promotes the integration of corporate branding, product branding, and CSR within a coherent public relations strategy. Employer branding should be understood as an extension of organizational reputation management, where social responsibility serves as the interpretive lens through which prospective employees assess credibility, trustworthiness, and value alignment. This integrative understanding provides the conceptual foundation for the conclusions that follow.

This study has some limitations, which could be further studied in the future. It is

necessary to reexamine the method used and its application in different industries. Also, further research is suggested to increase the number of respondents and widen the coverage area outside Jabodetabek. Different characteristics of the respondents can result in further hypothesis testing. This research can be useful for building progress in knowledge in the field of marketing communications and can be used as a reference for other researchers who wish to research the same topic and theme. Furthermore, future researchers are expected to add other variables besides CSR, corporate brand, product brand, and employer branding.

In a broader sense, this study also highlights the evolving role of public relations in shaping employer branding within digitally mediated and socially sensitive business environments. Employer branding is no longer confined to recruitment messaging or internal human resource practices, but it is increasingly embedded in how organizations communicate responsibility, ethics, and societal contribution to the public. As digital platforms continue to blur the boundaries between corporate, product, and employer identities, public relations functions become central in orchestrating coherent narratives that connect organizational performance with social legitimacy. This perspective reinforces the need to view employer branding as a strategic communication

outcome, rooted in sustained CSR engagement and reputation management rather than short-term promotional efforts.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that in the context of the sharing economy, a company's brand strength and product popularity alone cannot sufficiently create an image as an attractive workplace without a positive perception of CSR. This study confirms that all hypotheses (H1–H5) are accepted, with CSR demonstrating the most dominant influence on employer branding (coefficient value 0.401). CSR is proven to act as a full mediator in the relationship between company brand reputation and product brand reputation on a company's attractiveness as an employer. This finding confirms that brand reputation is effective only when accompanied by public trust in the company's social commitment.

This study also shows that today's jobseekers prioritize a company's ethical values and social commitment over mere reputation or product popularity. Companies such as GoTo, which faced a reputation crisis due to mass layoffs, should reaffirm their social responsibility values to rebuild their image as a desirable employer. The growing ethical perceptions through CSR activities—such as the #RiseTogether

movement for MSME empowerment and environmental preservation—are key factors in restoring the company’s image and regaining the trust of digital talent.

This research implies that recruitment communication strategies cannot be separated from social responsibility communications. The management of PT GoTo Gojek Tokopedia Tbk should integrate CSR narratives into every aspect of brand communications, both corporate and product-based, to demonstrate the synergy between business success and social contribution. Reputation recovery after layoffs can only be achieved if the company demonstrates concrete actions in supporting the community and protecting the environment. This alignment between brand image and social values could reinforce the message that working at GoTo means contributing to positive social change.

Theoretically, contributes to the public relations and human resource management literature by positioning CSR as a mechanism explaining how brand reputation can transform into job attractiveness. This model broadens the understanding of the strategic role of corporate ethics and social responsibility in shaping a sustainable and competitive employer image. From a PR perspective, this study proves that CSR is a strategic PR communication tool, through which brand reputation can be

interpreted within employer branding. It appears as a communicative space in the corporation, where corporate values and social commitments shape stakeholder perceptions in the sharing economy context.

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