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## AN ANALYSIS ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPECTED EMPLOYER BRAND ATTRACTIVENESS, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND INTENTION TO APPLY

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### ABSTRACT

Employer brand is a vital concept for handling scarcity in the labor market with creating the best place to work perception. To overcome war for talent, comprehension of the expectation of the workforce from the employers has facilitated the attraction and retention of the employees. Survey is conducted to 300 employees from 12 banks in Turkey. The data gathered from the survey are analyzed through the SPSS statistical packaged software. Analyses results stated that application value is the predictor of the organizational identification while application value and development value and socialization is crucial for the intention to apply. On the other hand, economic value provided by the organizations does not affect organizational identification and intention to apply.

**Keywords:** Employer brand, Employer brand attractiveness, Employer brand expectation, Intention to apply, Organizational identification

**JEL Classification:** M51, M12, L2

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's business world, organizations are being aware of the importance of superiority of organizational resources which they are determinant of gaining competitive advantage in a market. In addition to organizational capital referring to organizational structure, management styles, bureaucracy, planning and controlling mechanisms and physical capital referring the machines and equipment of the organization, technology, location of the organization, human capital is the most crucial resources of the organizations especially with movement from industrial age to information age (Alniaçık and Alniaçık, 2012) because of having no risk of imitation and substitution by other firms (Kashyap and Rangnekar, 2014), being internal customers of the organization and having impact on the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders. Physical abilities and capacities of firms do not make any sense as long as they have no qualified and talented human resources.

To gain competitive advantage, organizational resources of firms should be valuable, rarely exist in market and in competitors, be inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). Having these requirements and specifications for attracting and retaining the human capital among all organizational capital, is one of the most crucial stage of meeting this strategy but in this point organizations go experience some struggles. Lack of talented workforce is one of these problems. According to results of Skill Gap study in 2015 applied 41000 recruitment manager from 42 region and countries, 38% of employers have difficulty in meeting the gap in open position and this result has increased 2% compared to the 2014 and is the highest percentage since 2007 (Manpower Inc., 2015). The first five reasons behind the skill gap have derived from gap in work experience (22 %), expectation of higher salary (13%), deficiency of appropriate job application (35%), skill gap for technical/ uphill jobs (34%), skill gap for workplace/ business (17%). Foregoing results have required application of the employer brand concept to cope with lack of competency. In this context, our study measures expectations of

employees from the employers and effect on the organizational identification and intention to apply. Study begins with literature review and hypotheses testing. Research model and result of analysis will be revealed. Finally, discussion and recommendations for future researches will be centered on.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Employer Brand**

Idea of employer branding was expressed firstly by Ambler and Barrow (1996) with describing the term as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”. They realized the necessity of the employees’ side of the brand for organization. Brand management based on the customers is not enough for the organization. Firms have to consider also the employees in the creation of the brand. Moroko and Uncles (2005) mentioned similarity of characteristics being force for consumer and corporate brand with employer brand. Being noticeable and known, being seen as relevant and resonant, and being differentiated from direct competitors features of other types of brand can be seen in employer brand.

Barrow and Mosley (2011) classified benefits of employer branding as functional and emotional benefits. Functional benefits include basic things like payment, security, equipment and technology, incentives, working environment etc. and emotional benefits include motivation, satisfaction, work experience etc. according to them, brand should be created on the basis of emotional benefits because of difficulties in imitation of these benefits. Their other contribution in employer branding literature is the employer branding mix which consists of 12 dimension divided into two groups. First group is related with organizational concept and the other considers local context and practices. Organizational context consists of external reputation, internal communication, senior leadership, values and corporate social responsibility, internal measurement system and service support. Local context and practices composes of recruitment and induction, team management, performance appraisal, learning and development, reward and recognition and working environment. They also create employer brand personality concept which is a way of introducing values, characteristics, differences and contributions in employer brand of firm. They have argued that these all things (values, contributions etc.) should be defined and determined according to target group of candidates and pre-exist employees for useful and unique employer branding. In point of target group, they have used brand positioning that refers “the art and science of targeting the right audiences with the most compelling benefits and brand messages.” (Barrow and Mosley, 2011, p.63). Davies (2008) analyzed the both consumer and employee views of brand with four attributes; capability of differentiation, loyalty creation, satisfying and developing an emotional attachment.

