



Sustainability in the Hospitality Sector: Leveraging Development Value as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

Amidst the recent challenges the declining hospitality industry faces, this study focuses on enhancing employer branding sustainability in the hotel sector post the COVID-19 pandemic. The research targets hotel employees who have graduated from hospitality vocational schools and colleges. Utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, the results highlight the pivotal role of Development Value as a mediator in promoting sustainability within the hotel industry. This underscores the critical importance of hotel management in prioritizing the cultivation and recognition of development value among employees, where management of hotels can effectively enhance their sustainability practices. Inclusion of Development Values as a mediator is a novelty of this research. Employee development is the core that affects the sustainability of employer branding, and it is a strategic step to improve employer branding. Improvements were made to increase the fluency of sentences, consistency in the use of terms, and to clarify some parts to make them easier to understand.

Keberlanjutan di Sektor Perhotelan: Memanfaatkan Nilai Pengembangan sebagai Variabel Perantara

Abstrak

Di tengah tantangan yang dihadapi oleh industri perhotelan yang sedang mengalami penurunan, penelitian ini berfokus pada peningkatan keberlanjutan merek pemberi kerja di sektor perhotelan pasca pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menargetkan karyawan hotel yang lulus dari sekolah kejuruan dan perguruan tinggi di bidang perhotelan. Dengan menggunakan analisis Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), penelitian ini menemukan dampak signifikan dari nilai ekonomi dan perekrutan berbasis pengetahuan terhadap Nilai Pengembangan, yang pada gilirannya mempengaruhi Employer Branding. Hasil penelitian menyoroti peran krusial Nilai Pengembangan sebagai mediator dalam mempromosikan keberlanjutan di industri perhotelan, bersama dengan pertimbangan konservasi, pengelolaan sumber daya alam, dan praktik ekowisata. Hal ini menekankan pentingnya manajemen hotel dalam memprioritaskan pengembangan dan pengakuan nilai pengembangan di kalangan karyawan. Dengan menekankan pengembangan Nilai Pengembangan, hotel dapat secara efektif meningkatkan praktik keberlanjutan mereka sesuai dengan prinsip konservasi dan inisiatif ekowisata. Penggunaan Nilai Pengembangan sebagai mediator merupakan keunikan dalam penelitian ini. Pengembangan karyawan menjadi inti yang mempengaruhi keberlanjutan Employer Branding, serta merupakan langkah strategis untuk meningkatkan Employer Branding. Perbaikan dilakukan untuk meningkatkan kelancaran kalimat, konsistensi penggunaan istilah, serta memperjelas beberapa bagian agar lebih mudah dipahami.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of intense business competition, building brand image is the main focus of companies to increase the attractiveness and interest in purchasing their products (Ardana & Rastini, 2018; Rybaczewska et al., 2020). Brands related to attractive aspects are key in building brand recognition among the public and building an image that encourages trust in the brand (Carlson et al., 2019; Irmaliya & Anisa, 2022). In introducing its products, the company conducts activities to increase its brand recognition (Faransyah & Prabowo, 2020; Nadeem et al., 2020).

Undeniably, the hotel industry's brand image declined after the COVID-19 pandemic due to low occupancy rates, which resulted in reduced employee numbers. In addition to employee reductions, the impact on profitability is also reduced. If the hotel was only built two or three years before the pandemic, then the bank's loan repayment has not had time to pay off. As a result, the cash flow burden is more significant, leading to losses (Krishnan et al., 2024). This influence is known to all workers in each hotel, their families, and even the public worldwide, who are directly affected by prevention in the form of lockdowns (Ashraf et al., 2025). The tourism industry relies on accommodation, transportation facilities, and infrastructure. The employees' perception of the hotel company in which they work is reduced, and the brand image of the hotel company is also affected.

Amidst the challenges the hotel industry faces post-COVID-19, there is a growing need to prioritize sustainability and eco-conscious initiatives. The pandemic's impact has underscored the significance of integrating natural resources conservation and sustainable development principles into hotel operations. Hotels enhance their brand image and contribute to preserving the Earth's resources by embracing ecotourism practices and fostering a

culture of environmental responsibility. Given this, the industry must prioritize improving employer branding by emphasizing sustainability and highlighting the importance of growth within a green job framework (Guenther et al., 2025).

