The Role of Organisational Culture Traits on Corporate Image in Service Industry

Serap Sap[1]

Abstract

Organisational culture is a key aspect of functioning that impacts the company performance and effectiveness. It is formed by the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and behaviour of the employees that help the organisation to have a competitive advantage in the market. Scholar predominantly researches organisational culture from the managerial perspective that aims to understand the relation between the performance of the organisations including ROA, ROI, sales growth, and market share. However, organisational culture shapes the external perception of the organisation. Mainly, a shared organisational culture is reflected on the customers by frontline employees in service sector organisation. This makes organisational culture is a key factor that shapes the customers' perception affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, this research aims to conceptualize the organisational culture and its traits and explore their effect on the corporate image in the service sector context where human interaction is important. This study aims to extend the literature on organisational culture and corporate image with a new conceptual model. However, the limitation of the study is the lack of empirical research in testing the proposed relationships. Future studies may provide contribution to extend the current study with empirical data and model validation.

Keywords: organisational culture, corporate image, service industry

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[1] Dr., Faculty of Managerial Science, Abdullah Gul University, Turkey, serap.sap@agu.edu.tr, Orcid: 0000-0002-2560-4105

Hizmet Sektöründe Örgüt Kültürü Boyutlarının Kurumsal İmaj Üzerindeki Rolü

Özet

Örgüt kültürü, işletme performansını ve etkinliğini etkileyen işleyişin kilit unsurudur. Örgüt kültürü, işletmenin pazarda rekabet edebilmesine yardımcı olan, ortak değerler, inançlar, varsayımlar, tutmlar ve çalışan davranışlarından oluşur. Yönetimsel bir perspektif ile araştırmacılar ağırlıklı olarak örgüt kültürünün, aktif karlılık, yatırım getirisi, satış, büyüme pazar payı gibi organizasyonların performans göstergeleri arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamaya çalışır. Ancak örgüt kültürü, örgütün dışardan nasıl algılandığını da şekillendirir. Ortak bir örgüt kültürü, hizmet sektöründeki işletmelerde, ön saflarda yer alan çalışanlarla birlikte müşterilere yansıtılır. Bu şekilde, örgüt kültürü müşteri memnuniyetini ve sadakatini etkileyen müşteri algısını şekillendiren kilit bir faktör haline gelir. Bu yüzden, bu araştırma, insan etkileşiminin önemli olduğu hizmet sektöründe, örgüt kültürünü ve boyutlarını kavramsallaştırmayı ve kurumsal imaj üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, yeni bir kavramsal model ile örgüt kültürü ve kurum imajı literatürünü genişletmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ancak, çalışmanın limiti, varsayılan ilişkilerin ampirik olarak test edilmemesidir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, bu çalışmayı ampirik veriler ile modeli test ederek genişletebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: örgüt kültürü, kurumsal imaj, hizmet sektörü

1. INTRODUCTION

The service industry constitutes a major part of the world GDP (Alam, 2011). Service companies have the highest contact with the customers; therefore, in an organisation, it is necessary to have a unique culture with shared values, beliefs, goals, and norms that are transmitted directly to the customers by the frontline employees. For example, in a restaurant, customers have interactionswith the frontline employers to get the service by involving the process. Compared to the manufacturing industry, the service industry has dominated by the communication among humans. It is therefore not surprising that service companies have been giving more attention on creating a strong organisational culture that provides companies benefits from different aspects.

Service organisations reflect the organisational culture to their customers and this reflection shapes a corporate image in customers' minds. Although companies are aware of employee behaviours shaping consumers'perception about the organisation, how organisations can reflect the identity of the company through the organisational culture to shape perceived corporate image has not been fully understood. Therefore, this research aims at focusing on the service industry context where where there is an immense level of interaction between companies and customers in the process of service delivery. This paper further presents insights on the relationship between organisational culture and corporate image that have a strong impact on customer satisfaction (Davies and Chun, 2002).

The current research discusses that a unique and consistent organisational culture is reflected by the image in the service organisations to build a united reputation and traits of culture which are the key elements that form culture. Understanding how organisational culture traits affect perceived corporate image, namely customer perception about the organisation, should provide opportunities to marketing managers to enhance long term relationships with both employees and customers.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Service Industry Context

The service industry has dramatically grown all around the world over the last few years. According to Deloitte (2018), the service industry represents 74% of countries GDP in high-income countries and 48% in low- and middle-income countries. With the technological improvements in the manufacturing and agricultural sector, the service sector is the leading one that provides the highest amount of employment in the world more specifically, in OECD countries 70% of total employment is offered by the service sector (Deloitte, 2018).

