MAKÜ | Journal of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty

e-ISSN: 2149-1658
Volume: 11 / Issue: 2
June, 2024
pp.: 659-678

The Relationship Between Symmetrical Internal Communication, Employer Branding, Organizational Identification and Turnover Intention

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https://doi.org/10.30798/makuiibf.1410097

Abstract

It is accepted by both employers and academic circles that employees in the modern management approach are effective in the success of the organizations they work for. Employees also play a role in organizations creating competitive advantage. Employer branding practices in an organization at the point of creating a strong employer brand not only offer an attractive value package for qualified employees, but also ensure that qualified employees, who are an important competitive advantage for the organization, continue to work in the organization. Therefore, examining the factors associated with employer branding emerges as an issue that needs to be carefully evaluated for the sustainable success of organizations. The main purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between employer branding, symmetrical internal communication, organizational identification and turnover intention. 413 people working in Istanbul-based Turkish airline companies constitute the sample of the research. Quantitative research technique was used in the study and descriptive and relational scanning design was preferred. As a result of the research, a significant and positive relationship was found between symmetrical internal communication and employer branding, and it was determined that organizational identification mediated the relationship between employer branding and turnover intention.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Symmetrical Internal Communication, Organizational Identification.

Article Type	Application Date	Admission Date
Research Article	December 26, 2023	March 11, 2024

To cite this article: Yalım, F. & Mızrak K. C. (2024). The relationship between symmetrical internal communication, employer branding, organizational identification and turnover intention. *Journal of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty, 11*(2), 659-678. https://doi.org/10.30798/makuiibf.1410097

1. INTRODUCTION

Brand, whose origins as a concept go back to consumer goods, is generally defined from the consumer's perspective (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). American Marketing Association defines brand as "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers". The application of the steps taken and studies carried out towards branding in the field of human resources is called "employer branding" and organizations increasingly make use of employer branding to impact potential workforce and integrate existing employees into corporate culture and strategies (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Barrow and Mosley (2005), Sartain and Schumann (2008) researched brand functions from the perspective of employees through embracing the fact that brands do not only stick in consumers' minds but also in shareholders' minds (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). A successful employer brand not only contributes to attracting and retaining talented employees, but also increases production efficiency by encouraging and motivating existing employees and contributes to the continuity of business (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The employer brand not only increases the motivation of employees but also reduces their intention to leave by strengthening organizational identification. In addition to all these, employer branding is also a tool for the organization to achieve its strategic goals. If organizational identification is achieved, employees' decisions to accept offers from other institutions are prevented, even if the conditions are not very suitable (Kashyap & Chaudhary, 2019).

Employer branding is also a communicative and interdisciplinary process that creates a sustainable employer and employee relationship. This process is important for both current and potential employees (Aggerholm et al., 2011). "Communication" is the basis of employer branding efforts, and a strong employer brand consists of internal and external communication (Verčič, 2021). At this point, the external and internal communication systems of organizations should be structured with fact-based, consistent messages (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

Barney's (1991) Resource-Based Approach (RBA) considers the employer brand as an important tool that enables the recruitment and retention of employees, who are an important resource for it. At the same time, this human resource differentiates the business from its competitors and provides a sustainable competitive advantage. One of the primary goals of employer branding is to enable employees to identify with the organization they work for (Foster et al., 2010).

In this context, it is important to determine the elements associated with employer branding. The aim of this research, which sets out to examine these elements from the perspective of current employees, is to investigate the relationship between employer branding, symmetrical internal communication, organizational identification, and turnover intention. It has been seen in the literature that the relationships between these structures have been examined in separate studies. However, in the literature there isn't any study examining these variables together has been found. Therefore, research is important in this respect.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, effective use of resources is an important element in providing a competitive advantage for organizations. Resource-Based Approach (RBA) provides an important theoretical background for this study. The RBA suggests that organizations' own resources will be effective in providing competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Barney (1991) underlines the importance of human resources as an internal resource in creating competitive advantage today and defines competitive advantage as "an organization's implementation of a value-creating practice in a way that cannot be implemented simultaneously by its competitors".

In the literature, "employer brand", "employer branding", "employer attractiveness" are often confused with each other and used interchangeably. *Employer brand (EB)* is "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). A strong employer brand enhances the commitment of the employee to the organization, provides organizational identification and hinders employees' decisions for accepting offers from other institutions even if the conditions do not really appeal (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Another confused concept is *employer attractiveness (EA)*. Berthon et al. (2005) define EA as "the benefits that potential employees hope to obtain from the current implementation of an employer brand". *Employer branding (EBR)* is the practices carried out by the employer to increase employer attractiveness. Berthon et al. (2005) categorized the notion of employer attractiveness into five factors: namely, "interest value, social value, development value, application value and economic value".