In addition to internal problems within each hotel, a subsequent negative multiplier effect occurs, affecting students and hospitality students who will undertake internships. During the pandemic, the process of gaining work experience came to a halt. This differs from companies that still allow their employees to work in car repair shops and large restaurant kitchens that provide delivery and catering. Hotels that may reconsider working in the hospitality industry due to its declining brand image. In addition to industry and individual company issues, government regulations require contract employees to be paid a minimum wage. The minimum wage can only cover basic needs, while the young generation, aged 18 to 25, wants to grow. This age group encompasses the workforce across all industries, including the hospitality sector. On the other hand, the Government requires workers in the hotel and hospitality industry to possess relevant competencies according to their respective occupations. In this case, welfare in the form of decent green jobs, based on occupancy levels and continuous work guarantees, is needed (Gupta & Jangra, 2024).

The recipients of the standard minimum wage in Jakarta and Bandung can still be tolerated by workers and prospective workers who have graduated from vocational schools and vocational academies, provided there is certainty of growth through development, which is a separate value for workers. Career development is a form of educated workforce growth (Mudannayake et al., 2024). Pantaruk (2025) conveyed the results of his research that post-pandemic requires empowering workers in the service industry. He proposed mobilizing all stakeholders, including ow-

ners, leaders, supervisors, and employees, to initiate and realize their employees' careers for green job sustainability and long-term investment. He further stated that it would satisfy the parties, not only the employees concerned, but also the leaders, who would receive good performance from workers with promising careers (Tsang et al., 2011). Lavan et al. (2025) have long conveyed the nature of the hospitality industry and the food and beverage business, highlighting that several important factors must be considered and implemented in building a human resource development ecosystem in this industry, ranging from micro and medium systems to the context of macro systems. Employees will be motivated when they have growth opportunities and development values. Alderfer's theory of motivation suggests that existence and social connectedness are insufficient to meet the need for growth (Lou, 2021). Previous research has shown that economic value does not positively affect employer brand (Dhiman & Arora, 2020).

In contrast, labour laws have allowed contract employees a maximum of two years, with a possible extension of up to four years. Here, the difference in workers' perceptions with the expectations of labour users who want to be sustainable, talented, but on the other hand, owners do not want to bear long-term investment. With the condition of such a hotel industry company, researchers ask the following research questions:

- RQ1: How can the sustainability of the hotel industry's employer branding be increased?
 RQ2: Which variable determines employer branding sustainability?

The novelty of this study is the inclusion of Development Values as a mediator of this research. Employee development is the core that affects the sustainability of employer branding, and a strategic step to improve employer branding in the long run.

Hypothesis Development

Employer Brand

Employer brand is an effort by management to manage perceptions that the company is the preferred workplace (Burton & Dickinger, 2025). Employer brand is a perception given by stakeholders as a corporate image (Balmer et al., 2020). Employer branding practices in building a company's reputation are adopted to attract and retain the best employees. They are one of the main strategies companies can adopt in improving recruiting, retaining, and engaging employee competencies according to organizational needs (Mudannayake et al., 2024). Hospitality companies must express their concern for social responsibility in online recruitment. Job seekers pay attention to this because their logic and perception are built on the concept that a good external environment will be a good image of their internal environment. It is recommended that employees also get space to carry out social responsibility so that the celebration of employees increases the company's image (Bodhi et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, Fukuchi et al. (2022) stated that unfailing work maintains and develops talented employees. The role of employer branding holds the key to the development of the company. The parable that states you give a peanut, you get a monkey, means entrepreneurs must also care about what motivates someone to work in terms of economic value. In some instances, employees, in terms of monetary value, will voluntarily recommend their company to talent outside the company. Cao & Hamori (2022) stated that in developed countries, it is twice as high as that of underdeveloped countries. This means that the relationship between the era of economic value and preference for a company is very close.

