Business & Social Science
IJRBS

Research in Business & Social Science

IJRBS VOL 8 NO 5 ISSN: 2147-4478

Available online at www.ssbfnnet.com
Journal homepage: <https://www.ssbfnnet.com/ojs/index.php/ijrbs>

The effects of employer branding and career anchor on intention to leave: An empirical study

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28 July 19

Received in revised form 08 Aug. 19

Accepted 15 August 19

Keywords:

Employer Branding

Career Anchor

Intention to Leave

Quantitative Research

JEL Classification:

M1

M5

L2

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the effects of employer branding and career anchor on the intention to leave. The object of this research is the companies operating in the technology, finance and pharmaceutical sectors while the subject is 229 employees. Three variables from the research data were gathered through instruments in the form of valid and reliable questionnaires. Statistical Analysis of the research data used hierarchical regression analysis with the significance in accordance with the output of SPSS 20.0. The review of the findings obtained from the data demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between the employer brand and career anchor; employer brand and the intention to leave. Findings indicated that employer branding has a significant effect on career anchor and intention to leave; career anchor also has a significant effect on the intention to leave. However, the mediator effect of career anchor did not appear in the relationship between employer branding and intention to leave.

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Peer review under responsibility of Bussecon International Academy & SSBFNET.

Introduction

The globalization leads to economic and political developments in order to disappear the borders on the map through the business world. The abolition of the borders has led to an increase in competition. As organizations grow and develop, they need qualified labor more than they used to. While giving importance to the brands of their products, the branding of their own organizations has become essential for increasing their attractiveness. Increased organizational appeal attracts the attention of qualified labor force.

Although the branding of organizations attracts qualified labor force, the opposite situation leads to the emergence of thoughts in employees. These ideas have many sources, internal, external and personal. In any case, these negative thoughts leave their place in the mind of the employee in time and with the developing events. This intention can be turned into action with the act of quitting if no measures are taken.

Career anchor, which means that people discover their own paths, recognize their talents and get to know what their expectations are, is one of the important factors in choosing a job. In the literature, there are researches about the career anchors proposed by Schein. Both the employee and his / her organization should be aware of these career anchors. In this way, it will be possible to take significant steps in the process of branding of the company by increasing the productivity of the employee by providing him / her to work in a suitable position and by creating values for the company.

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Peer review under responsibility of Bussecon International Academy.

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<https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v8i5.454>

This research aims to investigate the effects of employer branding and career anchor on the intention to leave. The object of this research is the companies operating in the technology, finance and pharmaceutical sectors while the subject is 229 employees.

Literature Review

Employer branding

Social structure, technology, economic habits and competitive conditions that are constantly changing and evolving as a result of globalization have been trained and obliging the qualified labor force. Under these conditions, businesses want to incorporate the labor force they need in order to achieve their goals and to make their work continuous. Just as businesses want to attract customers and gain their loyalty by creating a brand, it is aimed to involve and retain the workforce in the company. Increasing the attractiveness of businesses attracts the workforce to the concept of employer brand in the literature. One of the most important factors in the emergence of competitive advantage is the brand (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004, p.501). Although the companies aim to promote the brand in their products, they can also be handled in terms of human resources. Indeed, the employer brand was first explored in 1996 by Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow (1996, p.187). In addition employer branding is defined as; “the functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by the employer to the employees and identified with the firm”. The main purpose of the employer brand has been suggested to improve the strategy of finding an employee, to keep the employees in the business, and to provide a consistent framework for management to gain loyalty and increase production (Collins and Stevens 2002, p.1121). All of the qualities that make up the value proposition to be created to become one of the leading employers are called the employer brand components (Oğuz 2012, p.7).

