

The effect of employer brand on workplace selection in the hospitality industry*

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of employer brand on the choice of the workplace of those working in hospitality businesses. The research was carried out with students at Süleyman Demirel University and Isparta University of Applied Sciences in Isparta, Turkey. A questionnaire was administered to 550 participants through face-to-face interviews. The data were analyzed with exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and regression analysis using SPSS. The findings indicated that four factors significantly affected workplace selection: career and development opportunities, institutional reputation, economic elements and working conditions. In contrast, employee value perceptions and social elements had no significant effect.

Keywords: Employer brand, Employers, Workplace selection, Hospitality industry, Tourism

1. Introduction

Like other social areas, the service sector has been affected by the emergence of an information-centred structure that require businesses to adapt to changes. Employer brand, which involves as proving and promoting the business to different stakeholders, especially employees, is becoming steadily more important. While various factors determine how interested businesses are in the employer brand, the most important is economic as the tourism sector, specifically hospitality businesses, are expanding their economic influence

Due to the significant benefits, they provide, hospitality businesses are particularly important in the current economic order. Hospitality businesses operate in a very competitive environment that has various advantages. Therefore, different applications are developed on the basis of the sector. One of these applications is employer branding. To gain a competitive advantage, hospitality businesses first try to attract qualified employees through employer branding. If these qualified employees and the strong reputation of the employer brand brings success, the business can strengthen its position ensure its survival by being economically superior to its competitors.

Research into employer brands shows how businesses can attract employees by offering a wide variety of benefits. By persuading potential employees to join, both the business

and the employee can benefit. The importance and effects of employer brands, which also influence other stakeholders like customers and competitors, is expanding. It is therefore essential for an hospitality business, especially its human resources department, to coordinate and demonstrate the importance of employer brand for the business.

Various studies have investigated the relationship between employees and employer brand (Adler and Ghiselli, 2015; Ratna-Singh, 2013; Barrow and Mosley, 2005; Chunping and Li, 2011; Lievens et al., 2007). However, no study has considered the effect of employer brand on employees' choice of workplace in the hospitality sector. The present study is thus original as it fills this gap in the literature. The main purpose of the study is to identify specific employer brand factors and determine their effects on employees' choice of workplace. The findings are valuable as an initial source for future employer brand studies of hospitality businesses.

2. Employer brand

In workplaces, the employees' muscular or physical strength is becoming less important than their knowledge and skills. Consequently, businesses increasingly need well-qualified employees, which has created a competition between them to attract talented and knowledgeable employees. Employer brand has become an important tool in this competition (Kara, 2013: 40). By ensuring that businesses

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Article info: Research Article
Received: 5 January 2022
Received in revised form: 16 March 2022
Accepted: 10 April 2022

Ethics committee approval:
*All responsibility belongs to the researcher. This article is produced from the master thesis cited as "Yaşar, E. (2020). The effect of employer brand on the workplace selection: The case of hospitality businesses. (Unpublished Thesis), Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta".

To cite this article: Yaşar, E. (2022). The effect of employer brand on workplace selection in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 8(2), 29-36. <https://doi.org/10.24288/jttr.1096279>

notice the value of their employees, employer branding has led to more studies on employees.

The concept of employer brand first emerged in the UK, where then Simon Barrow clearly defined its boundaries and meaning as the advantages and progress payments that the employer promises to their employees. These advantages are used to attract the attention of potential employees who can add value to the business through their knowledge and qualifications (Barrow and Mosley, 2005: 15). The basic logic of the employer brand is to present various benefits to attract the attention of potential employees.

The employer brand is also a tool for maintaining the business-employee relationship by stimulating commitment to the business so that the employees work more willingly (Davies, 2008: 668). By increasing employee loyalty to the business, this can make them more productive so that the business can take advantage in the specified basic areas.

