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## Article

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# Signaling competence of agricultural businesses through social media presence to attract gen Z

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## ABSTRACT

The lack of interest for young generations in working in the agricultural sector has been threatening the sustainability of agriculture and food provision. One of the reasons is the low competence stereotype assigned by young people to agricultural jobs, as the job in this sector requires no specific skills, a minimum educational background, is associated with old people, and is not prestigious. Based upon the stereotype content model, this research aims to examine whether the use of social media for agricultural businesses can increase their attractiveness for the younger generation through an improved competence stereotype. An online survey was distributed to Indonesian members of Generation Z who were aware of the presence of agricultural businesses in their country. About 376 data units were collected and analyzed using the moderated mediation model in Hayes' PROCESS Macro. The findings indicate that the use of social media improves the perceived competence of an agricultural business, subsequently fostering an intention among Generation Z members to apply for jobs in such businesses. Although the moderating role of self-efficacy is not significant, for individuals with low (high) self-efficacy, the adoption of social media decreases (increases) their intention to apply for jobs in the agricultural sector. Therefore, social media adoption has the potential to filter younger people who are talented and capable of working in agricultural businesses.

## 1. Introduction

The world population is over 8 billion and is predicted to reach 10 billion by 2050; consequently, the United Nations projects that food production needs to increase 70 % (Theguardian.com, 2022). To meet the increasing demand for food production in the long run, the agricultural sector needs to ensure its sustainability (Girdziute et al., 2022). However, the number of workers in agriculture declined globally from 1 billion people in 2000 to 873 million in 2021 (FAO.org, 2023), due to a lack of engagement of younger generations (Pratono, 2020; Scheidgen et al., 2021; Špička & Berg, 2022). As a result, the agricultural sector is experiencing an aging demographic; the average age of farmers is about 58.1 years old in the US and above 43 years old in Indonesia (American Enterprise Institute, 2024; Kompas, 2024a, 2024b; Kompas.id, 2023). Therefore, to maintain the sustainability of food production, there has been a call to promote young people's intention to work in the agricultural sector (Fiocco et al., 2023; Gandhi et al., 2016; Holm, 2022). Involving the younger generation in agriculture is important, but it is a complex issue influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors.

While income is important, it is not the only factor that young people consider when deciding to become farmers, since personal values, economic opportunities, future goals, and their attitude toward rural lifestyles also play a big role in their decision-making as well (Consentino et al., 2023; Consentino et al., 2024). This research focuses on people born between the late 1990s and the early 2010s (Gen Z) as they account for 30 % of the workforce; they were hit by global unemployment with the unemployment rate reaching 22.25 %, two times more than other generations in almost every OECD country (Kompas, 2024a, 2024b; World Economic Forum, 2021). Hence, the agricultural sector could potentially solve this issue that affects Gen Z by absorbing the unemployed young workforce.

Although it is reported that the younger generation lacks job opportunities, working in the agricultural sector is unappealing to them because it is associated with old people and therefore seen as being old-fashioned (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020). It is also seen as work that is dirty, physically demanding, and challenging, with long hours and excessive workloads (Eurostat, 2020; Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020). Furthermore, it is seen as an unstable profession with low pay (Unay-

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Gailhard & Brennen, 2022; Volken & Bottazzi, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Such work may not align with the career and financial goals of the younger generation, as they have a concept of success—defined by material consumption and monetary achievement—that is different from that of the older generation (Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022; Wong et al., 2017). In addition, younger people tend to perceive that jobs in the agricultural sector do not require a strong educational background or training; hence, they are associated with low competence (Consentino et al., 2023; Strinić et al., 2022).

In line with the backdrop of the study, the stereotype content model (SCM) postulates that individuals form a general perception of entities or objects—including businesses and other organizations—based on two fundamental dimensions: warmth and competence (Fiske, 2018; Gidaković & Zabkar, 2022; Strinić et al., 2021). The competence stereotype refers to the belief and knowledge that a business is offering innovative and high-quality products or services as well as performing well financially and in terms of competitiveness and prospects for growth (Lepthien et al., 2017; Shea & Hawn, 2019). Meanwhile, the warmth stereotype refers to the beliefs and knowledge that a business cares about the interests of the customers, community, environment, and its employees (Lepthien et al., 2017; Shea & Hawn, 2019). The SCM also suggests that stereotypes assigned to an entity or object affect evaluation, attitude, and behavior toward the entity or object in question (Fiske, 2018). Accordingly, previous studies have revealed that stereotypes related to jobs predict the intention to apply for those jobs (Luo et al., 2021; Nguyen & Riegle-Crumb, 2021). For example, people will tend to apply for a job at a business when it is perceived as having high competence because these job seekers expect better treatment and career opportunities from such a business (Arceo-Gomez et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2021). Having said that, young people tend to assign a low competence stereotype to jobs in agricultural businesses, so an endeavor to enhance these businesses' competence stereotype is critical to the promotion of young jobseekers' intention to work in the agricultural sector.