The company's reputation, the attractiveness of its sector, flexibility, product and service quality, geographical area, co-operation, wage and other rights granted to the employee, company culture, strategic responsibility, and global job opportunities are other components of the employer brand. (Micheals et al. 1998, p.50; Pinkess 2008, p.39; Swaroop and Agrawal 2009, p.44; Howe and Strauss 2004, p.4). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) proposed a resource-based approach to provide the theoretical background for the employer brand, while Rynes et al. (1991, p.514) proposed the theory of signaling. The resource-based approach primarily focuses on the company's resources rather than its products to ensure competitive advantage. The company's resources, such as brand name, technology experience, qualified personnel, commercial agreements, effective activities, assets and patents such as assets can be cited as examples of these resources (Wernerfelt 1984, p.172). The theory of signaling is used to explain the relationship between employers and employee candidates in the recruitment process (Rynes 1989, p7). As a result of the researches in the literature, hypothesis *H1* is composed as follows:

H1: Employer branding practices have a statistically significant impact on career anchor.

Intention to leave

The intention to leave occurs at the end of a certain stage. Communication is the main factor in the emergence of this intention in the working mind. When there is not enough communication with the employee, the employee intends to leave as a result of work stress, insecurity and dissatisfaction. In the institutions where communication is strong, the employee will be able to struggle against the factors mentioned above (Schweiger and Denisi 1991, p.127). Intention to leave does not imply an employee's departure; He states that he can quit his job at the first opportunity (Ünlüsoy 2010, p.49). In this respect, the intention of leaving is not absolute and the employee may change his intention as a result of improved conditions (Orbay 2008, p.31).

The investments made by the enterprises to the employees are also the investments made to the future of the enterprise. It is important to identify and eliminate the factors that cause the intention to leave to prevent these investments from becoming sunk costs. It is possible to categorize the reasons for the intention to leave as external factors (unemployment rate, alternative job opportunities), organizational elements (management style, wages, rewards) and personal elements (personality, age, family) (Cotton and Tuttle 1986, p.63-64). It is also possible to add psychological and economic factors. According to the result of the researches in the literature, hypothesis *H2* is conducted as follows:

H2: Employer branding applications have a statistically significant effect on the intention to leave

Career anchor

Career anchors are a collection of personal behavior, values and attitudes developed by Schein and Long in the 1970s. Career anchors allow the individual to become aware of his or her talents, career values and career options. Schein put forward the concept of the career anchor of a person's career, determining the limits, balance and self-perception that allows the pattern of self-perception has been expressed (Crepeau et al., 1992 p.147). Measuring career anchors explains a person's career orientations, and when he has this awareness, he makes a career plan for himself (Jiang and Klein 2000, p.221). In addition to self-values, the cultural heritage of the family is also influential in the formation of a career anchor. Schein examines that the elements that make up one's career are formed from the moment they are born. In this respect, one's perspective on life, emotional structure, social values and self-abilities are important in career choice (Adıgüzel 2009, p.279). Schein defined career anchors as a way of conducting one's career, allowing one to recognize himself / herself. He observed that behavior patterns that shape their careers occurred in the first years of their lives. These patterns, which are formed by the influence of people themselves, their environment and their families, shape their careers in

the future and affect job choices and job changes. These eight career patterns, called career anchors as mentioned above are: security / stability, independence / autonomy, lifestyle, technical / functional competencies, general management competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service / dedication to a purpose, pure challenge / competition.

The value-oriented approach expresses the employee's high awareness of his personal priorities. Employees with such a perspective are aware of their accomplished career accomplishments taking into account organizational priorities and use their values to guide their career. On the other hand, self-direction determines the extent to which an employee has strategic control of his career and independent roles in managing career behavior (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth 2006, p.31-32). According to the studies in the literature, the hypotheses are composed as follows;

H3: Career anchor has a statistically significant effect on intention to leave.

H4: The mediator effect of career anchor is statistically significant in the relationship between employer branding practices and intention to leave.

Research and Methodology

In this part of the study, the model of the research, sample, data collection tools, data collection process, preparation of data for analysis and techniques used in data analysis are given.