Establishing a successful employer brand brings several basic benefits, as follows:

- It contributes to the formation of the perception of the place where it is desired to work for the business, which is in the position of the employer. In this way, it becomes easier to include qualified employees who are thought to contribute to the business. In a way, the employer business is no longer in a situation where it chooses qualified employees, not selected by the employees, among alternative businesses during the recruitment process (Kara, 2013: 55).
- It ensures that a high rate of applications is received in the employee evaluation and procurement work carried out by the human resources (Baş, 2011:43).
- By having well-qualified employees, the business can minimize the cost of its activities and their failure rate (Barrow and Mosley, 2005: 69).
- The employer appears to be more attractive (Edwards, 2005: 266).
- The business becomes more competitive (Baş, 2011).
- The business can realize its mission (Yılmaz and Yılmaz, 2010: 301).
- The employer can develop a positive image, identity, and reputation (Özgen and Akbayır, 2011: 85).
- There is less employee turnover (Kavlakoğlu, 2018: 34).
- By performing their jobs properly, well-qualified employees make the customers satisfied and loyal, which increases sales (Barrow and Mosley, 2005: 72).
- Business recognition increases the organization's influence (Buğdaycıoğlu, 2014: 17).

Employees expect certain benefits from the business they work for. Accordingly, the employer brand includes efforts to achieve this unity of purpose formed in the employees, which is an important step towards ensuring employee

satisfaction. A positive employer brand can benefit employees in their education, career, income, and psychology. These benefits include opportunities to plan their career, participate in uplifting social activities, develop necessary education and experience, earn a satisfactory income through salary, bonuses, etc., participate in a working environment with a well-developed business culture, receive support while adapting to the business, be consulting by the employer before decisions are made and feel valued (Ambler and Barrow, 1996: 187). In short, the employer brand creates advantages for both employees and the business.

2.1. Dimensions of employer brands

Various studies have identified the dimensions that define the scope of employer brands and the areas for research to focus on. Ambler and Barrow (1996), for example, identify three main dimensions:

- Economic: the financial benefits and incentives offered to employees
- Functional: the career, educational, and development opportunities offered to employees
- Psychological: the work environment, business culture, etc.

Adler and Ghiselli (2015) add a fourth dimension to those suggested by Ambler and Barrow:

- Economic: progress payments like salary, premiums, bonuses and insurance
- Functional: the features of the job, and educational and career elements
- Psychological: activities that maintain the business culture to strengthen relations between employees
- Organizational: the business's history, the employer's reputation and image, and national and international activities

Based on a review of the literature, the present study considers six employer brand dimensions (Yaşar and Demir, 2021: 185):

Value perceptions: The practices that determine value perceptions may differ significantly between businesses depending on factors like the business's size, sector, mission and vision, and competitors. Generally, however, certain practices are important, such as valuing the mentality of the employees, listening to them, exchanging ideas, and interacting constantly. A business must create a perception of value towards its employees in terms of the results it creates. It must pay attention to the factors that create a perception of value by creating a sense of commitment in the employees, increasing their motivation and productivity, and ensure a suitable business culture and working environment. Finally, by providing a perception of value to current employees, the business can effectively promote itself to attract new employees.

Career and development: This include practices like employee training activities, planning to gain experience, and career advancement guidance. Thus, the business aims to become more successful by increasing its employees' skill levels (Demir, 2014: 18; Yasar and Demir, 2019: 504).

Institutional reputation: Institutional reputation refers to the recognition and rewarding of a business by its stakeholders. This trust between a business and its stakeholders is only achieved slowly (Kadıbeşegil, 2006: 59). The business and its employees gain different advantages from efforts to create a positive institutional reputation. Employees can increase their self-esteem while their loyalty and performance may increase (Demir, 2015) if they are satisfied with the institutional culture and working environment (Tan and Demir, 2018). Businesses can attract potential employees and increase their competitive power within the sector (Kara, 2013: 47).

Economic factors: The most significant economic factor is remuneration as wages, etc. The material content and the degree of saturation of the earnings offered to the employees affects many employee attitudes and behaviours, such as satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity.