Some of the studies on this subject refer to the importance of EBR for potential employees (Knox & Freeman, 2006; Theurer et al., 2018; Verčič & Ćorić, 2018). These studies generally focus on the issue within the framework of employer branding to attract qualified candidates to the institution (Knox & Freeman, 2006; Mosley, 2007). In various studies, existing employees and potential employees are reviewed at the same time, which is followed by comparing the results (Lievens et al., 2007). EBR does not only refer to reaching potential employees, it is about keeping employer promises at every stage of employee experience in the organization e.g., hiring, employment and leaving (Lievens & Chapman, 2019).

The EB, in terms of its content, not only points to the different aspects of the organization from its competitors, but also includes the unique features and opportunities of the working environment for employees. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore, within the scope of this study, the importance of employer branding for current employees has been focused on and the subject has been evaluated in this context. In this study, the concept of employer branding was discussed within the scope of the perceived employer attractiveness dimensions revealed in the study of Berthon et al. (2005), and how these employer attractiveness dimensions were perceived by employees was measured.

Due to the interdisciplinary and complex structure of the concept of *internal communication* (IC), there are different definitions made by different researchers in the literature (Kalla, 2005). IC is often associated with employee communication (Verčič et al., 2012). Employees are critical strategic groups of the organization (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Through IC corporate culture values are transferred to employees, internal information exchange is ensured, and internal relations are maintained. IC also provides employees with the information they need about their field of work, the institution they work for and its environment, and many more (Berger, 2008).

Thanks to IC in an organization, employees perceive the values of the employer brand. The IC system has the power to affect employees' feelings towards the organization, positively or negatively, and is a phenomenon that has an impact on the success of organizations in the long term and should be evaluated (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). IC is recognized by researchers and practitioners as a fast-growing area of expertise in communication management research (Lee & Yue, 2020; Verčič, 2021; Verčič et al., 2012; Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020).

Barrow and Mosley (2005) state that there are twelve elements in the employer branding process. These elements are internal communication, external reputation, senior leadership, corporate social responsibility, working environment, internal measurement system, reward and recognition, service support, team management, learning and development, recruitment and induction, performance evaluation. The responsibilities and importance of corporate internal communication in organizations today are increasing in the field of EBR (Verčič, 2021). Another important issue regarding corporate internal communication is about what this communication structure will be like. It is an accepted fact today that a successful internal communication system must be structured symmetrically.

Symmetrical communication that underpins understanding, cooperation, and responsiveness for forming long-term, mutual, and beneficial relationships (Grunig, 2006; Men, 2014) is considered as a paramount area of communication management. Symmetrical internal communication (SIC) is about listening to the wishes of employees, who are important stakeholders of an organization, and responding to their concerns and questions (Roper, 2005). Organizations are required to adopt a two-way symmetrical internal communication strategy to align their employees' thoughts, feelings, and actions with their own strategies (Albrech, 2011). SIC deals with "the principles of employee empowerment and participation in the decision-making process" (Hargie & Tourish, 2000).

In the symmetrical communication perspective, it is expected from individuals and organizations to use communication not to control the thoughts and behaviors of others', but to adapt their own ideas and behaviors to others' (Grunig & Grunig, 2006). Symmetrical communication also plays a persuasive role in achieving the goals of management (Men, 2014). In this study, internal communication is discussed within the scope of symmetrical internal communication.

In different research, SIC has a positive correlation with many constructs such as employee–organization relationships, job satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, trust, empowerment, loyalty, employee creativity, organizational identification (Jo & Shim, 2005; Kang & Park, 2017; Kang & Sung, 2017; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Smidts et al., 2001). As Verčič (2021) stated in his study the relationship of IC with many fields has already been examined, however almost no studies have demonstrated the relationship between IC and EBR. This study primarily aims to fill this gap. Starting from here;

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between symmetrical internal communication and employer branding.

Organizational identification (OI) is defined as “the individual's unity with the organization, defining himself as a member of that group, feeling himself belonging there, and taking credit for his successes and failures” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). OI is “the degree to which a member identifies himself with the characteristics of the organization” (Dutton et al., 1994). It is seen that the studies conducted in the field of OI, especially after the 1980s, are based on Social Identity Theory (SIT). SIT is based on the studies conducted by Henri Tajfel and his friends to investigate intergroup relations (Abrams & Hogg, 1998). Ashforth and Mael (1989), who discussed organizational identification within the framework of SIT, suggested that OI is a special form of social identification, and they define social identification as “the sense of belonging that an individual has developed towards a particular group”. Social identification is related to the individual's attitudes and behaviors. On the other hand, OI is related to the individual's attitudes and behaviors towards the organization (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000).