Sample of the study

The object of this research is the companies operating in technology, finance and pharmaceuticals sectors while the subject is 229 employees. The results of demographics of the participants are given in Table 1:

Table 1: Demographics

		f	%
Gender	Female	142	62,0
	Male	87	38,0
Education	High School	6	2,6
	Associate	10	4,4
	Undergraduate	147	64,2
	Graduate	66	28,8
Tenure	1-3	118	51,5
	4-6	50	21,8
	7-10	31	13,5
	11-15	22	9,6
	16 and above	8	3,5
Position	Assistant Specialist	28	12,2
	Specialist	110	48,0
	Senior Specialist	12	5,2
	Low-level Manager	41	17,9
	Middle-level Manager	30	13,1
	Top-level Manager	8	3,5
Department	Human Resources	59	25,8
	Law	10	4,4
	Finance	24	10,5
	Administrative Affairs	3	1,3
	Marketing	25	10,9
	Sales	50	21,8
	Technology	32	14,0
	Customer Service	26	11,4
Sector	Technology	131	57,2
	Finance	57	24,9
	Pharmaceutical	41	17,9

Source: Authors

The results of the frequency analysis of the demographics in Table 1 shows that 62% of the participants in the organizations are female. When the age distribution of the participants is examined, it is seen that the 45% of the participants are between the ages of 25-31 and 2.6% of the participants are between the ages of 46-52. The educational status of the participants are as follows; undergraduate degree is 64.2%, graduate degree is 28.8%, associate degree is 4.4% and high school degree is 2.6%. The results also

show that participants' tenure in companies are 51.5% for 1-3 years, 21.8% for 4-6 years, 13.5% for 7-10 years, 9.6% for 11-15 years and 3.5% for 16 years and over. According to the distribution of the positions, the results show that, 48% of the participants are specialist and top-level managers are composed of 3.5% of the participants. According to department, the highest level of participation is from human resources 25.8% and the lowest participation is seen in administrative affairs 1.3%.

Scales

Employer Branding Scale (EBS): 5-point Likert type scale consisting 10 items developed by Demirkan (2017). As a result of the scale, two-factor structure emerged. These are; employer awareness-reputation factor and work-related information factor.

Career Anchor Scale (CAS): 5-point Likert-type scale consisting 25 items referring to the study of Igbaria and Baroudi (1992) by Solmaztük and Dündar (2018). The scale consists of 8 factors which are service / dedication, managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, technical / functional competence, autonomy-independence, order and trust, lifestyle and risk-taking.

Intention to Leave Scale (ILS): 5-point Likert-type scale consisting 3 items used by İçergen (2016).

Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability of the measurement tools used in the research were determined by various analyzes. In this study, factor structure of the scales was determined by exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Reliability was determined by Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients.

EFA Results for EBS: The data were analyzed by Kaiser Mayer Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett Sphericity test (Büyüköztürk, 2009). KMO value was calculated as 0.873 and Bartlett Sphericity test value is calculated as follows; ($\chi^2_{45}=1382, 558; p<.05$). KMO value is greater than 0.80 (Tavşancıl, 2005) and the results of Bartlett test are statistically significant. So, it is founded that the data set is appropriate in terms of EFA.

As a result of EFA, two factors with greater than one eigenvalue were reached. The first factor is dominant and explained variance is 54.05%. The total explained variance is 67.91%. Figure 1 shows the scree-plot graph resulting from EFA.

Factor loadings are examined in EFA analysis and the values are founded as higher than 0,30. The factor loadings are vary between 0,522 and 0,845. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for the reliability of the scores obtained from EBS. The reliability of employer awareness and reputation factors is founded as 0,83, the reliability of the work-related information factor is founded as 0.91 and overall reliability is founded as 0.90.

Accordingly, it can be stated that the scores obtained from the scale are reliable.