Working conditions: Working conditions are an important component of the employer brand. Employees' hesitations in certain areas must be eliminated so that they can adapt to the workplace and perform efficiently (Terlemez, 2012: 34). In particular, healthy working conditions contribute to a positive employer brand, which increases the current employees' performance and attracts potential employees.

Social elements: In addition to performing their duties, a business's management and employees need to be socially

integrated and interact. It is therefore necessary for the business to carry out certain social activities and social responsibility studies. These activities in question should be varied to contribute to the formation of the employer brand from a different point of view.

These six dimensions comprising the employer brand are the independent variables for this study while choice of workplace is the dependent variable. Figure 1 shows the research model. The study tests the following six hypotheses:

H1: The perception of value created in the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.

H2: The career and development opportunities offered to the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.

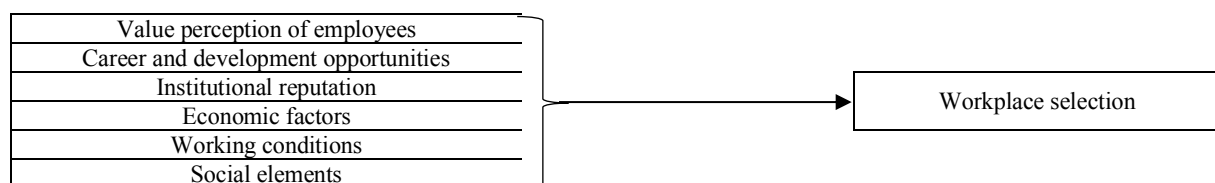
H3: The business's reputation as perceived by the employees significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.

H4: The economic benefits offered to the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.

H5: The working conditions to the employees offered by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.

H6: The social elements offered to the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.

Figure 1. Research model



3. Method

3.1. Research scale

Data were collected using a quantitative questionnaire as appropriate for the purpose of the study. The questionnaire form consisted of two parts. The first had open-ended questions to determine the participants' demographic characteristics. The second part had 48 statements about the employer brand dimensions affecting the participants' workplace selection. The participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree).

The statements about the employer brand dimensions were obtained from Demir and Demir (2016), Knox and

Freeman (2006), Maxwell and Knox (2009), Moroko and Uncles (2008) and Roy (2008). The statements from English-language sources were translated into Turkish by two academics who are experts in their fields. Two other academics then back-translated the statements.

3.2. Research population and data collection

The research population consisted of students studying in the tourism departments of Süleyman Demirel University and Isparta University of Applied Sciences. The survey was conducted in April and May 2019. After obtaining the necessary permissions, 550 questionnaires were prepared and distributed. All questionnaire forms were completed face to face. Of the completed questionnaires, 10 were received

empty and 27 were excluded for incompleteness, leaving a research sample of 513 questionnaires. This satisfied the requirement to reach the 95% confidence interval of the sample and to have at least five times ($48 \times 5 = 240$) the number of items to perform factor analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

The research data were analyzed using SPSS which was developed for quantitative research in social sciences. The validity and reliability of the measurement tool were tested while the participants' demographic characteristics were examined using frequency and percentage distributions. Factor, correlation and regression analyses were carried out to test the hypotheses to identify which employer brand dimensions affect the participants' choice of workplace.

3.4. Participants' demographic characteristics

Regarding age, 94.9% of the participants were 18-25 years old while 97.1% were single, 55.9% had graduated from other types of high schools and 44.1% were from tourism vocational high schools. Regarding work experience, 40.2% had less than a year, 29.2% had 1-3 years, 23.6% had 4-6 years. Finally, 67.4% had worked in hotels.