Organizations are able to correct the perceived job stereotypes and improve the responses to them (Conlon & Patel, 2022). There are many ways a business can promote its competence stereotype: internally, for example, human resource management practices and educational programs (Lawson et al., 2022; Patel Gunaldo et al., 2021; Shin & Hwang, 2023; Tam et al., 2020); and externally, for example, advertising appeals (Septianto et al., 2022) and endorsing digital influencers (Crisafulli & Singh, 2022). Ultimately, the SCM suggests that linking an object with certain stimuli, such as digital or technological features, can improve its competence stereotype (Luna Cortes, 2024). For example, recent studies have also concluded that the utilization of digital technology can improve the competence stereotype of a business (Guo et al., 2020; Gursoy et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2024). Yet, according to McKinsey and Harvard Business Review (HBR), the agricultural sector is among the least digitized sectors (Consentino et al., 2024; Whatfix, 2024). Although there has been much research on the application of “hard technology” (e.g., mechanics and biotechnology) in the agricultural context, research on the use of “soft technology” (e.g., social media) is still in its infancy (Abbasi et al., 2022; Morris & James, 2017).

The term social media refers to various digital platforms, applications, and media that facilitate peer-to-peer communication, collaboration, and content sharing among individuals or groups (Hanafizadeh et al., 2021). In the agricultural sector, social media is utilized to transfer knowledge to, communicate with, and educate the public, especially young people (Hanafizadeh & Alipour, 2024; Morris & James, 2017). For example, as agricultural jobs are perceived as being dirty and not requiring training or good education, portraying agricultural technological advancement, innovation, and ideas through social media will help the public to perceive a better competence stereotype (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022). Therefore, social media is expected to help the agricultural sector to modify the competence stereotype. Moreover, statistics show that the younger generation

prefers to work in the digital-related sectors, especially those related to social media (CFO, 2023; Jakpat, 2022). While a study by Heřmanová et al. (2024) finds that benefits, such as time off and vacations, will attract Gen Z to work in the agricultural sector (Consentino et al., 2024), this study aims to examine a different factor—the adoption of social media—as a strategy to attract Gen Z to work in the agricultural sector.

The SCM also suggests that individuals generally prefer jobs that match their stereotypes (Eagly & Koenig, 2021; Tam et al., 2020). It is likely that—because social media improves the competence stereotype of agricultural businesses—only younger individuals who feel more competent (i.e., they have higher self-efficacy) are likely to apply for the jobs in the agricultural sector compared to the younger generation who feel less competent (i.e., they have lower self-efficacy). As this research is motivated by the need to improve the competence stereotype of working in the agricultural sector, the SCM is considered relevant to explain and to develop solutions related to the phenomenon affecting agricultural sector employment.

As the demographic of workers in the agricultural sector is an increasingly aging one, and this is threatening food sustainability in the future, it is important to examine effective strategies to attract Gen Z to work in this sector (Fiocco et al., 2023; Gandhi et al., 2016; Holm, 2022). Built upon the SCM, this research is expected to contribute to the literature by demonstrating that occupational stereotypes influence Gen Z's intention to apply for jobs in the agricultural sector. Moreover, this research serves as empirical evidence that occupational stereotypes are dynamic, not static as assumed in the existing literature (Peiffer et al., 2018; Strinić et al., 2022), and can be modified by orchestrating organizational features. Specifically, competence stereotype can be enhanced through social media adoption. Drawing from the findings of previous studies confirming that people are attracted to jobs that align with their self-stereotypes (Eagly & Koenig, 2021; Tam et al., 2020), this study is expected to confirm that self-efficacy of Gen Z will moderate the indirect relationship between social media adoption, competence stereotypes and intention to apply for jobs.

The objective of this study is centered on understanding the dynamics between social media adoption and intention to apply for a job in the agricultural sector, with a focus on competence stereotypes as the mediating variable and self-efficacy as the moderating variable. This study aims to answer the following three research questions. (1) Does perceived social media adoption positively influence the intention to apply for a job; (2) Do competence stereotypes mediate this relationship; (3) Does self-efficacy moderate the mediated relationship between social media adoption and intention to apply for a job through competence stereotypes. To achieve those objectives, this paper will further describe SCM in the conceptual and theoretical framework section and how SCM can explain the inter-relations between social media adoption, competence stereotypes, intention to apply for jobs, and self-efficacy in the literature review and hypotheses development section. Furthermore, the research method will be explained especially related to sampling technique and data collection procedure, followed by the presentation of data analysis and results. Subsequently, the discussion section elaborates how the research findings relate to previous studies in literature, followed by the theoretical, managerial, and societal contributions. Limitations and future research directions are presented in the last section.