Economic Value of Employer Branding

Economic value is the financial benefits companies provide to employees in return for contributions to work done (Ek

Styvén et al., 2022). According to Aguiar-Quintana et al. (2021), Economic value is the first factor workers expect when agreeing to an employment contract. This is natural to meet the needs-based theory of motivation for growth (Alrawahi et al., 2020). From the beginning, vocational school graduates aim to work immediately and quickly get job vacancies; this is the main reason, in addition to interests and talents.

Due to their competencies, the primary objective is the economic value, such as salaries, bonuses, and incentives (Morela et al., 2024). In the era of the green economy, in addition to emphasizing green processes, it also highlights the attractiveness of economic values for employees to sustain workers' businesses and careers (Gulakdeniz & Karadas, 2024; Hoang et al., 2025). Based on this analysis, the hypothesis is posited:

H1: There is a significant relationship between economic value and employer branding.

Knowledge-Based Recruitment (K-BR) on Employer Brand

K-BR is a process focused on selecting employees based on relevant knowledge and abilities (Dhiman & Arora, 2020; Laguía et al., 2024). Hence, K-BR is an employee selection-based competency relevant to organizational needs (Heriqbaldi et al., 2025). Knowledge-based recruitment is also a strategic function of human resource management, involving identifying potential employees who enable the implementation of human capital-based development. A company that maintains employees contributes to the environment and social responsibility (Foroudi et al., 2024).

Humans, as the primary driving forces of a business, certainly get priority for continuous development. Innovation is generated from the creativity of talented workers, while talents can grow if given ongoing nutrition through training, edu-

cation, spiritual and emotional debriefing. Steriopoulos (2020) stated that spiritual practice may bring happiness and build a solid workplace network. Hence, benefits may be obtained from intrinsic motivation. At the same time, Gupta & Jangra (2024) declared that motivational sources should be built among the participants and the environment from time to time. Therefore:

H2: There is a significant effect between K-BR and the Employer brand

Development Value toward Employer Branding

Development value is the opportunity to build their capacity (Pisareva, 2021). Development value can measure organizations' perceived benefits regarding self-development and career development (van Ewijk & Weber, 2021). Development value also represents an organization's opportunities for its employees' growth, including sustainable training programs and career prospects (Van Assen, 2021). Work contracts that are limited to two years and can be extended once are troubling for future workers and workers currently carrying out their duties in the hospitality industry. Pantaruk et al. (2025) said that managing workers in the hospitality industry is the foundation of success. This starts with recruitment selection according to the competence needed by the industry, and the long-term needs must be met. Employees also want periodic assessments associated with rewards through recognition, promises, and incentives (Gupta & Jangra, 2024; Thawornlamlert et al., 2026). Moreover, hotel owners should provide training on employee competencies to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requirements because they will be evaluated in 2030 (Cottafava et al., 2022). Green jobs and environmental sustainability are stipulated and agreed upon by participating countries on the SDGs target. Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H3: Knowledge-based recruitment posi-

vely affects development value.

- H4: Economic value positively affects development value.
- H5: The Development value positively affects the development value
- H6: The Economic Value has a positive effect on the Employer brand through the Development Value
- H7: The Knowledge-Based Recruitment positively affects Employer Brand through Development Value.

The following is the research hypothesis model:

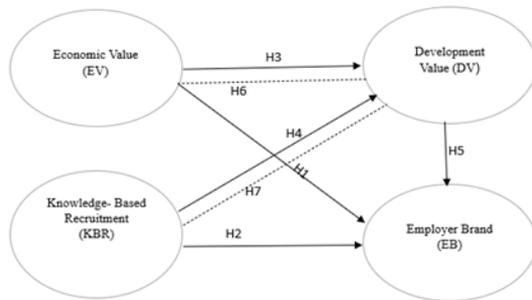


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

METHODS

Sample and Data Collection

The population consists of the managerial level of Four-star hotels in Bandung. The validity and reliability tests were conducted on 30 people chosen because of their positions (organizational level) and