4. Findings

4.1. Scale reliability and validity analysis

Factor analysis was performed to determine the research scale's factor structure. As a result, several items were excluded from further analysis. Some lacked the appropriate properties and values, some distorted the scale's overall statistical structure statistically, and each of them taking place alone in the free grouping in factor analysis. Based on the factor analysis, 37 statements were retained under the following seven dimensions: employee value perception, career and development opportunities, institutional reputation, economic factors, working conditions, social elements and workplace selection. The seven factors explained 65% of the total variance. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin sample adequacy level of the scale was 94.5% while the Bartlett test result for globosity was 10974.9, which was significant at $p < 0.01$ level. Table 2 shows the correlations between the employer brand dimensions and employees' choice of workplace.

There were moderately significant positive linear relationships between workplace selection and perception of value for employees ($r = .659$, $p < 0.01$), career and development opportunities ($r = .647$, $p < 0.01$) and social elements ($r = .519$, $p < 0.01$). There were highly significant positive linear relationships between workplace selection and institutional reputation ($r = .729$, $p < 0.01$), economic factors ($r = .799$, $p < 0.01$) and working conditions ($r = .852$, $p < 0.01$).

4.2. Regression analysis and hypothesis testing

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether each employer brand dimensions affected

workplace selection. The results are shown in Table 3. The independent variables were the employer brand dimensions while the dependent variable was workplace selection.

4.3. Correlation analysis

The analysis indicated that only four employer brand dimensions significantly affect employees' choice of workplace.

First, career and development opportunities had a significant effect on Workplace Selection ($t = 2.02$; $p = .044$). That is, potential employees are more likely to choose a workplace that provides opportunities to work abroad, offers experience in different departments, arranges orientation programs that prioritize employee development, helps employees by making career plans, adopts a fair approach to promotions, and actually implements these policies.

Second, institutional reputation had a significant effect on Workplace Selection ($t = 3.11$; $p = .002$). That is, employees are more likely to choose a workplace if the business has a certain prestige, especially international recognition, ethical rules regarding its operations, an impression of trust, and being a place where employees want to work.

Third, economic factors significantly affected Workplace Selection ($t = 2.51$; $p = .012$). That is, potential employees are more likely to choose a workplace that offers attractive remuneration, pays wages and bonuses on time, and follows regulations regarding insurance compensation, etc.

Fourth, working conditions significantly affected Workplace Selection ($t = 11.6$ and $p = .000$). That is, potential employees are more likely to choose a workplace with a cooperative culture, a calm and motivating work environment, equitable, non-discriminatory workload distribution, technologically up-to-date working environment, and clearly defined working hours.

In contrast, perception of value to employees had no effect on Workplace Selection ($t = -.678$; $p = .498$). That is, it makes no difference to potential employees' choice of workplace whether management gives importance to employees, trusts them, helps them when necessary, cares about their opinions, creates a sense of belonging, or is sincere in attitudes and behaviour.

Similarly, social factors had no effect on Workplace Selection ($t = -1.39$; $p = .163$). That is, it makes no difference to employees' choice of workplace whether employees and their families participate in activities organized by the business or other organizations, or employees represent the business at these events.

5. Conclusion

Tourism is a competitive and growing sector that has increasing influence both locally and globally. Therefore, tourism businesses must adopt new techniques to gain a more advantageous position. One of these is employer branding. Businesses that give sufficient importance to their

own employer brand can benefit from multiplier effects to eliminate rival businesses. The first advantage of a positive employer brand is that the business can more easily recruit qualified employees. Once these qualified employees work in the business, they can provide customer services more

successfully, which increases customer satisfaction and ultimately ensures higher sales, greater customer loyalty, and the ability to outcompete other business rivals. To maintain this multiplier effect, the business must first recruit qualified employees and create an effective employer brand.