Differentiation from competitors can be achieved by employer brand application in organization (Wahba and Elmanadily, 2015). Dissimilar features in corporate and consumer brands have been fulfilling a psychological contract and unintended appropriation of brand values. On the other hand, researchers defined attractiveness and accuracy as criteria of successful and unsuccessful employer brand. Accuracy refers congruency between values promised inside of employer branding concept in organization and real work environment and values. Barrow and Mosley (2011) classified benefits of employer branding as functional and emotional benefits. Functional benefits include basic things like payment, security, equipment and technology, incentives, working environment etc. and emotional benefits include motivation, satisfaction, work experience etc. According to them, brand should be created on the basis of emotional benefits because of difficulties in imitation of these benefits. In the following phase of research, results have stated that organizations’ employee based brand equity affect the decision making process of potential employees positively in terms of employer brand signal including clarity, consistency, credibility and brand investments (Wilden, Gudergan and Lings, 2010).

Employer brand literature emphasizes on employer side of a kind of psychological contract between employer and employees and seeks to clarify the conditions for creating a unique and priceless employer brand perception in point of this psychological contract in terms of working conditions and benefits promised by employer. These benefits have been explained by Ambler and Barrow as functional, economic and

psychological benefits (1996); symbolic benefits referring intangible and perceptual contribution of firm to employees (work culture, organizational prestige etc.) and functional benefits referred by Backhaus and Tikoo that having more tangible opportunities as salary and promotion activities (2004); economic value, interest value, social value, development value and application value (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005) and economic value, development value, social value, diversity value and reputation value (Schlager et al., 2011) given to employees; instrumental and symbolic framework by Lievens and Highhouse, (2003); Ito, Brotheridge and McFarland, 2013; Van Hove et al., 2013; Lievens, Van Hove, and Anseel, 2007; Lievens, 2007).

Research about employer brand image in cultural context has contributed to the literature of employer branding in different perspectives (Van Hove et al., 2013). To show ability of generalization of symbolic and instrumental attributes of employer brand image for different organizations from different countries and cultures, researchers have applied the concept to country (Turkey) where it has collectivistic culture. Results revealed that Turkish students have mostly been attracted by good working conditions and competency. Differentiation of organization can be actualized with focusing on symbolic image dimensions rather than instrumental image. As a result, findings of study have showed consistency with results of studies in individualistic countries.

### **3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Goal**

In the literature, wide range of antecedents and consequences of the employer brand attractiveness were stated and aim of this study is to determine the aspects of employer brand attractiveness in terms of measuring the expectation of the respondents affecting the organizational identification and intention to apply tendency of the employees. Stating the expectations of workforce creates benefits for shaping existing employer brand activities in the organization for the long term employment of them.

#### **3.2. Hypotheses Development**

The term employer attractiveness refers to “the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization” (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005, p.156). Studies about employer brand attractiveness have executed different values provided by employer brand. To measure attractiveness of employer brand, researchers have revealed different factors taken into consideration by workforce. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) have used symbolic and instrumental framework in the measurements of employer brand attractiveness and defined symbolic framework as “describing job/organization in terms of subjective and intangible attributes” (p.81) with payment and security, advancement, task demands and working condition and instrumental framework as “describing job/organization in terms of objective, concrete, and factual attributes that a job/organization has or does not” (p.80) with sincerity, innovativeness, competence, prestige and robustness. Several studies have used this scale for measuring employer attractiveness (Ito, Brotheridge and McFarland, 2013; Van Hove et al., 2013; Lievens, Van Hove, and Anseel, 2007; Lievens, 2007).

On the other hand, Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) have used economic value, interest value, social value, development value and application value while Srivastava and Bhatnagar (2010) have developed scale that includes enabling organization, career growth, credible and fair, caring organization, flexible and ethical, product and service brand image, positive employer image and global exposure to measure attractiveness. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) has regarded two potential employee groups; students, the first ones consider the innovativeness, competence and location while employee groups focus on innovativeness and competence. Lievens (2007) has suggested that travel opportunities, team activities and task diversity are significant predictors of attractiveness for potential applicants while team activities, structure, job security task diversity and physical activities attract the actual applicants. For all sample groups, payment, benefits and advancement have not impact on the attractiveness.