who were available to ensure the instruments are valid and reliable. The validity test was estimated using the correlation coefficient (R-value) using the Pearson Product-Moment formula, and the reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha with SPSS software. The tested instrument was then used to conduct the survey. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling, where respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. Out of the 400 population, only 151 respondents submitted adequate responses, whereby, according to Hair et al. (2016), this response rate is adequate. For efficiency and effectiveness, the survey utilized digital tools using Google Forms. Resources were allocated effectively, such as scheduling the survey to maximize productivity and reduce downtime. The Likert scale is applied from one to five, with strongly disagree to agree strongly. After that, the data analysis is processed using PLS-SEM techniques and the Smart-PLS tool version 3.0. Smart-PLS version 3.0 was used because it supports a wide range of PLS-SEM analytical procedures, including bootstrapping and blindfolding, which are necessary for model validation and predictive relevance assessment. Smart-PLS provides powerful visualization capabilities for presenting data clearly.

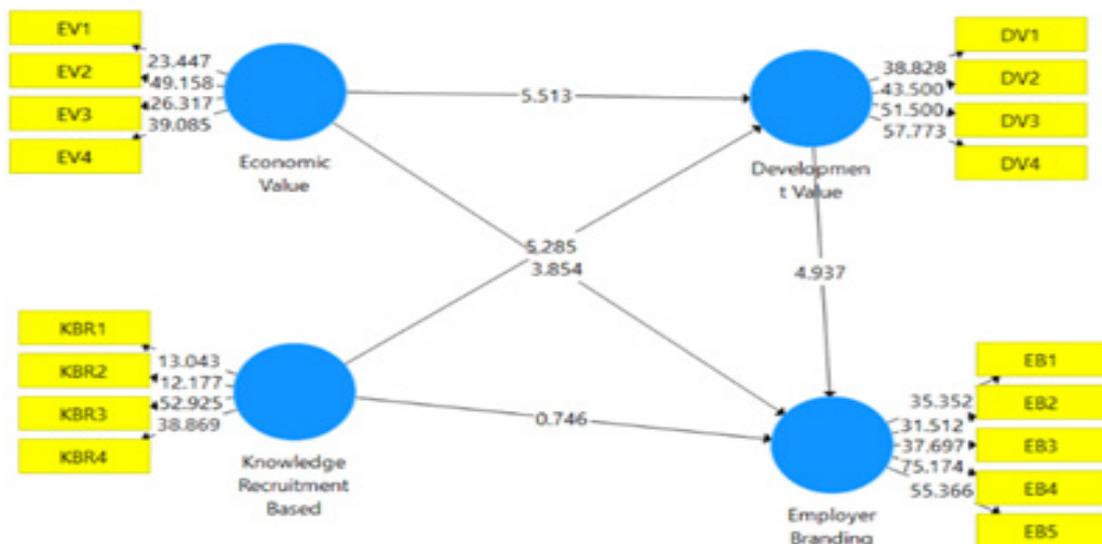


Figure 2. Structural Model

Measurement Model

Smart-PLS process the collected data to determine its validity and reliability (Xiaohui, 2016; Sarstedt et al., 2017). The statistical tests employed the hypotheses have been formulated and tested using Smart-PLS Software, covering reliability and validity, Discriminant Validity with Cross Loading Criteria, adjusted R-squa-

red, Analysis result, F Square, Prediction Accuracy Analysis Results, Fit Model Analysis Results and Hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2016).

A convergent Validity value greater than 0.7 is said to be valid. After data processing using Smart-PLS 3.0, the loading factor results can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach Alpha	Reliability Composite	AVE	Conclusion
Economic-Value (X1)	EV.1	0.829	0.889	0.923	0.751	Good
	EV.2	0.910				
	EV.3	0.848				
	EV.4	0.876				
Knowledge-Based Recruitment (X2)	KBR.1	0.813	0.874	0.912	0.723	Good
	KBR.2	0.808				
	KBR.3	0.903				
	KBR.4	0.872				
Development-Value (Y1)	DV.1	0.896	0.934	0.953	0.834	Good
	DV.2	0.908				
	DV.3	0.924				
	DV.4	0.926				
Employer Brand (Y2)	EB.1	0.880	0.952	0.963	0.839	Good
	EB.2	0.892				
	EB.3	0.913				
	EB.4	0.953				
	EB.5	0.940				