## 1.1. Conceptual and theoretical framework

### 1.1.1. Stereotype Content Model (SCM)

The SCM postulates that social perceptions are formed based on two fundamental dimensions: warmth and competence (Fiske, 2018). This model suggests that people tend to evaluate other entities based on these two dimensions and this leads to specific combinations that form a different type of stereotype. The warmth dimension refers to perceived trustworthiness and friendliness based on the judgment of a group as a friend or foe (Abele et al., 2021; Fiske, 2018). Moreover, this dimension

is associated with traits like friendliness, sincerity, and cooperation. Competence refers to capability and assertiveness based on the capacity perception of a group in terms of acting on intention (Dupree & Fiske, 2019; Fiske, 2018; Peeters, 2001). Based on this definition, competence in the organizational context means that it is intelligent, efficient, prestigious, and well-known for its ability to reach goals (Fiske, 2002; Fiske et al., 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

Different jobs have been associated with different stereotype contents (Berry & Sanchez, 2019). Line-level jobs in hospitality and tourism are labeled as dirty, worthless, subservient, unequal power, low in status, transitory, precarious, limited career opportunities, and low-skilled, with poor working conditions and long working hours (Moufakkir, 2023). In preschool teachers, low occupational stereotypes increase withdrawal behaviors as they do not feel their jobs are meaningful (Huang et al., 2022). In blue-collar workers, individuals who are deeply engaged in their families are more inclined to quit their jobs, as it implies their family identities (Ji et al., 2022). Furthermore, specific stereotype content predicts specific emotions through social comparison and attribution of outcomes (Fiske, 2002). In conclusion, occupations that are associated with low competence will exacerbate potential employees' tendency not to join (Moufakkir, 2023). Despite the extensive evidence that stereotypes influence cognitive and behavioral responses, their implications for employment in agricultural businesses and the younger generation's intention to apply for jobs have yet to be well understood.

The literature also suggests that the public develops a competence stereotype of a business based on various characteristics or signals, such as their business orientation (i.e., for-profit vs. non-profit) (Xu, 2020), the country of origin (Motsi & Park, 2020), the global or local nature of their products (Kolbl et al., 2019), the gender of the entrepreneurs (Kyrgidou et al., 2021), as well as the business's use of technology (Belanche et al., 2021). The use of technology, specifically service robots, can enhance competence stereotypes (Belanche et al., 2021). Accordingly, this study proposes that the adoption of technology (i.e., social media) can improve the competence stereotype and Gen Z's intention to apply for a job in agricultural businesses.

## 1.2. Literature review and hypothesis development

### 1.2.1. The relationship between social media adoption and the intention to apply for a job

Social media adoption in this study is defined as the extent to which an organization accepts and uses social media for business purposes (Doss, 2006). The literature confirms that social media usage is useful for promoting careers in the agricultural sector by informing young people of the benefits, breaking down negative information, as well as building positive perceptions of a career in the sector (Hanafizadeh & Alipour, 2024; Martindale, 2021; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022). Agricultural businesses can employ various signals to attract young job seekers, such as emphasizing the self-fulfillment of career motives, highlighting technological advances (because young people are more attracted to technology), and communication campaigns targeted at young people (Barhate & Dirani, 2022; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022).

In this study, the researchers propose that the use of social media adoption increases the competence stereotypes of agricultural businesses. Through social media, businesses can present their organization, products, brands and communicate to engage with the public (Etter et al., 2019; Mohamed Sodom et al., 2023; Seyyedamiri & Tajrobehkar, 2021) by sharing short messages using photos, videos and information that might play an important role in creating positive perceptions (Carpentier et al., 2019). Individuals who had come across information about the organization on social media developed a more favorable perception of the company's corporate reputation (Antretter et al., 2019). In addition, social media increased the power and influence of public relations through online reputation management (Mohamed

Sodom et al., 2023). Furthermore, businesses can attract applicants by creating a positive business reputation by sharing organizational information through social media, as well as some specific issues related to agriculture that can be accessed through social media and could lead to increasing the awareness of agricultural industries (Harvey et al., 2018; Rastegari et al., 2023). The accessibility of information through social media allows job seekers to easily research and evaluate organizational reputations (Etter et al., 2019). Thus, a strong and positive digital presence of a business can contribute to a good organizational reputation. A number of surveys have conclusively demonstrated that small businesses are increasingly adopting social media (Abbasi et al., 2022; Falia, 2025), especially for marketing and general business strategies. Social media is seen as a cheaper alternative to conventional media; hence, it is more attractive for small businesses with limited time and money (Solomon et al., 2024). Even though a small portion of SMEs reported difficulties in managing their social media, the efficacy of such platforms in improving business performance and communication with the young audience has encouraged small businesses to use social media continuously (Hanafizadeh & Alipour, 2024; He et al., 2017). Furthermore, previous studies have confirmed empirically that a high reputation leads to job seekers' intention to apply (Harvey et al., 2018; Schaarschmidt et al., 2021). Accordingly, the researchers hypothesize that perceived social media adoption has a positive relationship with the intention to apply for a job.