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) define EBR as “the process by which organizations build an employer brand identity to differentiate themselves from competitors. SIT suggests that when the organizational identity is considered attractive and unique by the employee, the level of identification of the employee with the organization increases (Lievens et al., 2007). If the person sees himself/herself as a part of that organization more clearly than alternative organizational identities and has some characteristics of that organization as a social group, then it can be said that the person strongly identifies with that organization (Dutton et al., 1994).

SIT suggests that employees leave their identities to associate themselves with the identity of the organization to realize the organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). The EB differentiates the business from its competitors by presenting a distinctive employer identity. When the employee compares the business, he works with other businesses, he will perceive the business as different and attractive from other businesses in line with the value propositions presented to him. This perception will enable the employee to consider the business as a “good place to work" and will therefore improve the level of organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). A strong employer brand improves the employee's commitment to the institution, ensures organizational identification and deters employees from leaving their posts for other institutions even if the conditions are bad (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). From this point

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between employer branding and organizational identification.

Turnover intention (TI) is defined as "a conscious and deliberate desire to leave an organization" (Tett & Meyer, 1993). It is about "the individual's departure from the organization and the search for a new job" (Gaertner, 1999). It is seen that studies on TI are based on different fields such as economics, psychology, sociology and management. (Gadot & Zion, 2004). One of the factors thought to affect turnover intention in organizations is EBR and OI. Literature review has revealed in many studies that EBR reduces employees' turnover intention, which is associated with improving OI (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; Priyadarshi, 2011; Rai & Nandy, 2021).

When the turnover intention results in leaving the job (job change stress, loss of seniority, etc.), many negative consequences arise for employees and (the cost of finding qualified personnel, loss of experienced personnel, decrease in motivation, satisfaction level of employees, increase in internal communication problems etc.) organizations (Mobley, 1982; Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980). Knowing the factors affecting the turnover intention is important for sustainable success in organizations. From this point;

Hypothesis 3: There is a negative relationship between organizational identification and turnover intention.

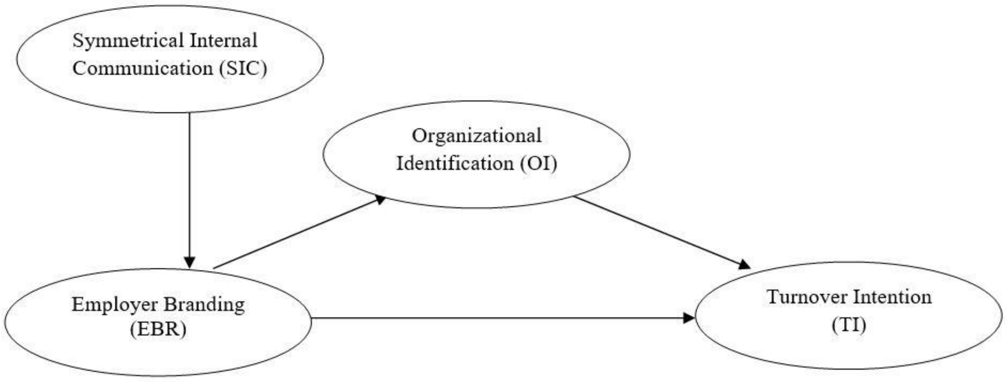
Hypothesis 4: There is a negative relationship between employer branding and turnover intention.

In addition to all these, Hypothesis 5 was created to test the mediating role of organizational identification in the relationship between employer branding and turnover intention.

Hypothesis 5: Organizational identification mediates the relationship between employer branding and turnover intention.

The Research Model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model



3. METHOD

Demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed using the statistical program SPPS 24.0. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was preferred to test the hypotheses within the scope of the study and SmartPLS 3.0 statistical program was used for this.

SEM is a statistical method that analyzes the relationships between variables to test hypotheses in scientific research. There are different approaches to SEM analysis: first generation and second generation. Among these approaches, the most common ones in academic studies are Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) and Maximum Likelihood (Covariance Based Sem/CB-SEM) approaches. Within the scope of this study, the PLS-SEM approach was preferred (Hair et al., 2017b) . "Unlike CB/SEM, PLS-SEM is a second-generation analysis method used to measure and test complex models consisting of many structures and variables" (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is a method that does not require a normality distribution and can analyze both formative and reflective variables, as well as variables measured by one or two indicators. It also provides ease of analysis in complex models and is also used when the sample size is small. In recent years, its use in brand-related studies has been increasing. (Hair et al., 2014; Henseler, 2010). In addition to all this, "PLS-SEM is increasingly recognized in brand management" (Mahmoud et al., 2021). SmartPLS 3.0 one of the leading software applications for PLS-SEM, was used as the analysis tool in this study.