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Table 2. Discriminant Validity with Cross-loading Criteria

	Economic Value(X1)	Development Value (X2)	Knowledge-Based Recruitment (Y1)	Employer Brand (Y2)
EV.1	0.829	0.731	0.557	0.695
EV.2	0.910	0.692	0.659	0.695
EV.3	0.848	0.580	0.622	0.559
EV.4	0.876	0.708	0.681	0.743
DV.1	0.755	0.896	0.714	0.755
DV.2	0.714	0.908	0.699	0.737
DV.3	0.688	0.924	0.707	0.730
DV.4	0.721	0.926	0.738	0.802
K-BR.1	0.511	0.544	0.813	0.481
K-BR.2	0.539	0.523	0.808	0.472
K-BR.3	0.691	0.737	0.903	0.683
K-BR.4	0.688	0.789	0.872	0.723

EB.1	0.686	0.761	0.669	0.880
EB.2	0.769	0.788	0.653	0.892
EB.3	0.694	0.739	0.624	0.913
EB.4	0.725	0.744	0.652	0.953
EB.5	0.709	0.756	0.667	0.940

Source: Processed Data (2025)

As shown in Table 2, the results show that all indicators have a loading factor value greater than 0.70 are said to be valid to meet the requirements of convergent validity.

In measuring the outer model by assessing convergent validity and discriminant validity. The construct is considered reliable due to Cronbach's Alpha values bigger than 0.7 (Sarstedt et al., 2017). The output in Table 2 showed that the com-

posite reliability value for all constructs is above 0.70.

Assessment of the Structural Model

The inner model can be evaluated using multicollinearity, R-square, effect size, f-squared, Q² effect size, and hypothesis testing.

The Cronbach Alpha value is more than 0.7, therefore the construct is considered reliable.

Table 3. Analysis of the Inner VIF Value

	Development Value	Employer Branding
Development Value		3.500
Economic Value	2.123	2.878
Employer Branding		
Knowledge-Based Recruitment	2.123	2.815

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The Smart PLS results in Table 4 show a satisfactory correlation among variables (VIF <5.00), which means the mo-

del has no multicollinearity issue (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 4. Discriminant validity with cross-loading criteria

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employer Branding	0.714	0.710
Knowledge-Based Recruitment	0.734	0.728

Source: Processed Data (2025)

R² is the magnitude of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable and the coefficient of deter-

mination. Then, the R-square value indicates if the model has medium strength (Hair et al., 2016).

Table 5. Analysis Result, F-squared

	Development Value	Employer Branding
Development Value		0.283
Economic Value	0.356	0.137
Employer Branding		
Knowledge-Based Recruitment	0.326	0.008

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The measure of the effect of the Employer Branding variable on Economic Value was 0.137, indicating a moderate influence. The effect of the Employer Branding variable on Development Value,

0.283, indicated a moderate influence. The measure of the influence of the Development Value variable on Knowledge-Based Recruitment was 0.326, showing a positive and strong influence.

Table 6. Prediction Accuracy Analysis Results

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Development Value	604.000	250.018	0.586
Economic Value	604.000	604.000	
Employer Branding	755.000	306.121	0.595
Knowledge-Based Recruitment	604.000	604.000	

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The values above zero (D. 0.586; KBR=0.595) confirm the model's predictive relevance for the two endogenous constructs. In the SEM model, a Q² value

greater than zero for a reflective endogenous construct indicated the predictive relevance of the path model for that construct (Ahmad et al., 2016).

Table 7. Fit Model Analysis Results

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.068	0.068
d.ULS	0.716	0.716
d_G	0.477	0.477
Chi-Square	402.413	402.413
NFI	0.853	0.853

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Fit model testing, based on the results of PLS model estimation, Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR) for structural models is 0.005, which is less than

the threshold of 0.8 (Hair et al., 2016). Thus, current PLS path modelling has a corresponding overall fit.