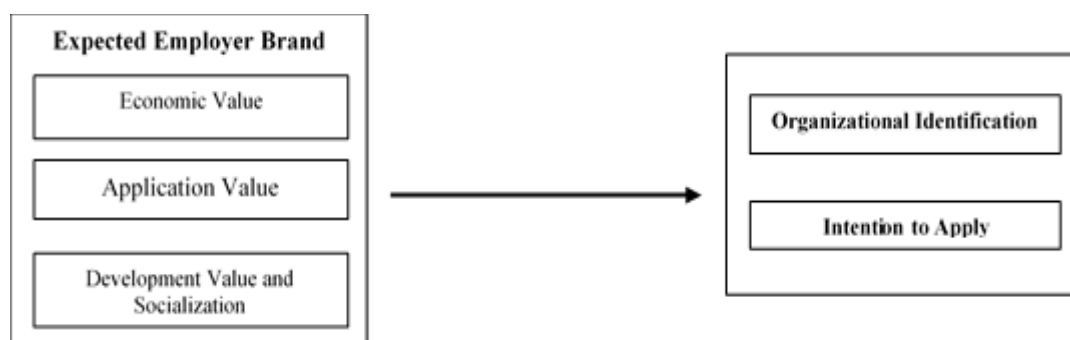
Study of Alnıçık and Alnıçık (2012) identify dimensions of attractiveness which were stated as social value is the strongest predictor of attractiveness while market value has low effect over the attraction of potentials.

Moreover, social, market, application and cooperation values have higher importance on females compared to the males. As respondents getting older, importance of market values of the organizations goes up in attractiveness. Rampl and Kenning (2014) centered their study on interaction between employer brand attractiveness measured with brand personality traits and employer brand trust and employer brand affect. In regard to results, sincerity is much probabilistic predictor of the employer brand trust than employer brand affect while excitement and ruggedness is two of stronger predictors of the employer brand affect than employer brand trust. Competence is not a predictor of either employer brand affect or employer brand trust contrary to results of Lievens and Highhouse (2003).

Rampl (2014) has analyzed the effect of employer brand association on the employer first-choice brands and results of study indicated that work content and work culture are the predictors of attractiveness. Van Hove et al. (2013) showed that good working condition, competency and differentiation of an organization have significant effect on the attractiveness for the Turkish students and symbolic framework was considered more important than instrumental framework. Gungordu, Ekmekcioglu and Simsek (2014) centered that the most important predictors are working environment, economic value, image and developmental value. Potential female candidates give more importance to social value, economic value, image and application value than potential male candidates. Candidates who worked for an organization before have considered socialization, economic value, image and working environment comparing to candidates have no work experience.

Effect of employer attractiveness has been proved and results of study revealed that symbolic attributes of a brand (sincerity, innovativeness, competence, prestige and robustness) are the best predictors of the organizational identification while instrumental frameworks do not have any contribution to identification (Lievens, Van Hove, and Anseel, 2007). In another study, results have stated that identification of current employees relies on the social and reputation values while social, reputation and diversity values are the predictors of identification for the prospective employees (Schlager et al., 2011). Contrary to expectation respect to idea reveal that developmental and economic value are the strongest predictors for the identification, research has put forward that social value of the organizations including team spirit, competence and behaving respectively and friendly among co-workers, supportive relationship, good and positive reputation of organization as well as well-known and high quality products accompany identification of employees. Basic idea of employer brand is to create loyal and satisfied employees with providing different and valuable benefits and opportunities, fulfilling promises given to employee value proposition as a result of being a part of a human capital of the organization as well as attracting them. This perspective and activities in favor of employees have resulted in identification of employees with shared values, goals and vision which company have released, striving for the success of the organization with collaboration, extra working or working instead of a person having justifications.

Martin (2005) has emphasized that organizations state responsibilities which they account for as an employer with employer brand signal and also determining the expectation of them from workforce after employment. Congruence between expectation of organizational obligation and employee obligation in fulfilling this mutual agreement contributes to unique employment experience. Ito, Brotheridge and McFarland stated that symbolic and instrumental benefits within the scope of employer brand subscribe the achievement of mutual agreement, job satisfaction and commitment (2013).