PLS-SEM Measurement Model (outer model) and *Structural Model* (inner model) consist of two main components. While the Measurement Model defines the relationship between the variables and the scale indicators that make up these dimensions, the Structural Model is used to define the relationships between the latent variables of the research (Henseler, 2010). In this study, the Measurement Model (outer model) was evaluated with a two-stage approach, and then the Structural Model was passed.

3.1. Data Analysis

3.1.1. Participants

The population of the research consists of employees of Turkish airline companies whose headquarters are in Istanbul. 413 people working in these companies were determined as the sample of the research. A Random sampling method was used to determine the sample. This method is one of the probability-based sampling methods. The research was carried out according to the descriptive and relational screening design, one of the quantitative research designs, and the data were collected through an online questionnaire using the questionnaire method, which is one of the quantitative research techniques. The online questionnaire form consists of 5 parts. In the first part, there are questions about demographic characteristics, in the second part there are scale items about symmetrical communication, in the third part about the employer branding, in the fourth part about organizational identification and in the last part there are scale items about intention to leave.

Table 1. Sample demographics

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	164	39.7
Male	249	60.3
Job type		
Ground staff	203	49.2
Flight staff	210	50.8
Years of working in the company		
1-4 years	209	50.6
5-9 years	126	30.5
10 years+	78	18.9
Age		
18-29	155	37.5
30-39	230	55.7
40 +	28	6.8
Total	413	100

As seen in Table 1, 39.7% of the participants are women and 60.3% are men. While 49.2 of the participants are ground staff, 50.8% are flight staff. Among the respondents, 50.6% have a working period of 1-4 years, and more than half (55.7%) of the respondents are in the age range of 30-39.

3.1.2. Measures

The scales used within the scope of the research are listed below. In all scales, agreement with the statements was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree; 5- strongly agree)

The 25-item employer attractiveness scale created by Berthon et al. (2005) was used to measure employer branding. The functional, economic and social benefits included in the definition of employer branding by Ambler and Barrow (1996) were later taken as basis on the scale created by Berthon et al. (2005), and employer attractiveness was measured in 5 sub-factors and 25 items (Alnıaçık et al., 2014). Scale consists of 5 sub-factors. Social value (eg., “I have good relations with co-workers in the organization where I work”), economic value (eg “I am paid above average”), development value (eg, “This organization where I work is) a good stepping stone for my future career goals”) interest value (eg,“The organization I work for offers innovative services “and application value (eg, “The organization I work for attaches importance to human values and reflects this to the society”.

SIC was measured with 5 items adopted from Dozier et al. (2002) (e.g., “It can be said that the communication carried out with me within the organization is mostly two-way,” “Managers in our organization encourage employees to express different ideas”).

OI was measured with 6 items adopted from Mael and Ashforth (1992), (e.g., “When someone criticizes the organization, I take it as a personal insult”, “When talking about my organization, I usually use the phrase ‘we’ rather than ‘they’”).

TI was assessed with 4 items developed by Moore (2000) and Netemeyer et al. (1996) (e.g., “I plan to work in this organization for another five years”, I am currently looking for a new job”).

3.1.3. Normality Test

In the study, Skewness and Kurtosis values were examined as a result of the Normality test performed to determine whether the scales showed a normal distribution. Accordingly, Employer Branding (Skewness -.144, Kurtosis -.762), Symmetrical Internal Communication (Skewness -.064, Kurtosis -.639), Organizational Identification (Skewness .004, Kurtosis -.747), Turnover Intention (Skewness .067) , Kurtosis -.277), it is seen that the values of all scales are within +/- 1 limits and meet the normality assumptions (Hair et al., 2009).

3.1.4. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model shows the relationship between observed variables and the latent variables on which they depend. In the research model, the employer branding variable, which has five dimensions, is considered as a high-order construct. It represents the more general structure of the lower-order constructs measured reflectively. In the model; The employer branding superstructure consists of five sub-structures: social value, economic value, development value, interest value and application value. The relationships of the superstructure with its own substructure implicit variables should be tested. The measurement model was checked by examining the reliability, rho_A, validity values (Hair et al., 2014; Henseler et al., 2016). Since all the structures in the research are reflective, the measurement model was examined using the consistent PLS method (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015).