**H1.** There is a positive relationship between perceived social media adoption and the intention to apply for a job in SMEs that operates in agricultural industry.

### 1.2.2. The mediating role of competence stereotype

In the organizational context, recent studies have found that individuals also assume that businesses have the same basic dimension stereotypes such as warmth and competence (Aaker et al., 2010; Aaker et al., 2012). A competence stereotype is an assumption that someone is part of a higher group that refers to capability and assertiveness (Arndt et al., 2017; Fiske, 2018). Moreover, profitable organizations are perceived as more competent than non-profit organizations (Aaker et al., 2010; Leach et al., 2007). Specifically, young people generally refuse to work for agricultural businesses because agricultural jobs are stereotyped as low competence (Metelerkamp et al., 2019). Low competence stereotypes negatively impact employees' behavior (Huang et al., 2022; Ji et al., 2022; Soeling et al., 2022). In human resource contexts, blue-collar stereotypes increase employees' intention to quit their jobs (Ji et al., 2022); low competence stereotypes in preschool teachers increase their intention to leave the organizations (Huang et al., 2022). In sum, job stereotypes might affect individuals' intention to apply for those jobs (Luo et al., 2021; Nguyen & Riegle-Crumb, 2021).

The stereotypes content model (SCM) is also applicable in the context of recruitment practices in the job market (Consentino et al., 2023; Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020). From the employers' perspective, jobs with competence stereotypes are associated with targeting men and providing higher salaries, while jobs with warmth stereotypes are associated with targeting women and providing lower salaries; consequently, employers tend to provide lower salaries for the non-targeted group and recruit employees that match the stereotypes (Galperin, 2021). Similarly, from the perspective of potential employees and job seekers, job stereotypes affect their behavior toward the jobs (Luo et al., 2021). A study by Luo et al. (2021) finds that academic jobs are stereotyped as competent and more suitable for men; hence, there is the lower engagement of women working in academia, and they feel greater exhaustion and intention to quit as they do not feel they are a good fit for these jobs. Job stereotypes also affect job seekers' intention to apply for jobs; they will tend to apply for jobs with stereotypes that match them and that have high competence as they perceive they have higher self-efficacy and expect better treatment and career opportunities from the organizations (Arceo-Gomez et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2021). Since the

younger generation stereotypes agricultural jobs as being low-competence (Consentino et al., 2023; Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020), this means perceived competence is expected to increase their intention to work in the agricultural sector (Conlon & Patel, 2022; Peiffer et al., 2018). The adoption of social media is expected to improve the competence stereotype of businesses by portraying the intended characteristics (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020; Martindale, 2021; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022). In addition, Kasemsap (2018) finds that companies can improve their competence stereotype if they actively communicate using social media, and this will improve perceived accountability.

Consistently, a study by Conlon and Patel (2022) has also found that organizations are able to correct the perceived job stereotypes and improve the responses to them. For example, as agricultural jobs are perceived as being dirty and not requiring training or good education, portraying agricultural technological advancement, innovation, and ideas through social media will help the public to develop higher competence stereotypes (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022). Social media adoption in organizations can improve competence stereotypes so that they attract applicants (Carpentier et al., 2019; Frasca & Edwards, 2017; SHRM, 2016). As such, Carpentier et al. (2019) find that social media presence can improve the competence stereotype of an organization through its informativeness. Another study by Carpentier et al. (2017) finds that the use of Facebook per se increases nurses' perceptions of a hospital's competence, innovativeness, and sincerity, and subsequently increases their intention to apply for a job in the hospital. Therefore, this study proposes that social media adoption's effect on intention to apply for a job is mediated by competence stereotypes.

**H2.** The relationship between perceived social media adoption and the intention to apply for a job in SMEs that operates in agricultural industry is mediated by competence stereotypes.

### 1.2.3. The moderating role of self-efficacy

Agricultural sector businesses are stereotyped as having low competence, and the adoption of social media is expected to improve their competence stereotype by portraying the intended characteristics or stereotype (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020; Martindale, 2021; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022). However, the literature suggests that the younger generation tends to apply for jobs with stereotypes that match with their own perceived characteristics or stereotypes (Conlon & Patel, 2022; Eagly & Koenig, 2021; Tam et al., 2020). For example, women might hesitate to work in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) sector as it is stereotyped as high competence in line with the stereotype of men, meaning that women feel incapable of doing jobs in the STEM domain (Luo et al., 2021; Tam et al., 2020). Individuals' assessment and set of beliefs in their own capabilities and abilities are called self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy can also be described as confidence in one's ability to perform actions for desired outcomes, and it is a key component of psychological capital, exhibiting both state and trait attributes (Li, 2019).

Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to embrace challenges, employ complex strategies, persist in the face of setbacks, and remain calm during threats (Bandura, 1977), whereas those with low self-efficacy are easily discouraged by failure (Wieber et al., 2010). As agricultural businesses that have adopted social media are stereotyped as more competent than those that have not (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020; Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022), it is expected that only members of Gen Z who possess high self-efficacy are more confident in applying to work in agricultural businesses that have a strong social media presence. The research model for this study is depicted in Fig. 1.

**H3.** The relationship between perceived social media adoption and the intention to apply for a job in SMEs that operates in agricultural industry as mediated by competence stereotype is moderated by self-efficacy.

## 1.3. Research method

### 1.3.1. Data collection and sample

Data in this research were collected using a survey. The research questions involved latent variables that cannot be observed, and, instead, respondents can only be asked about them; hence, it is appropriate to use the survey method (Hulland et al., 2018). Moreover, as agricultural business locations are scattered across the Indonesian archipelago, the use of an online survey was more representative and more effective at reaching a spread-out population (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Lastly, as the respondents in this study were specifically members of Gen Z who are generally familiar with the internet, the response bias due to lack of online expertise and technological variations could be minimized (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Moreover, Gen Z is the largest proportion of the Indonesian population that uses the internet (15.2 %) compared to other age cohorts (DataReportal, 2024).

This research was carried out in the Indonesian context, chosen for its status as a nation heavily reliant on income from the agricultural sector that has vast farming land across its diverse regions (Antara News, 2022). Furthermore, agriculture in Indonesia is the largest sector in terms of employment (CNBC Indonesia, 2023). However, the workforce in this sector is currently diminishing, which has been attributed to a growing preference among the younger generation to move to an urban environment (FAO.org, 2023). Moreover, Gen Z is more attracted to work in digital-related jobs (Jackson, 2022; Jakpat, 2022). The subjects of this research were Gen Z members who were aware of the existence of agricultural businesses (meaning that the respondents could recall companies or brands in the agricultural sector) (Kanchanapibul et al., 2014). Furthermore, they were asked for their evaluation of social media adoption, which means that the respondents evaluate the level of social media adoption by the agricultural companies based on their own observations and their previous encounters with the companies. These observations included whether the companies had a social media account, how they actively engaged with the public through social media, and to what extent they used social media for their business activities.

Primary data were obtained through an online survey distributed via Kudata, an Indonesian-based online research panel, during a period of

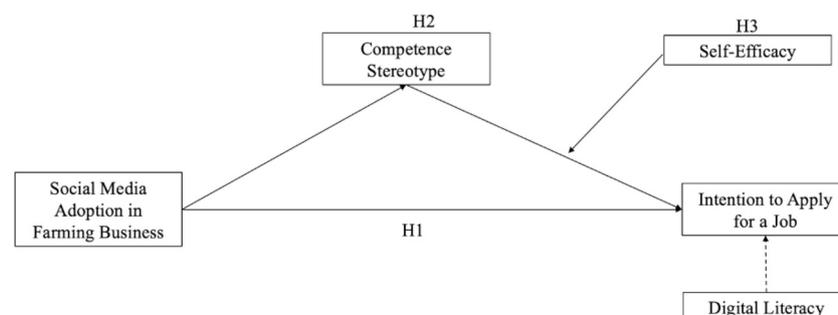


Fig. 1. Research Model.

seven months. The respondents were incentivized to participate in the survey by providing a USD 5 telecommunication service voucher for randomly selected respondents.

1.3.2. Measurement instruments

All scales to measure the focal variables were adopted from previous studies as presented in the Table 1. The scales were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for each indicator. This scale was used, not a 7-point nor a 9-point Likert scale, because a 5-point Likert scale is more efficient. Furthermore, it also reduces the cognitive load of the respondents, as in online surveys respondents' span of attention is short (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). In addition, previous studies confirmed that there is no substantial difference between a 5-point, 7-point, or 9-point Likert scale on the robustness of the results (Leung, 2011). A back-translation process was conducted to ensure correct wording and conceptual equivalence between the original version and the translated Indonesian version that was distributed to and answered by the respondents (Brislin, 1970).