Figure 1: Scree Plot of EBS

EFA Results for CAS: The data were analyzed by Kaiser Mayer Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett Sphericity test (Büyüköztürk, 2009). KMO value was calculated as 0.718 and Bartlett Sphericity test value is calculated as follows; ($\chi^2_{300}=2277, 341; p<.05$). KMO value is greater than 0.50 (Kaiser, 1974) and the results of Bartlett test are statistically significant. So, it is founded that the data set is appropriate in terms of EFA.

As a result of EFA, eight factors with greater than one eigenvalue were reached. The first factor is dominant and explained variance is 18,275%. The total explained variance is 71.245%. Figure 2 shows the scree-plot graph resulting from EFA.

Figure 2: Scree Plot of CAS

Factor loadings are examined in EFA analysis and the values are founded as higher than 0,30. The factor loadings are vary between 0,549 and 0,868. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for the reliability of the scores obtained from CAS. The reliability of serving / dedicated to a purpose is founded as 0,825. The values of other factors are founded respectively as; managerial competence 0,758, entrepreneurial creativity 0,866, technical / functional competence 0,812, independence-autonomy-autonomy 0,780, layout 0,817, lifestyle 0,716, confidence 0,658. The overall reliability is founded as 0,798.

EFA Results for ILS: The data were analyzed by Kaiser Mayer Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett Sphericity test (Büyüköztürk, 2009). KMO value was calculated as 0.749 and Bartlett Sphericity test value is calculated as follows; ($\chi^2_3=548,708; p<.05$). KMO value is greater than 0.80 (Tavşancıl, 2005) and the results of Bartlett test are statistically significant. So, it is founded that the data set is appropriate in terms of EFA.

As a result of EFA, one factor with greater than one eigenvalue were reached. The total variance explained is founded as 87.272%. Figure 3 shows the scree-plot graph resulting from EFA.

Figure 2: Scree Plot of ILS

Factor loadings are examined in EFA analysis and the values are founded as higher than 0,30. The factor loadings are vary between 0,838 and 0,903. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for the reliability of the scores obtained from ILS. According to the results, one component extracted for the ILS scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the reliability of the scores obtained from the ILS. The obtained value was calculated as 0.927.

Result and Discussion

Normal distribution and linearity

For multiple regression analysis, it is necessary to determine whether the data is normally distributed or not. In this respect, descriptive statistics were used. The results obtained are given in Table 2:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Scales

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Medyan	Skewness	Kurtosis
EBS	201	35,4129	36,0000	-,170	-,695
CAS	201	86,8010	87,0000	,414	,683
ILS	201	8,4279	8,0000	,130	-1,115

Source: Authors

According to Table 2, it was found that the mean and median values of the scores obtained from the three measurement instruments used in the study were close to each other. In addition, it is seen that almost all skewness and kurtosis coefficients are founded between -1 and 1 values.

Hierarchical regression analysis

In the light of the hypothesis of the study, the mediating role of career anchor was determined according to the procedure steps proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). It was demonstrated that the $f2$ factor of the career anchor can be used to determine the model tool effect. In other words, it was seen that only $f2$ factor provided the necessary assumptions.

- The independent (predictor) variable must be associated with the mediator variable. For this purpose, it was tested whether EBS predicted the CAS significantly or not. According to the results obtained EBS; $f2$ ($R^2 = ,075$, $t_{199} = 4,010$, $p < .01$; $\beta = ,273$) predicted statistically significant.
- The independent (predictor) variable must be associated with the dependent (predicted) variable. For this purpose, it was tested whether EBS predicted the ILS significantly or not. According to the results; EBS; ($R^2 = ,222$, $t_{199} = -7,542$, $p < .01$; $\beta = -,471$) predicted ILS statistically significant.
- The mediator variable must be associated with the dependent (predicted) variable. For this purpose, it was tested whether CAS predicted the ILS significantly or not. According to the results obtained $f2$ ($R^2 = ,037$, $t_{199} = 2,746$, $p < .01$; $\beta = ,191$) predicted ILS statistically significant.