Table 8. Hypothesis Test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Direct Effects						
Economic Value -> Employer Branding (H1)	0.324	0.313	0.084	3.854	0.000	Accepted
K-BR > Employer Branding (H2)	0.077	0.082	0.103	0.746	0.456	Rejected
Economic Value -> Development Value (H3)	0.464	0.459	0.084	5.513	0.000	Accepted
K-BR > Development Value (H4)	0.445	0.451	0.084	5.285	0.000	Accepted
Development Value -> Employer Branding (H5)	0.513	0.518	0.104	4.937	0.000	Accepted

Indirect Effects

Economic Value -> Development Value -> Employer Branding (H6)	0.238	0.236	0.060	3.968	0.000	Accepted
K-BR > Development Value -> Employer Branding (H7)	0.228	0.236	0.072	3.159	0.002	Accepted

Source: Processed Data (2025)

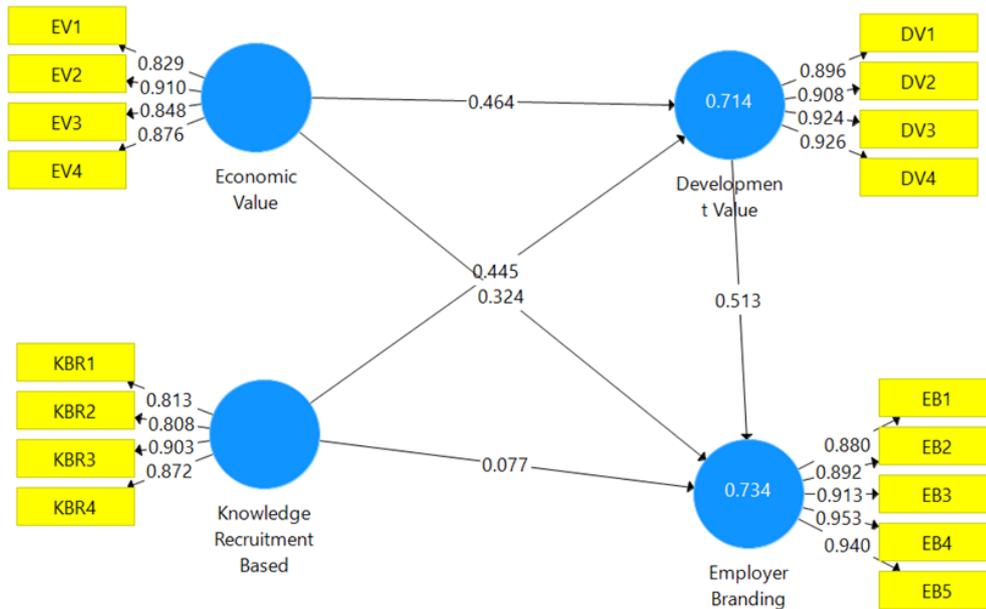


Figure 3. Hypothesis Full Model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Hypothesis testing is derived from the bootstrapping results. The t-statistic > 1.96 with a significance level of p-value of 0.05 and a positive beta coefficient. The value of hypothesis testing is shown in Table 8.

Hypothesis testing

The rules of thumb used in this study were t-statistics > 1.96 with a significance level of p-value of 0.05 and a positive beta coefficient. The value of testing this research hypothesis is shown in Table 8, and the research model is shown in Figure 3.

As presented in Table 8 above, almost all hypotheses were positive and significant, both directly and indirectly. However, H2 is rejected, as the P-value is

greater than 0.05. At the same time, H1 is accepted with a statistical value of 3.854 and a P-value of 0.000.

H3 is accepted with a statistical value of 5.513 and a P-value of 0.000. H4 is accepted with a statistical value of 5.285 and a P-value of 0.000. H5 with a statistical value of 4.937 and a P-value of 0.000. H6 is accepted with a statistical value of 3.968 and a P-value of 0.000. H7 is accepted with a statistical value of 3.159 and a P-value of 0.000. The Development value mediates H6 and H7. The finding becomes meaningful due to the main role of development value in mediating all independent variables toward dependent variables. Based on the findings, it is recommended that hotel management implement the model.