Table 1. Factor analysis results

Factors	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)
Employee value perception	6	.89	12.85	34.73
Career and development opportunities	6	.81	4.03	10.90
Institutional reputation	6	.86	2.14	5.79
Economic factors	5	.90	1.52	4.11
Working conditions	7	.87	1.32	3.57
Social elements	4	.83	1.12	3.04
Workplace selection	3	.86	1.06	2.87

General α =.95; KMO=.945; Bartlett's Test=10974.9; AVO= 65.05

Table 2. Correlation analysis results

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 employee value perception	1						
2 Career and development opportunities	.893**	1					
3 institutional reputation	.763**	.715**	1				
4 economic factors	.714**	.688**	.760**	1			
5 working conditions	.706**	.680**	.772**	.891**	1		
6 social elements	.576**	.601**	.507**	.591**	.610**	1	
7 workplace selection	.659**	.647**	.729**	.799**	.852**	.519**	1

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Table 3. Regression analysis results

Variables	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
	B	St. error	β		
Constant	.443	.107		4.132	.000
1 employee value perception	-.032	.048	-.037	-.678	.498
2 Career and development opportunities	.092	.045	.104	2.023	.044
3 institutional reputation	.126	.041	.127	3.115	.002
4 economic factors	.131	.052	.131	2.515	.012
5 working conditions	.625	.054	.618	11.606	.000
6 social elements	-.036	.025	-.042	-1.398	.163

Dependent variable (Workplace Selection): R=.863; R²= .746; Adjusted R²=.743; F= 247.163; p<.001

Table 4. Hypotheses results

Hypotheses	t	p	Result
H1: The perception of value created in the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.	-.678	.498	Rejected
H2: The career and development opportunities offered to the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.	2.023	.044	Accepted
H3: The business's reputation as perceived by the employees significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.	3.115	.002	Accepted
H4: The economic benefits offered to the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.	2.515	.012	Accepted
H5: The working conditions to the employees offered by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.	11.60	.000	Accepted
H6: The social elements offered to the employees by the business significantly affects employees' choice of workplace.	1.398	.163	Rejected

The correlation analysis indicated both moderate and strong positive relationships between workplace selection and the employer brand dimensions. The strongest relationship was with working conditions while the weakest relationship was with social elements.

The multiple regression analysis indicated that four employer brand dimensions significantly affected workplace selection: career and development opportunities, institutional reputation, economic factors and working conditions. In contrast, perception of value to employees and social factors had no significant effect.

Employees develop their career plans based on their own priorities before choosing which business to work in. Obviously, employees must develop their careers successfully to maintain a suitable level of welfare, meet their needs, and gain satisfaction, such as respectability, recognition and success. Therefore, potential employees evaluate businesses and employer brands in terms of the elements that can support their career plans through career planning, training and development, opportunities to gain experience in different fields, and periodic promotions based on clear criteria.

Various studies have shown the importance of these factors. Kesoğlu (2017), for example, concluded that promotion and career opportunities significantly affect organizational commitment. Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012) included the career and development factor within the functional dimension. They concluded that the employer brand should include opportunities given to employees to improve themselves. Melin (2005) found that potential employees especially prefer businesses that offer training opportunities. Likewise, Ambler and Barrow (1996) included career and development opportunities while explaining the dimensions of employer branding. Confirming the importance of promoting the employees' careers and development, hypothesis H2 was accepted.

Employer branding studies indicate that businesses need to gain the respect of their stakeholders on symbolic issues, such as employer reputation and employer image. In support of this, the regression analysis results indicated that the institutional reputation dimension had the strongest effect on workplace selection after working conditions. That is, employers give importance to the name of the business as a reference to potential employees, stakeholder trust, their international reputation, following ethical rules and being preferred by other employees.

Previous studies also confirm the importance of institutional reputation within the employer brand. Lievens et al. (2007), for example, found that qualified employees pay more attention to reputation while Cable and Turban (2003) found that recognition and reputation are the first factors that potential employees consider when choosing a workplace. Adler and Ghiselli (2015) also included employer reputation and image within the organizational dimension while explaining the dimensions of the employer brand. Hypothesis H3 was accepted, confirming that potential employees are

sensitive to a business's name, reliability, recognition and understanding, and their desire to add added value to their careers, guarantee their financial security, and benefit from the business's corporate reputation both in business and social life.