1.4. Data analysis and results

1.4.1. Sample profile and measurement assessment

The sampling criterion for this research was members of Gen Z who were aware of any businesses that are engaged in the production, distribution, and/or sale of farm/agricultural products. Among 776 respondents who accessed the survey link, 358 respondents were not

**Table 1**  
List of Measurement Item and Measurement Assessment Results.

No	Item	Load	$\alpha$
	Social Media Adoption (Agnihotri et al., 2017)		0.901
1.	The small business integrates social media as part of the routine operation	0.807	
2.	The small business uses social media in the best fashion to help it with the business	0.867	
3.	The small business uses social media to support its operation	0.877	
	Competence Stereotype (Fernandes et al., 2022)		0.918
4.	I consider this small business competent	0.776	
5.	I consider this small business independent	0.707	
6.	I consider this small business capable	0.783	
7.	I consider this small business confident	0.779	
8.	I consider this small business efficient	0.758	
9.	I consider this small business competitive	0.804	
10.	I consider this small business skillful	0.794	
11.	I consider this small business intelligent	0.767	
	Self-efficacy (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992)		0.892
12.	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	0.532	
13.	If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want	0.703	
14.	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	0.714	
15.	I am confident that I can deal efficiently with unexpected events	0.772	
16.	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	0.713	
17.	I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort	0.703	
18.	I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities	0.737	
19.	When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions	0.674	
20.	If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution	0.756	
21.	I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	0.552	
	Intention to Apply for a Job (Gomes & Neves, 2011)		0.909
22.	If I were searching for a job, there would be a strong probability of applying to this offer	0.892	
23.	If I were searching for a job, I would apply to this organization	0.878	

aware of any agricultural businesses while 42 were Millennials, and only 376 responses were completed and eligible for further analysis.

The researchers presented the gender, age, and educational background of the respondents as previous studies showed they affect job stereotypes and preferences (Clarke, 2020; Demel, 2019; Weiss & Perry, 2020). Among the total respondents, 76.06 % of respondents were younger than 23 years old, whereas 23.94 % of the respondents were around 23–27 years old. Most of the respondents in this study were women (64.10 %). In terms of background education, most of the respondents (51.86 %) are high school graduates, and 45.48 % hold an undergraduate/bachelor's degree. The sample size and representativeness effectively reflect the Indonesian Gen Z population, as the majority are pursuing high school (60.7 %) or higher education (Kompas.id, 2024) (See Table 2).

Prior to the data analysis, a validity and a reliability test were conducted (see Table 1). All items meet the cut-off values (i.e., Cronbach's alpha is above 0.7 for reliability; the loading factor is above 0.5 for validity) and were included for further analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Common method bias (CMB) was checked using CLF, and the result revealed that the differences between the standardized regression weightings of all items for models with and without CLF are below 0.200 (min = 0.009; max = 0.161), confirming that there is no substantial CMV in the data (Serrano Archimi et al., 2018). In addition, we also ran a test for CMB using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) by examining the VIF scores. The results revealed that the VIF scores for all indicators were below 3.3, indicating that the model is considered to be free of CMB (Kock, 2015). The correlation analysis is presented in Table 3.

1.4.2. Hypothesis testing

The proposed hypothesis was analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS Macro version 3.5 in IBM SPSS version 23. H1 and H2 were analyzed simultaneously using Model 4. Model 4 allows examinations for mediated relationships between social media adoption and intention to apply for a job. The results show that H1 and H2 are supported. There is a significant direct positive relationship between perceived social media adoption and intention to apply for a job ( $\beta = 0.51$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ); thus, H1 is supported. The result also shows that there is a significant positive indirect relationship between perceived social media adoption and intention to apply for a job, as mediated by self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.06$ ;  $SE = 0.04$ ); hence, H2 is supported.

Model 14 was used to analyze H3. Model 14 allows examination of moderated mediation, where the mediation effect of social media adoption on intention to apply for a job through competence stereotypes might vary depending on an individual's self-efficacy. This model provides no support for the moderating role of self-efficacy on the mediated relationship between perceived social media adoption and intention to apply for a job through competence stereotype ( $\beta = 0.05$ ;  $SE = 0.05$ ;  $LLCI = -0.03$ ;  $ULCI = 0.15$ ). That is to say, the relationship between perceived social media adoption and intention to apply for a job as mediated by competence stereotype is negative and insignificant for

**Table 2**  
Sample Profile.

Demographic variable	n	%
Gender		
Man	135	35.90
Woman	241	64.10
Age		
17–23 years old	286	76.06
23–27 years old	90	23.94
Education Background		
Elementary school	3	0.80
Junior high school	4	1.06
Senior high school	195	51.86
Bachelor's degree	171	45.48
Master's degree	3	0.80