With a sharp increase in the interest service industry, researchers focused on understanding how marketing helps service organisations to increase the customers' satisfaction and loyalty in

different areas such as education, banking, accommodation, etc. (Kushwaha and Agrawal, 2015; Famiyeh et al., 2018; Olughor, 2014; Shiu and Yu, 2010).

Service marketing has different features compared to product marketing. Although traditional marketing mix elements are formed from 4p (product, price, promotion, and place), they are found inadequate for the service industry (Shamah, 2013). Therefore, scholars identified three more Ps; people, physical evidence, and process (Kushwaha and Agrawal, 2015). These marketing mix elements have a more complex nature than products for different context and industries. Most currently identified 7 marketing mix elements (7Ps) provide opportunity to service organisations to have competitive advantage over competitors (Kushwaha and Agrawal, 2015; Grönroos and Helle, 2012). Having strong and effective marketing mix elements helps service organisations to have better customer service, higher efficiency, and effective cost reduction (Krasnikov et al., 2009). According to scholars (Kushwaha and Agrawal, 2015), people, physical evidence and process elements are more complicated elements and are more important for the services sector compared to other elements. According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018) 7 Ps of the service marketing mix; product; core and supplementary products are the elements that meet customers' need. Place refers to the physical or electronic channels that are used to deliver the service. Price refers to the payment that customers are willing to pay for offered service. Promotion is defined as using effective marketing programs to communicate with customers. The process is related to all operations to create and deliver the service. And the physical environment is the servicescape of the company in where service delivery is made. Finally, the people element covers the interaction with employees and customers during the service delivery process.

Although those marketing mix elements are all important for a successful marketing activity of the service organisations, the people element directly shapes the organisational culture and form the corporate image in customers minds. Parasuraman (1987) states that the organisational culture affects customer evaluation about the organisation and satisfaction during the service delivery process. Therefore, service organisations need to have a customer-oriented culture to achieve a competitive advantage while dealing with customers (Parasuraman, 1987). Besides, it is difficult to copy an organisation's culture as it has a unique and idiocratical identity (Parasuraman, 1987). Therefore, having a unique organisational culture helps organisations to differentiate from their competitors. The unique identity of the organisation is reflected on customers during the interaction by employees who are the front-line of the organisation. (Chelladurai, 2014). Thus, during the interaction, having good communication and creating a positive customer perception of the organisation is a prerequisite to have an organisational culture. To have a better understanding of corporate culture, the next section will discuss it more deeply.

2.2 Organisational Culture

The organisational culture which is also interchangeably used with corporate culture has been studied in various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, business, etc (Wilson, 2001). Organisational culture is defined as shared values, attributes, attitudes, norms, behaviours and beliefs in an organisation (Shiu and Yu, 2010). Hatch and Schultz (2001) define organisational culture as:

> *"the internal values, beliefs and basic assumptions that embody the heritage of the company and communicate its meanings to its members; culture manifests itself in the ways employees all through the ranks feel about the company they are working for".*

Organisational culture, vision and image are pillars of corporate branding. Having an alignment between those three pillars is important to manage a successful corporate brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). Organisational culture is a bridge between the organisation's vision and image that refers to the stakeholders' perception of the organisation. In the same vein, Balmer and Greyser (2006) identified culture as one of the important pillars of corporate marketing that denotes the organisation philosophy. Famiyeh, Asante-Darko and Kwarteng (2018) examined the moderating role of organisation culture between service quality and customer satisfaction in the banking industry context. They collected quantitative data from bank users and validated a new model. Their research findings show that service quality dimensions are significant contributory factors to the customer satisfaction. The organisational culture strengths this positive relationship that shapes customer loyalty. Therefore, building a unique organisation culture shapes the customers' perception of quality and provides positive outcomes for the organisation (Famiyeh et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020).