The importance of economic benefits, such as salary, bonuses, insurance and other compensation, vary between employees. Given its importance, many studies have included it as a dimension of the employer brand. Khoshnevis and Gholipour (2017), for example, found that economic factors comprise the most important employer brand factor for employees. Similarly, Öksüz (2019) found that economic factors, especially salary, are critical for employer branding, and this was confirmed by subsequent studies. Berthon et al. (2005), Maxwell and Knox (2009), Kimpakom and Dimmitt (2007) all included the economic dimension in employer branding. In line with previous research, hypothesis H4 was accepted. That is, potential employees are motivated by economic benefits to meet basic needs, gain prestige and social status, and be more productive.

Working conditions are important for efficient performance of workplace tasks. Given that they determine employee performance levels and their commitment to the job and the business, they are critical to helping employees throughout their career. Working conditions are thus a critical employer brand element because they increase employee motivation and help employees succeed at work and transfer this success to their social lives. Previous studies have therefore included working conditions as an essential element in employer branding.

Rampl (2014), for example, found that working conditions was the branding factor that employees most prioritized. Similarly, Öksüz (2019) concluded that the working environment is a key factor for employer branding and that working conditions are more important than economic factors for some employees. Burawat (2015) showed that working conditions creates expectations for employees and that the provision of working conditions in businesses affects employees. According to Sağır (2016), employee productivity and commitment increases if the working conditions reach the desired level. Likewise, Oğuz (2012), Lievens and Highhouse (2003), Kara (2013) and Jain and Bhatt (2015) all argue that employer branding should include working conditions as one of its dimensions. Finally, Demir (2011) found that working conditions significantly affect employees' intention to stay at work. In line with these studies, hypothesis H5 was confirmed, showing that working conditions are a motivating factor for potential employees.

Employee value perception and social elements should be included in the employer brand. However, Şahin (2011) and Şenel (2012) conclude that employees below a certain age cannot make a complete decision regarding their career plan and the elements they value. Therefore, their job commitment tends to be low. At certain ages, employees are more motivated by relatively concrete issues like economic

factors and working conditions. Therefore, they do not prioritize more abstract dimensions like perception of value. Accordingly, hypotheses H1 and H were both rejected in the present study.

This study, which aimed to determine the effect of employer brand on employees' choice of workplace, showed that Career and Development Opportunities, Institutional Reputation, Economic Factors and Working Conditions significantly influence workplace selection whereas Perception of Value to Employees and Social Elements do not. Thus, four hypotheses were accepted and two were rejected.

These findings have several theoretical and practical implications.

- Businesses need to give the necessary importance to the employer brand to retain existing employees and attract potential employees.
- Although this study suggested that creating a perception of value for the employees and social elements have no effect on the employer brand, businesses should consider the age range of their employees and determine whether they have such priorities when doing value perception and social elements activities.
- Career and development opportunities significantly affect the employer brand. Therefore, business should include relevant elements within the employer brand, such as training and development programs, business and human resources for employees, career planning, opportunities to work in different departments and abroad, and equitable in promotions.
- Businesses should consider elements like the business name, reputation, image, trust and attractiveness.
- Businesses should protect and implement fairly employees' rights regarding salary, bonuses, and regulations governing employee compensation and insurance.
- Working conditions should be designed to maximise performance and job commitment while tasks should be distributed equitably among employees.
- Businesses should develop plans to create employer brands.
- As the responsible department for employee-related activities, human resources should take more responsibility.
- To compete internationally, tourism sector businesses should be encouraged to work on employer branding.

Author contribution statements

The author declares that he contributed to the design and implementation of the research, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the article.

Disclosure statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the author.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researcher. This article is produced from the master thesis cited as "Yaşar, E. (2020). The effect of employer brand on the workplace selection: The case of hospitality businesses. (Unpublished Thesis), Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta".

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