Table 2. Measurement Model Results

Factor	Indicator	Factor Loading	t value (bootstrap)	CA (α)	Rho_A	CR	AVE
EBR	**Social value**			0.805	0.820	0.813	0.593
	EBR2	0.844*	40.216				
	EBR1	0.770*	25.201				
	EBR5	0.689*	21.652				
	Economic value			1.00	0.802	0.802	0.574
	EBR8	1.00*					
	Development value			0.800	0.806	0.802	0.505
	EBR11	0.784*	35.543				
	EBR14	0.723*	28.178				
	EBR15	0.674*	20.965				
	EBR12	0.654*	18.874				

Table 2. (Continued)

Factor	Indicator	Factor Loading	t value (bootstrap)	CA (α)	Rho_A	CR	AVE
	Interest value			0.859	0.820	0.813	0.593
	EBR16	0.793*	44.283				
	EBR19	0.776*	33.922				
	EBR18	0.773*	39.042				
	EBR20	0.769*	29.036				
	Application value			0.832	0.834	0.833	0.714
	EBR24	0.867*	43.080				
	EBR23	0.823*	33.643				
OI	OI3	0.787*	17.443	0.772	0.784	0.776	0.538
	OI4	0.771*	20.237				
	OI5	0.632*	12.149				
SIC	SIC2	0.836*	16.254	0.886	0.891	0.888	0.615
	SIC4	0.817*	33.582				
	SIC3	0.803*	26.227				
	SIC5	0.767*	35.399				
	SIC1	0.689*	25.588				
TI	T2	0.775*	15.741	0.800	0.802	0.802	0.574
	T4	0.764*	17.054				
	T1	0.734*	15.742				

*p<0.05, two tailed, (t>1.96), Note: CA=Cronbach's α ; CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

Table 2 shows the results for measurement model reliability and convergent validity. For convergent validity, factor loading/external loading and average variance extracted (AVE) values were examined. Hair et al. (2019) recommends that the factor loading be at least 0.708 and that those below 0.40 be excluded from the model. Indicators with factor loads between 0.40 and 0.70 should be removed from the model by checking the AVE and CR coefficients. The extraction process can be terminated when the AVE and CR coefficients reach the desired threshold value. Within the scope of this study, indicators with a factor load below 0.40 were excluded from the model. Indicators between 0.40 and 0.70 were also excluded from the analysis one by one by controlling the AVE and CR coefficients. As seen in Table 2, factor loads of all indicators in the study were 0.60 and above. As soon as the AVE and CR threshold values reached the desired level, the measurement model took its final form. Consistent PLS Bootstrapping (subsample-5000) was used in the research model. The t and p values after bootstrapping are also given in Table 2. The results show that all indicators are related to the variables they are related to, and it is significant at the 0.95 confidence level. AVE values should be above ≥ 0.50. The values in Table 2 show that convergent validity is provided. For reliability in the measurement model, Cronbach Alpha-CA, which is the internal consistency reliability/coefficient, CR and rho_A, which is the composite reliability coefficient, should be ≥ 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 shows that these values are ≥ 0.70 and above. Therefore, it is seen that the reliability of the measurement model is stuck. Three values are used to test discriminant validity. One of them is cross-loading, the second is the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the third is the HTMT criterion (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3. Cross-loadings of the measurement items

	Social value	Economic value	Development value	Interest value	Application value	SIC	OI	TI
EBR2	**0.844**	0.561	0.622	0.697	0.705	0.650	0.388	-0.299
EBR1	**0.770**	0.402	0.546	0.687	0.607	0.620	0.390	-0.232
EBR5	**0.689**	0.437	0.618	0.493	0.566	0.567	0.401	-0.222
EBR8	0.609	**1.00**	0.639	0.698	0.622	0.560	0.331	-0.476
EBR11	0.571	0.475	**0.784**	0.687	0.756	0.504	0.578	-0.563
EBR14	0.455	0.481	**0.723**	0.638	0.616	0.507	0.568	-0.378
EBR15	0.519	0.412	**0.674**	0.571	0.534	0.399	0.519	-0.370
EBR12	0.655	0.446	**0.654**	0.479	0.543	0.472	0.375	-0.189
EBR16	0.574	0.577	0.724	**0.793**	0.643	0.646	0.462	-0.502
EBR19	0.641	0.517	0.620	**0.776**	0.626	0.722	0.391	-0.479
EBR18	0.627	0.556	0.589	**0.773**	0.652	0.768	0.455	-0.446
EBR20	0.706	0.523	0.683	**0.769**	0.695	0.586	0.445	-0.419
EBR23	0.751	0.554	0.719	0.733	**0.867**	0.733	0.557	-0.529
EBR24	0.625	0.496	0.749	0.686	**0.823**	0.571	0.664	-0.614
SIC2	0.613	0.463	0.544	0.782	0.639	**0.836**	0.452	-0.335
SIC4	0.676	0.483	0.503	0.741	0.599	**0.817**	0.385	-0.306
SIC5	0.627	0.379	0.532	0.634	0.632	**0.767**	0.496	-0.253
SIC3	0.664	0.428	0.514	0.692	0.650	**0.803**	0.329	-0.210
SIC1	0.535	0.443	0.513	0.565	0.505	**0.689**	0.419	-0.252
OI4	0.431	0.357	0.584	0.452	0.621	0.439	**0.771**	-0.353
OI3	0.411	0.265	0.573	0.425	0.528	0.372	**0.787**	-0.426
OI5	0.259	0.201	0.417	0.359	0.425	0.350	**0.632**	-0.376
T1I	-0.229	-.0325	-0.365	-0.429	-0.491	-0.285	-0.406	**0.734**
TI4	-0.258	-0.391	-0.430	-0.410	-0.486	-0.212	-0.414	**0.764**
TI2	-0.258	-0.365	-0.428	-0.509	-0.557	-0.292	-0.372	**0.775**