**Table 3**  
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Variables.

	Mean	SD	Social Media Adoption	Competence Stereotypes	Self-efficacy	Intention to Apply for a Job
Social Media Adoption	3.43	0.84	1			
Competence Stereotypes	4.09	0.64	0.43**	1		
Self-efficacy	4.10	0.55	0.32**	0.403**	1	
Intention to Apply for a Job	3.48	1.08	0.44**	0.284**	0.384**	1

individuals with low self-efficacy ( $\beta = -0.02$ ;  $SE = 0.04$ ;  $LLCI = -0.10$ ;  $ULCI = 0.08$ ). On the other hand, the relationship is positive and insignificant for individuals with high self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.03$ ;  $SE = 0.05$ ;  $LLCI = -0.03$ ;  $ULCI = 0.15$ ). Lack of variation in the educational levels of the respondents could cause low variation in the self-efficacy levels with a relatively high mean ( $M = 4.10$ ) and the low standard deviation ( $SD = 0.55$ ) of self-efficacy. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 4.

**2. Discussion and conclusion**

The findings of this study confirm that social media adoption positively influences Gen Z’s intention to apply for jobs. This adds to the literature examining the factors that promote intention to apply for a job (Pham & Vo, 2022; Soeling et al., 2022). While previous studies have found that organizations’ strength, reputation, and working conditions increase their organizational attractiveness (VanMeter et al., 2015), in the context of the agricultural sector, a study by Heřmanová et al. (2024) finds that Gen Z will be attracted to work in the agricultural sector due to benefits like vacations and time off. This study found that social media can also provide an option for attracting Gen Z’s attention and increase their intention to work in the agricultural sector (Carpentier et al., 2019).

Secondly, this study confirms that social media adoption is not only useful for agricultural businesses in supporting their operations, such as trading and marketing, but it can also be useful for organizational reputation building (i.e., improving its competence stereotype) (Etter et al., 2019; Sivertzen et al., 2013). An organization’s reputation is an important consideration for people when applying for a job, so understanding the factors that improve that reputation is important (Frasca & Edwards, 2017). As establishing social media is relatively inexpensive and can be implemented in a relatively short time period, it represents an efficient and effective way to build a reputation (Carpentier et al., 2019).

This study also demonstrates that, regardless of their perceived self-

efficacy, young people are more attracted to jobs with high competence stereotypes (VanMeter et al., 2015). However, there is also a tendency for job seekers to apply for jobs that match their own perceived characteristics or stereotypes (Eagly & Koenig, 2021; Tam et al., 2020); this is also in line with the person-job fit (PJF) theory, which argues that individuals try to match their jobs with their own perceived competence (Jia et al., 2023; Sengupta & Mittal, 2023). However, Therefore, it is important for agricultural businesses to adopt social media extensively if they intend to attract high-quality young individuals with talent.

**2.1. Theoretical implications**

The theoretical contributions of this study are twofold. Firstly, it adds a nuance to the literature on the SCM; the stereotypes regarding jobs in a particular sector are not static as previous studies have argued (Peiffer et al., 2018; Strinić et al., 2022). Instead, it is dynamic and can be modified through a collective effort by each organization within a particular sector. Specifically, sectoral stereotypes can be tackled by orchestrating organizational stereotypes in order to improve the public’s intention to apply for jobs within the specific sectors (Peiffer et al., 2018; Strinić et al., 2022). In the context of this study, the agricultural sector can improve its competence stereotype by promoting the use of social media by as many agricultural organizations as possible. Second, although the literature suggests that individuals tend to apply for jobs that match with the stereotypes they hold about themselves (Eagly & Koenig, 2021; Tam et al., 2020), this study contributes to the SCM literature by demonstrating that Gen Z individuals’ perceived self-efficacy does not significantly moderate the indirect relationship between social media adoption, competence stereotype, and intention to apply for jobs. Likewise, studies by Imhoff et al. (2018) and Strinić et al. (2022) find that individuals’ stereotypes are more accurate at a larger group level, such as their gender or generation. That is to say, the stereotype across individuals within the same generation might be similar to each other. Therefore, the hiring strategy should specify which group of individuals will be targeted (Strinić et al., 2022).

**2.2. Managerial implications**

In practical terms, the findings of this study recommend that agricultural business owners adopt various social media extensively and intensively. Even though in general small businesses have limited knowledge and dedicated resources to extensively and intensively use social media, training them social media strategies will increase the efficacy of social media without having to allocate dedicated resources (de Vries et al., 2018). Social media can be used to reach younger generations, given that 60.6 % of the total global Gen Z population uses social media (Desiata, 2023; Hanafizadeh & Alipour, 2024). Gen Z also tends to rely on social media to make decisions, including job application decisions (Trang et al., 2023).