According to the findings, it was found that all the conditions required for the mediation test were met. The mediator effect of $f2$ factor of career anchor in the relationship between EBS and ILS was determined by hierarchical regression analysis. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Test Results Coefficients

	Model	ΔR^2	B	SH_B	β
Model 1	Constant	,222**	2,336	,985	
	EBS		,203	,027	-,471**
Model 2	Constant		1,694	1,179	
	EBS	,004	-,196	,028	-,453**
	CAS ($f2$)		-,070	,068	-,067**

** $p < .01$; Model 1: Independent variable: EBS (Employer branding), Dependent variable: ILS (Intention to leave)

Source: Authors

Model 2: Independent variable: EBS, Career Anchor ($f2$), Dependent variable: ILS (Intention to leave)

As shown in Table 3, it was found that the beta (β) coefficient for EBS in Model 1 was -, 471, and that the β coefficient for EBS in Model 2 increased to -453 with the $f2$ variable taken into the model. In Model 1, EBS has a statistically significant and negative effect on ILS ($\beta = -, 471$; $p < ,01$). However, when the mediator variable is added, it is examined that the variable does not affect the dependent variable ($\beta = -, 067$; $p > ,05$). According to the results both $H1$, $H2$ and $H3$ hypotheses are accepted. However $H4$ hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusions

The changing conditions of competition as a result of globalization has made the aim of companies to be different one step forward and become a necessity. Considering that the main objective is to maximize economic profit, this necessity has begun to form the basis of the objectives of existence and survival in the market before further gains. Given the profit maximization objective of commercial activities, companies are expected to do more than exist and survive. Even if only a customer-oriented activity is desired, it is inevitable that many conditions, even if indirectly, are among the main objectives of the activity to place the customer at the

focal point. Companies' point of view to the customer may be the stage of realizing a sale or attracting the customer. In addition, when considered more holistically it is important to protect existing customers, gain the customer after sales and to spread the customer satisfaction to the entire experience.

The effort to recruit successful employees in the labor market is an important key for enterprises to outperform their competitors. When we consider the situation for the employee, it will be inevitable to seek alternative in an environment where employer brand components are not available or cannot find application area. The absence of these components for a qualified employee may result in the intention of quitting. Employees seeking job because of organizational factors will have to make comparisons between alternatives. Therefore, the concept of becoming a center of attraction for the employer will become more meaningful at this point. However, before the comparison among employers, employees must set their own career goals and compare their goals and current potential. Starting from their own characteristics and priorities will be one of the most important ways to make the right choice for the employer.

At this point, the concept of career anchor emerges and guides the employee in career orientation. The value range of the career anchor components will provide the greatest guidance to employees both in the continuation of their current job and in a possible job search process. In this study, the effects of employer brand applications on the intention to leave were revealed. In addition, the mediator effect of career anchor in this relationship was investigated. In this direction, the technology, finance and pharmaceutical sectors survey was conducted with the employees. It is seen that most of the respondents were female participants. As a result of the diversity policies of companies, it can be said that the targeted increase in the number of female employees has been realized. Many companies are trying to implement supportive practices for women employees not only in recruitment policies, but also in organizational changes. Given the success stories of female employees, we can see that such practices are rational.

Considering the hypotheses of the study, it was found that most of the hypotheses were supported. However, the mediator effect of career anchor did not appear in the relationship between employer brand practices and intention to leave. At this point, it can be stated that the positive or negative employee experience, which directly affects the intention to leave of employees, is determined by the organization. The process, which has the power to direct the preferences directly without the need for any mediator effect, shows the effect of employer brand applications on the employees.

As a result, it was observed that the variables considered on the basis of the research were related. This may be a guide to the way in which a sustainable partnership should be pursued, given the intention to leave, both for the employer and the employee. In particular, the relationship between employer brand practices and intention to leave will reveal the fact that companies are required to do so. The study is expected to be a guide for future studies. In particular, there is a greater need for studies involving employer brand and career anchor. If the studies can be expanded by taking into account the variables in different sectors, the evaluation of the results will be more meaningful.

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