According to Hair et al. 2017(a), the coefficients of the superstructure should be ignored while controlling the diagonal loads. Therefore, diagonal loads of the EBR, which is the superstructure, are not included in Table 3. In the crosstab, each indicator should take the highest value in the related variable. When the indicator loads are examined, it is seen that EBR 12 has a high correlation with a different variable. However, there is less than 0.10 difference between the factor loading in the other variable. Therefore, EBR12 is not considered as a contiguous item and is left in the model.

Table 4. Discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion

	EBR	OI	SIC	TI	app.v	dev.v	eco. v.	ınt.v	soc.v.
EBR	**0.710**								
OI	0.658	**0.733**							
SIC	0.840	0.529	**(0.784)**						
TI	-0.586	-0.524	-0.347	**0.758**					
application v	0.976	0.721	0.774	-0.675	**(0.845)**				
development v	1.002	0.722	0.664	-0.539	0.868	**(0.710)**			
economic v	0.751	0.331	0.560	-0.476	0.622	0.639	**1.00**		
interest v	1.013	0.564	0.875	-0.594	0.841	0.841	0.698	**(0.778)**	
social v	0.956	0.508	0.796	-0.328	0.816	0.770	0.609	0.819	**0.770**

Table 4 includes Fornell-Larcker values. Hair et al. (2017a) state that discriminant validity should only be between first-level constructs and all other constructs of the model, but they state that it does not need to be examined between first-level constructs and second-level constructs. Therefore, the discriminant validity in Table 4 was evaluated on this basis. Here, too, the coefficients of the EBR have been ignored, since employer branding is a high-level variable. According to the Fornell-Larcker criteria, the dark values seen in the diagonal are the square root of the AVE value of the relevant variable and each must be higher than the correlation coefficients in its own row and column (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). When Table 4 is checked, it can be seen that some values in parentheses violate this criterion. Recent studies reveal that it is not always possible to meet this criterion. For example, the Fornell-Larcker criterion; it stated that it does not perform well, especially when the indicator loads on a structure are only slightly different (for example, when all indicator factor loads are between 0.65 and 0.85). The researchers suggested that the cross-loading and Fornell-Larcker criteria are insufficient to reveal the discriminant validity, and it was suggested to look at the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio between correlations. This value should be below 0.90 if the research model contains conceptually close variables, and below 0.85 for concepts that are far from each other in terms of content (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 5. Discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait-Ratio (HTMT)