Agricultural businesses can adopt social media to showcase themselves as organizations, their products and brands; they can engage an audience through short messages, photos, and videos (Etter et al., 2019; Mohamed Sodom et al., 2023) that publicize information that can enhance their organizational reputations, specifically the competence stereotype (Sivertzen et al., 2013). They can even implement e-recruitment using social media. Thus, by adopting social media, organizations can cultivate a positive reputation in terms of competence stereotype

**Table 4**  
Relationship Among Focal Variables.

Relationship among variables	$\beta$	SE	Lower-level CI	Upper-level CI	Description
Model 4					
Social Media Adoption—Intention to Apply for a Job	0.51	0.07	0.38	0.64	Supported (H1)
Social Media Adoption—Competence Stereotype	0.06	0.04	0.00	0.15	Supported (H2)
Model 14					
Social Media Adoption—Intention to Apply for a Job*Competence Stereotype—Self-efficacy	0.05	0.05	-0.03	0.15	Not supported (H3)
Low Efficacy	-0.02	0.04	-0.10	0.08	Non-significant
High Efficacy	0.03	0.05	-0.03	0.15	Non-significant
Control variable: digital literacy	0.04	0.04	-0.02	0.13	Non-significant

and attract young talent (Frasca & Edwards, 2017; SHRM, 2016;). Furthermore, this study found that social media tends to attract individuals who have high self-efficacy rather than low self-efficacy, even though the difference between group was not statistically significant. As agriculture businesses need to attract high-quality talent to improve their performance (Waddingham et al., 2023), a social media presence is becoming a critical strategy for human resource management, especially in recruitment. To effectively capture the attention of Gen Z, posts on social media must be both captivating and strategically designed. According to Strinić et al. (2022), Gen Z is likely to interact with social media posts that resonate with their personal interests. A powerful approach to achieve this is by sharing short, engaging videos that showcase the day-to-day responsibilities and required skills of specific roles. Moreover, portraying agricultural jobs as monetarily and materially rewarding (Unay-Gailhard & Brennen, 2022; Wong et al., 2017), prestigious, and exciting through social media posts would increase Gen Z's interest. This not only helps potential candidates gain a clear understanding about the various jobs but also boosts their confidence in applying. Given that Gen Z has a relatively short attention span (Wolf, 2020), concise and visually appealing video content is particularly effective. By adopting this strategy for posting about agricultural jobs, it is possible to enhance both interest in these roles and the perceived competence stereotype.

### 2.3. Societal implications

The aging demographic of the agricultural sector poses a threat to the sustainability of food production. Simultaneously, members of Gen Z in Indonesia are struggling to find jobs (ABC News, 2024; Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020), yet they are not interested in working in the agricultural sector due to its perceived low competence, which doesn't match Gen Z's expectations and their perceived characteristics (Consentino et al., 2023). Therefore, addressing this issue will solve both the problem of the agricultural sector's sustainability and the problem of Gen Z unemployment. Besides supporting the agricultural sector through pricing policy, payments supporting farmers, stimuli for agricultural businesses, and other programs (Barbosa, 2024), the government may also provide incentives and training to foster social media adoption by agricultural businesses (Moonsammy & Moonsammy, 2020). Moreover, given that agricultural businesses are currently run by members of the older generations, they are experiencing difficulties in adopting social media (Malik & Ansari, 2024).

### 2.4. Limitations and future research directions

While this study offers valuable insights into businesses in the agricultural sector adopting social media, it is important to consider certain limitations when interpreting the results. One key limitation is that this study relied on a single method—the common latent factor (CLF)—to address common method bias (CMB). This approach may not fully eliminate the risk that bias might affect the accuracy of the findings. To enhance the robustness of future research, it would be beneficial to incorporate other techniques to manage CMB. For instance, using marker variables might help to reduce bias, while multitrait-multimethod analysis could provide a more detailed examination of the data by cross-validating results through a multiple measurement approach. Another notable limitation is the absence of more compelling independent variables to enrich the theoretical model, such as parental influence and agricultural digitalization. In certain cultures, parental advice is highly valued and can shape the career choices of members of the younger generation (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Parental influence, therefore, might play a crucial role in career development by providing informal learning opportunities, continuous guidance, and the transfer of skills and knowledge through early exposure to farming practices (Firdaus et al., 2024). This highlights the need for further research to examine the impact of parental influence. Additionally, the inclusion of

agricultural digitalization as an independent variable in future research might provide valuable insights. Since the agricultural sector has been undergoing a digital transformation—from production to the consumption of food and resources—advanced digital technologies have been shown to improve production efficiency, optimize operational management, and enhance decision-making processes (Bampasidou et al., 2024; Basso & Antle, 2020). This digital shift might potentially improve the competence stereotype of the agricultural sector in the eyes of Gen Z. Therefore, exploring the influence of the digitalization of the agricultural sector on young people choosing to pursue a career in that sector needs further investigation.

### Credit authorship contribution statement

**Anggraeni Pranandari:** Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Widya Paramita:** Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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### Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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