**Figure 1: Research Model**

*H1: Economic value affects the organizational identification.*

*H2: Development value and socialization affect the organizational identification.*

*H3: Application value affects the organizational identification.*

*H4: Economic value affects the intention to apply.*

*H5: Development value and socialization affect the intention to apply.*

*H6: Application value affects the intention to apply.*

### 3.3. Sample and Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to 12 different banks in Turkey. Main reason behind choosing the banking sector is remarkable findings of research made by Deloitte Turkey (2015) about talents in banking and assurance sectors exerted that virtually half of business administration and economy students in Turkey plans to stay in their first job for a five years and above and this rate has keep 54,3% of students up having tendency for banking sector but report has stated that popularity of banking sector has fallen from second with 16,5 % to fourth with 10,4 % and conglomerates have taken first grade in employer choice decision of respondents.

As research throw light on the issue, aim of the study is to determine the criteria for sustainability of this intention for remain with clarifying the reasons and factors affecting this decision and also clearing ways for regaining the attractiveness of the banking sector for Turkey with measuring expectation of respondents. For the sake of scarcity in the research about employer brand attractiveness for banking sector is also a reason behind choosing this sector. By analyzing the effect of employer brand attractiveness on the organizational outcomes, surveys were applied to members of banking sector in Turkey.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Employer brand attractiveness was measured by using 32-item index of Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005). Organizational identification was also measured using 6 questions from Mael and Ashforth (1992) and 2 questions were gathered from the study of Gautam, Van Dick and Wagner (2004). Intention to apply was measured using 4-item scale of Aiman-Smith, Bauer and Cable (2001). 8 items were deleted because of lower loading, loading two factors or lower loadings and because of reliability problem of factors. Finally, 36 items were gathered from 300 samples with 6 likert-type scale and factor loadings of items can be seen on the Table 1. Scale sources, number of items and reliability analysis results have been given in Table 2. All scales used in research have satisfactory reliability.

**Table 1: Factor Analysis Results**

	EV	DVAS	AV	OI	ITA
<b>EXPECTED EMPLOYER BRAND ATTRACTIVENESS</b>					
A great company	,743				
Profitable organization	,737				
Well known organization through media and advertisement	,728				
The organization produces high-quality products and services	,719				
The organization produces innovative products and services	,718				
Bringing the respect of family and friends	,678				
Acceptance and belonging	,659				
A springboard for future employment	,626				
An attractive overall compensation package	,623				
An above average basic salary	,543				
Humanitarian organization - gives back to society	,536				
Hands-on inter-departmental experience	,508				
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization		,844			
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization		,823			
The organization both values and makes use of your creativity		,802			
Having a good relationship with your superiors		,662			
Gaining career-enhancing experience		,654			
Recognition/appreciation from management		,637			
Supportive and encouraging colleagues		,611			
Working in an exciting environment		,511			
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned			,835		
Types of good/services produced by organization			,746		
The organization is customer-orientated			,737		
Opportunity to apply what was learned at a tertiary institution			,555		
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION</b>					
This organization's successes are my successes.				,759	
When I talk about organization where I have been working, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'				,815	
When someone praises the organization I'm working for, it feels like a personal compliment				,843	
If a story in the media criticized the organization where I have been working, I would feel embarrassed.				,838	
When someone criticizes organization where I have been working, it feels like a personal insult.				,774	
I am very interested in what others think about organization where I have been working				,752	
I work more than necessary for this company				,737	
I often describe myself to others by saying 'I work for ...(organization)' or 'I am from ...(organization)'				,777	
<b>INTENTION TO APPLY</b>					
I would actively pursue obtaining a position with this company					,677
I would attempt to gain an interview with this company					,574
If this company was at a job fair I would seek out their booth					,703

If this company visited campus I would want to speak with a representative

,785

Total Explained Variance for Perceived Employer Brand Attractiveness % 67,277

Total Explained Variance for Organizational Identification % 62,043

Total Explained Variance for Intention to Apply % 68,486

Table 2 shows the results of reliability analyses, number of items for each scales and sources of scales used in study. Cronbach alpha of reliability coefficient should be  $\geq 0,7$ . Cronbach Alpha for perceived employer brand attractiveness is 0,886, for organizational identification is 0,911 and for intention to apply is 0,837.

**Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Values of Scales**

Concepts	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Scale Sources
Perceived Employer Brand Attractiveness	24	0,886	Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005)
Organizational Identification	8	0,911	Mael and Ashforth (1992); Gautam, Van Dick and Wagner (2004)
Intention to Apply	4	0,837	Aiman-Smith, Bauer and Cable (2001)

In order to analyze the relationship between independent variables, expected employer brand attractiveness and dependent variables, organizational identification and intention to apply, Multiple Regression Analysis has been applied because of having more than one factor of independent variables and using the interval scale for gathering the data.

In an analysis of relationship between perceived employer brand attractiveness and organizational identification, economic value ( $\beta = -,021$ ;  $p = ,851$ ) and developmental value and socialization ( $\beta = ,171$ ;  $p = ,080$ ) have no significant relationship while application value ( $\beta = ,301$ ;  $p = ,000$ ) have significant relationship in organizational identification.

On the other hand, in an analysis of relationship between perceived employer brand attractiveness and intention to apply, application value ( $\beta = ,263$ ;  $p = ,001$ ) and development value and socialization ( $\beta = ,207$ ;  $p = ,023$ ) have significant relationship to intention to apply while economic value ( $\beta = ,062$ ;  $p = ,551$ ) has no significant relationship to intention to apply. As results of regression analysis have showed H3, H5 and H6 are supported while H1, H2 and H4 are not supported.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis Results on the Expected Employer Brand Attractiveness-Organizational Identification- Intention to Apply**

Regression Model	Independent Variables	Depended Variables	Standardized $\beta$	Sig.	Adjusted R2	F Value	Model Sig.
1A	Economic value	Organizational Identification	-,021	,851	,319	19,585	,000
	Application value		,301	,000			
	Development value and socialization		,171	,080			
1B	Economic value	Intention to Apply	,062	,551	,164	28,674	,000
	Application value		,263	,001			
	Development value and socialization		,207	,023			

## 5. DISCUSSION

By becoming employer first choice, brand have hold on preferences of target workforce group preferences have changed in overtime. According to result of study, economic values provided by organizations are not valuable or determinant of the application motive and organizational identification of candidates in contrast to classical employer perspective of attracting the best talent.

With reference to Talents in Banking Turkey research presents that high future earning is the seventh crucial motivation tool after path for advancement and professional training and development for the banking-inclined students (Deloitte Turkey, 2015). In other study evidences have presented the prominent role of work content and work culture rather than salary, promotion, location and reputation (Rampl, 2014). Findings of this study are consistent with the study of Schlager et al. (2011) presenting that economic and developmental values are not predictors of organizational identification while two studies differentiate in terms of predictors of identification. Schlager et al. (2011) stated the importance of social, reputation and diversity values, this study revealed that application value is predictor of identification.

In terms of symbolic and instrumental images, many studies have exerted that symbolic framework is better driver of differentiation rather than instrumental framework (Lievens, 2007; Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). From the intention to apply point of view, prominence of application value and developmental value and socialization have similar indication with the study of Lievens (2007) deliberating on the vitality of symbolic image of army in terms of potential and actual candidates and current employees.

Instead of payment base employer brand strategy, this study shows that organizations should focus on the developmental value and socialization of workforce with a good relationship among employees and supervisors, supportive work environment, giving importance to workforce creativity with application of opportunities for teaching and learning things related to job that all have brought to intention to apply in today's war for talents. Organizations which have been providing opportunities to employees for applying the knowledge which it acquired by teaching and learning can attract candidates.

However, result of this research is valid only for banking sector. For making generalization of finding, concept should be applied in different sectors for the comparison of indications. For future research, relationship between employer brand and other organizational behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior, work engagement, organizational commitment etc. antecedents of employer brand activities for kinds of effect of organizational culture and leadership style may be examined in future researches. Finally, effect of employer brand for the efficiency of the recruitment process may be analyzed to show the role of the employer brand concept.

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