Discussion

The main objective of this study is to answer the first research question. The second question has also been met: Developmental value plays a role in increasing employer branding. Nevertheless, Economic Value is a real demand in general, and the same thing is also demanded as a major factor to be implemented in the hotel industry. Economic value and K-BR on employer branding were also directly and indirectly accepted through development value. This finding indicated that, in terms of theoretical implications, we simultaneously contribute to career development and employer branding (Fan, 2021).

K-BR, as an independent variable mediated by development value, has contributed to the sustainability of employer branding. On the other hand, development value helps all other independent variables to prove that the employee is the focus of development in the long term, especially when the employee is provided with green orientation (Sun & Liu, 2020). As also mentioned by Gupta & Jangra (2024), there is a positive relationship between green orientation and sustainable performance, highlighting the role of long-term employee development. Focusing on the role of knowledge-based recruitment (K-BR) in shaping employer branding. It highlights a more strategic and competency-driven approach to hiring in the hospitality industry, moving away from traditional methods, which can attract more qualified and career-oriented employees.

The public plays a role when hotel operators practice social responsibilities in some respects, such as in the environment, social activities, and the green economy. However, the limitation of this study lies in the research that has not involved the public, with the assumption that the pandemic belongs to everyone and businesses in the world.

Although a disruption happened, the hotel industry will be able to improve its employer branding. In the meantime,

tourism and hotel vocational school employees and students may perceive a positive employer branding as the prospective workplace. The hotel management should implement Development Value by providing continual training and education.

Enhancing Sustainable Practices in the Hotel Industry through Green Initiatives and Employer Branding

The research findings present a valuable opportunity to explore the impact of sustainable practices within the hotel industry. By emphasizing the significance of green initiatives, eco-friendly policies, and conservation efforts, the study sheds light on how these practices can contribute to enhancing employer branding and facilitating career development. Adopting sustainable practices aligns with environmental conservation principles and is a powerful driver for attracting environmentally conscious guests and employees (Ek Styvén et al., 2022). Green initiatives, eco-friendly policies, and conservation efforts can significantly enhance employer branding and career development. Furthermore, environmental sustainability measures improve corporate image while also increasing staff involvement and morale. HR departments play a vital role by embedding sustainability into recruitment, onboarding, and training processes, building an organizational culture of environmental responsibility (Fukuchi et al., 2022).

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of linking sustainable initiatives to employer branding strategies. By showcasing a commitment to eco-friendly policies and conservation efforts, hotels can distinguish themselves in the market, appeal to a growing segment of environmentally conscious consumers, and create a positive brand image that resonates with sustainability-minded individuals (you can elaborate on these points). This linkage between sustainability efforts and employer branding can increase competitiveness, customer loyalty, and employee

satisfaction within the hospitality sector.

The theoretical contribution of your study lies in expanding the understanding of employer branding by including "development value" as a core factor. In practical terms, your study offers actionable insights for hotel managers to develop attractive employer branding strategies and retain skilled employees continuously.

Managerial Implications

The hotel industry can survive with non-talented and non-developed employees for a short period due to short-term employment contracts. However, in the long run, this industry will lack genuine hospitality and dedicated, loyal staff. To cope with this possible saturation, the researcher suggests that management of four-star hotels should apply development value, aiming to maintain sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The inclusion of Development Values as a mediator is a novelty of this research. Employee development is the core that affects the sustainability of employer branding, and it is a strategic step to improve employer branding. The conclusion highlights the pivotal role of development value in amplifying the impact of economic value and Knowledge-Based Recruitment (K-BR) on employer branding within the hotel industry. This finding underscores the significant influence of development value in advancing employer branding practices. While acknowledging the study's constraints related to time limitations, the research contributes valuable insights to human resource management practices in the hospitality sector.

Notably, this study stands out as pioneering in applying the concept of development value to examine these dynamics. Future research endeavors could expand on this model by replicating the study in other prominent Indonesian cities. Con-

ducting similar investigations in diverse urban settings can offer a comprehensive perspective on hotel sustainability practices and their implications for conservation and sustainable development in the broader ecological context. It is suggested that conducting longitudinal research that observes changes in employer branding in the long term can provide deeper insight into how employee development efforts and changes in company policies affect the company's image sustainably. This can provide more detailed information about the impact of employer branding strategies implemented in the long term.

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