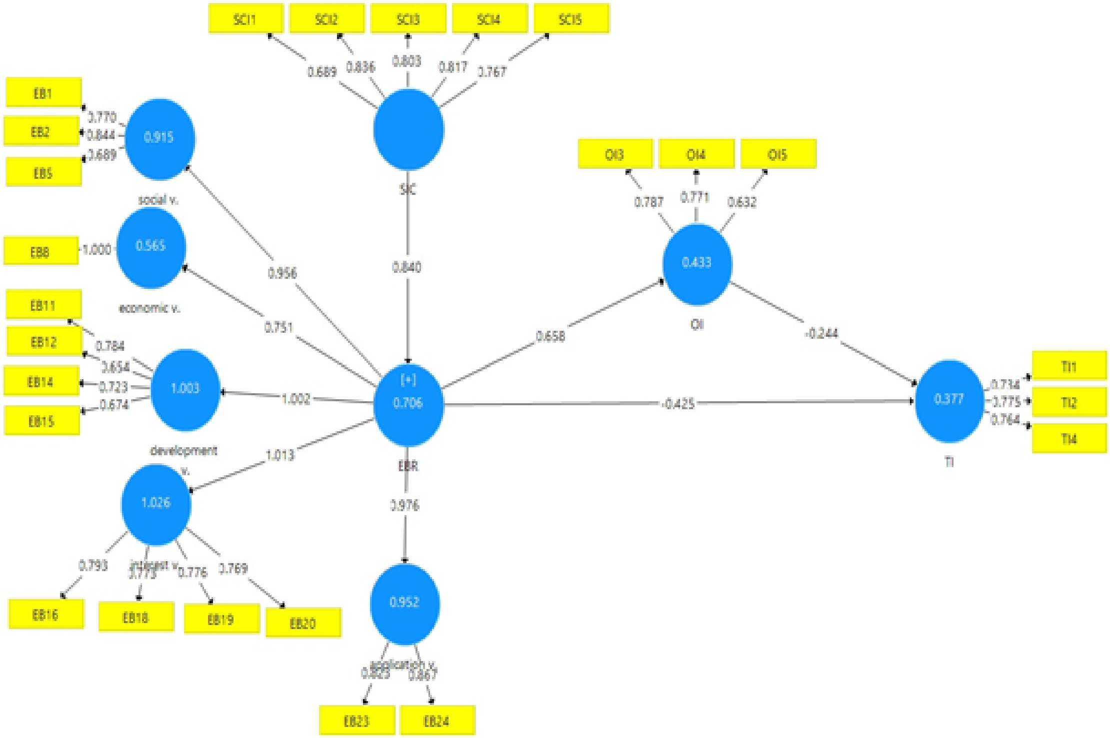
	EBR	OI	SIC	TI	app.v	dev.v	eco. v.	ınt.v	soc.v.
EBR									
OI	0.657								
SIC	0.842	0.537							
TI	0.578	0.530	0.349						
application v	0.968	0.723	0.775	0.678					
development v	1.015	0.719	0.671	0.531	0.867				
economic v	0.750	0.331	0.564	0.476	0.622	0.641			
interest v	1.009	0.566	0.877	0.594	0.841	0.839	0.699		
social v	0.972	0.512	0.808	0.330	0.821	0.790	0.612	0.823	

When the HTMT coefficients are examined in Table 5, it is seen that these values are below 0.85. For the HTMT coefficients, the coefficients of the high-level variable EBR are ignored.

3.1.5. Structural Model Evaluation

SmartPLS 3.0 was used for SEM. Figure 2 shows the model. In this study, the five-dimensional employer branding independent variable was reduced to one dimension in the SmartPLS.3 and the SEM was tested as a high-level model. The high-level model is often used to test models with two second-order building layers. In the research, the high-level model was used in order to avoid linearity problems between the variables and to reduce the number of relationships in the model. Regarding the research model; PLS algorithm for calculating linearity, path coefficients, R^2 and effect size (f^2); Blindfolding analysis was also run to calculate the predictive power (Q^2). In order to evaluate the putative path coefficients and the level of significance, the resampling (n= 5000) bootstrapping analysis method at a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval was used. (Chin, 1998).

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model



The inter-construct variance inflation factors (VIFs) values, which emerged as a result of the analysis performed to determine whether there is a linearity problem between the variables before proceeding to the hypothesis tests, are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Inter-construct variance inflation factors (Inter-factor VIFs)

	EBR	OI	SIC	TI	app.v	dev.v	eco. v.	ınt.v	soc.v.
EBR		1.00		1.763	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
OI				1.763					
SIC	1.00								
TI									

Since the variables are reflective, the linearity between the indicators (outer VIF values) is not at the focal point, the linearity results in the inner VIF values are considered. According to Hair et al 2019, VIF coefficients should be below the threshold value of 5, in order to avoid a linearity problem between the variables. As seen in Table 6, (VIFs) values are less than 5. There is no linearity problem between the research variables

Table 7. Explained variance (R^2) and the prediction relevance (Q^2) test

	R^2	Q^2
EBR	0.706	0.315
OI	0.433	0.216
TI	0.377	0.200

Table 7 includes R^2 values. R^2 values are considered weak if they are below 0.19, moderate if they are between 0.19-0.33, and substantial if they are greater than 0.67 (Chin, 1998). When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that the model explains 70% of the variance of employer branding (substantial), 43% of the variance of organizational identification (moderate) and 37% of the variance of the turnover intention (moderate). Table 7 also includes cross-validated redundancy measure (Q^2) values. Q^2 indicates whether the research model has the power to predict endogenous variables (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Blindfolding procedure was used to calculate the Q^2 value. The fact that this value is greater than zero indicates that the research model has the power to predict endogenous variables (Chin, 1998). Q^2 in Table 7 shows that the model has predictive power.