Balmer and Greyser (2006) define culture as an overall feeling of the employees towards organisation that creates a shared common value. Shared culture helps employees to identify themselves as a member of the organisation. It also helps employees to engage with other employees and the organisation (Balmer and Greyser, 2006). All shared values, beliefs and assumptions assist to derive a culture and these also help employees to feel connected while providing a reflection on customers. A precisely shared organisational culture helps employees to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organisation. This clear understanding positively affects employees' performance (Poku et al., 2013). Olughor (2014) stated that organisational culture is a strategic asset for organisations to have a competitive advantage. In the same vein, various scholars pointed out that organisational culture is a vital factor that affects the effectiveness and outcomes of the organisations such as employee commitment, loyalty, turnover rate, and employee satisfaction (Parasuraman, 1987; MacIntosh and Doherty, 2007; Ogbeibu et al., 2018; Martínez-Caro, et al., 2020; Khan et al,. 2020).

2.3 Denison's Organisational Culture Model

Organisational culture has a strong effect on company's performance (Denison, 1990; Khan et al., 2020) and effectiveness (Yilmaz and Ergun, 2008). To gain deeper insight into organisational culture, qualitative research has been employed to identify values and beliefs that shape the organisations (Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983). However, Denison and Neale (2000) develop an organisational culture model by collecting data from different levels of managers with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. According to the shared beliefs and assumptions in an organisation, four cultural traits are identified: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission.

Involvement has an internal focus and is more flexible traits that are explained with three indices: team orientation, empowerment, and capability development. The involvement trait is related to the degree of employees' contribution to the organisation during the decision-making process (Olughor, 2014). Similarly, consistency has an internal focus, but it has a more stable nature. Consistency refers to the united internal approach of the organisation to solve problems and achieve the organisation's goals in unexpected situations. Consistency has three indices, organisation core value agreement, coordination, and integration (Denison, et al., 2004). Consistency trait is related to how well and strong the organisational culture is identified and it is understood by the employees (Olughor, 2014).

Adaptability helps organisations to cope with external changes in a competitive environment. It is explained using with three indices: creating change, customer focus and organisational learning. Adaptable organisations listen to their customers to provide better products and services while learning from their mistakes and taking a risk to change (Denison, 2000). The mission is stable and defined as the organisation's future goals and visions. Having a unique identity helps organisations to have a strong culture. The mission is measured with the following indices: strategic direction and intent, organisation vision, goals, and objectives (Denison et al., 2004).

Figure 1: Four traits of Organisational Culture (Denison and Mishra, 1995)

External Orientation	**Adaptability**	**Mission**
Internal Integration	**Involvement**	**Consistency**
	Change & Flexibility	Stability & Direction

2.4. Organisational Culture and Corporate Image

Organisational cultures and corporate image are the critical factors of corporate marketing (Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Urde (2003). The corporate image which is also referred to as organisational image is an asset (Abratt and Mokofeng, 2001) that is the perception of the customer to the organisation (Davies and Chun, 2002; Tran et al., 2015; Ma et al,. 2021).

Corporate image is a mirror that reflects the organisation identity and culture to external stakeholders (Gioia et al., 2000; Juntunen et al., 2010). Having consistency between internal and external stakeholders' perceptions is vital for service companies where the interaction between customers and employees is high (Davies and Miles, 1998). A gap between the culture and image might damage the reputation of the organisation (Davies and Chun, 2002; Urde, 2003). An explicitly identified culture and similarly reflecting it to customers, enable the organisation to have a competitive advantage in the market (Chun et al., 2005). It also helps organisations to increase awareness and build trust (Tran et al., 2015), to have satisfied and loyal customers (Davies and Chun, 2002; Da Silva and Alwi, 2008). When organisation culture shapes the internal stakeholders' attitudes, beliefs, and values; they have all reflected the external stakeholders by the image. All in all, reflecting the corporate culture to customers in different ways increase customer satisfaction. The following examples can be given as follows; employees' positive attitudes toward customers, showing reliability, solving complaints instantly, giving recommendations to customers, helping customers to have an error-free service delivery process (Famiyeh et al., 2018). They will affect the perception of customers toward the organisation or corporate image.

3. RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

The starting point in developing an organisational culture and corporate image model has been explained within the corporate brand umbrella from an internal stakeholder perspective. Employees who represent the internal stakeholders of an organisation shapes the external stakeholders' thoughts about the organisation. The core value of the corporate brand started inside of the organisation that carried out the outside. Understanding internal perspective with organisational culture is crucial in corporate brand formation. Therefore, this research conceptualised a new model to stress the role of organisational culture on perceived corporate brand image. The new conceptual model is proposed based on the framework of Denison and Mishra (1995). The new proposed model emphasises the role of organisational culture traits and their effect on perceived corporate brand image. In this study organisational culture is conceptualized with four dimensions. Each of the following research propositions is related to enhance organisational culture traits and corporate image in the service industry context.

The adaptability of the organisation is vital for marketing strategy, and it has been considered a strategic tool to develop a long-term relationship with the customers (Brennan et al., 2003). That trait refers to the organisations internal capacity which help organisation to make a reply to external changes (Denison and Mishra, 1995). It is difficult to adapt operations when the organisation is highly internally focused (Lawrence and Lorch, 1967). However, adaptation has a relationship perspective that it is important to have internal adaptation to understand and meet customers' needs (Fey and Denison, 2003; Tarnovskaya et al., 2008). Customers expect the organisation to adapt its operations, product or service offers accordingly to their needs (Adamson et al., 2003; Stathakopoulos et al., 2019). By having a customer-oriented approach, organisations may have a strong relationship with their customers that positively shape the

perceived corporate image. While the product companies are mostly producing the standard products to keep quality at the same level, service customers prefer more customised service that increases their satisfaction. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between the ability of adaptability and perceived corporate image. The relationship among the adaptability trait and customer perception leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 1: In service industry, there is a positive relationship between the ability of adaptability and perceived corporate image.

The mission is the answer to "why the organisation exists". It shapes the future directions of the organisation, provides both economic and noneconomic goals and objectives in the short-term and shapes the vision of the organisation in the long term (Gillespie et al., 2008). Mission has an external orientation that aims to meet customer needs as a business strategy (Denison and Mishra, 1995; Jones, 2010). Therefore, developing a suitable mission is key for customer satisfaction that affects the customers' perception of the organisation. Thus, the relationship among the mission trait and customer perception leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 2: In service industry, there is a positive relationship between the mission of the organisation and perceived corporate image.

The involvement trait has an internal orientation, and its focal point is employees. Thus, successful organisations focus on increasing employee involvement to increase their satisfaction level at work. Empowering them to make the decisions, encouraging teamwork, and supporting their skill development process at work help employees feel more involved at work (Denison, 2000; Fey and Denison, 2003; Gillespie et al., 2008; Jones, 2010). Highly involved employees feel more responsible and committed to the work and focus more on solving customer problems and satisfying their needs. In service organisations, mostly customer needs to involve the service delivery process in where they directly contact the employees. Nguyen and Leblanc (2002) stated that the employees are the mirror of the organisation who share the organisation values with customers. Therefore, employees, their behaviours, appearance, competence shape the customers' first impression about the organisation (Nguyen and Leblanc, 2002). The importance of employees' involvement on perceived corporate image leads the following proposition:

Proposition 3: In service industry, there is a positive relationship between the involvement of employees and perceived corporate image.

Although the adaptability skills of the organisation toward external changes are important for better performance results, having consistent routines between the employees are important to have a strong culture (Sørensen, 2002). Organisational culture represents guidelines and rules that produce consistent behaviour in an organisation. Having a routine that minimizes the unexpected negative outcomes of a complex and unstable environment (Schein, 1995) consistency about core values, the way to solve critical issues, coordination and integration are
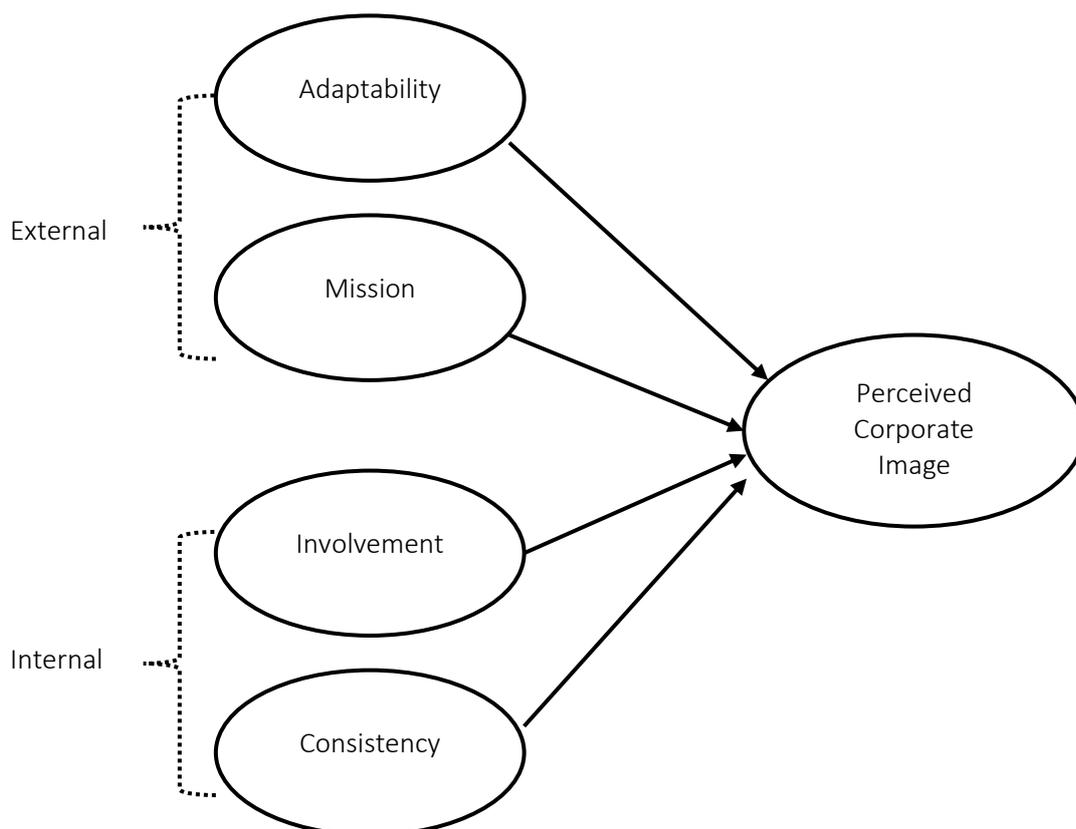
the keys to create an identity. Although diversity, adaptability is important for organisational performance in the long term (Denison, 1990, Jones, 2010), corporate branding scholars agree on having consistent organisational values which is also important to create an organisational culture (De Chernatony, 1999). Having and implementing the shared core values, systems and infrastructure at the organisation have a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Gillespie et al., 2008; Jones, 2010). This consistency help organisations to build a positive reputation and image among their stakeholders (Chen et al., 2020). Therefore, the relationship among the consistency trait and customer perception leads to the following proposition:

> **Proposition 3:** In service industry, there is a positive relationship between the consistency and perceived corporate image.

According to the relations discussed, the following model of organisational culture and corporate image is proposed.

Figure 2: Proposed model of organisational culture and corporate image

5. CONCLUSION

Organisational culture and corporate image represent the internal and external elements of the corporate brand. The core value of the corporate brand is firstly shared between the internal

stakeholder of the organisation. Employees who are the internal stakeholder of the organisation creates a culture with shared beliefs, values, and norms. The culture is carried out by the external stakeholders and shapes their perceptions. Delivering the right message to external stakeholders is the responsibility of employees to form a corporate brand.

In service organisations, front-line employees are the key aspect of the organisation to build relations with the company and its stakeholders (Wilson, 2001). The transaction between the employees and customers makes organisation culture visible for customers, thus having a consistent and unique organisational culture is required to build trust and to have a positive corporate image. Shared values, beliefs, and assumptions within the organisational culture between the employees shape the customers' perception of the organisation that affect their behaviour and intentions for the future (Kowalczyk and Pawlish, 2002).

Therefore, it is essential for the role of organizational culture and its traits to build a strong corporate brand. A new model is conceptualized based on Denison and colleagues organisational culture framework, which has been developed to further emphasize the role of organisational culture traits on perceived corporate brand image in the service industry context. The new framework proposed that organisational cultures are formed by four vital traits: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission (Denison, 1990). Although cultural traits are investigated to understand the managerial perspective, they also shape the external stakeholders' perception of the organisation. Thus, this research conceptualises the organisational culture in the service sector context to explore its effect on customers' perceptions. Understanding the external perception about the organisation may help the organisations to plan their future strategies to increase effectiveness and performance and build long-term relations with stakeholders. The current paper has a limitation. The model has not been tested with the data collection. Emprical studies can be conducted by collecting data from the customers to test the current relationship for the future studies.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR

Declaration of Contribution Rate: The author contributes the study on her own.

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