Table 8. Evaluation of the structural relations

Path	β	f^2	Effect	Standard dv.	t Statistics	Confidence Interval Bias Corrected 2.5%(LL)	97.5%(UL)	p-value
SIC → EBR	0.840	2.406	large	0.019	44.871*	0.800	0.875	0.000*
EB → OI	0.658	0.763	large	0.042	15.712*	0.573	0.736	0.000*
EBR→TI	-0.425	0.164	medium	0.070	6.091*	-0.559	-0.289	0.000*
OI → TI	-0.244	0.054	small	0.078	3.098*	-0.385	-0.085	0.002*

Table 8 shows the standardized path coefficient β coefficients, effect size (f^2), standard deviation, t statistics, confidence interval bias corrected values. In the research, t values were calculated with the Bootstrap method. 5000 subsamples were taken. Table 8 shows that all values are less than 0.05 at the 95% confidence level indicating that the hypotheses are accepted. SIC→ EBR meaningful and positive (β = 0.840; p < 0.05), EBR→OI meaningful and positive (β = 0.658; p < 0.05), EBR→TI meaningful and negative (β = -0.425; p < 0.05), OI →TI meaningful and negative (β = -0.244; p < 0.05) as affecting. Table 8 shows that t value is calculated as 44.871 in the SIC→ EBR path, 15.712 in the EB →OI path, 6.091 in the EBR→ TI path, 3.098 in the OI →TI path.

Since these values were not between 1.960 and 1.960 at the 95% confidence level (Hair et al., 2011) it was seen that all hypotheses were accepted. The effect size f^2coefficient shows the share of exogenous variables in the explanation ratio of endogenous variables. According to this coefficient, ratios of 0.02 and above are considered to have a small effect, 0.15 and above are considered to have a medium effect, and 0.35 and above are considered to have a large effect (Cohen 2013; Hair et al. 2017). The f^2 coefficients in Table 8 show that the SIC variable has a large effect on the EBR variable, the EBR variable has a large effect on the OI variable, the EBR variable has a medium effect on the TI variable, and the OI variable has a small effect. When the confidence interval bias corrected confidence intervals in the table are checked, it is seen that none of the path coefficients contain a value of zero.

Table 9. Mediation test results

	Total effect β	*t* statisti cs	Direct effect β	Indirect effect β	VAF *	p-value	Confidence Inter. Bias Corrected 2.5%(LL)	97.5%(UL)
EBR → TI (c)	-0.586	14.860	-	-	-	0.000*	-0.565	-0.290
EBR → OI (a)	-	16.098	0.659			0.000*	0.570	0.735
OI → TI (b)	-	3.139	-0.241			0.002*	-0.385	- 0.080

Table 9. (Continued)

	Total effect β	*t* statistics	Direct effect β	Indirect effect β	VAF *	p-value	Confidence Inter. Bias Corrected 2.5%(LL)	97.5%(UL)
EBR→OI→TI	-	3.109	-0.427(c')	-0.159	0.27	0.002*	-0.260	-0.057

*p<0.05 (t>1.96), * VAF (variance accounted for)=indirect effect/total effect (Hair et al, 2014), LL lower limit, UL upper limit

The method of Baron and Kenny was used to determine whether OI has a mediating effect between EBR and TI. The authors suggest that three conditions must be met in order to talk about a mediating effect. The first of these is that in the structural model without the mediating variable, the independent variable should affect the dependent variable (EBR→TI), in the structural model with the mediating variable, the independent variable should affect the mediating variable (EBR→OI) and the mediating variable should affect the dependent variable (OI→TI). Again, in the structural model with the mediating variable, if the effect of the independent variable (EBR→TI) on the dependent variable is insignificant ($p>0.05$), if the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (EBR→TI) is significant ($p<0.05$) and the beta coefficients (β) If there is a decrease, partial mediation effect is mentioned. These conditions are indicated in Table 9 as paths a, b, c, c'. When the results in Table 8 were checked, EBR→TI was meaningfully negatively (β=-0.586; $p<0.05$), EBR→OI was meaningfully positive (β=0.659; $p<0.05$), OI→TI was negative meaningfully (β=-0.241; $p<0.05$) as affected. When the mediating variable OI entered the model, the EBR→TI effect was negative and significant, and the β coefficient decreased (β=-0.427; $p<0.05$) Therefore, it can be said that organizational identification has a partial mediation effect on the relationship between employer branding and turnover intention. Hair et al. 2017 recommends calculating the VAF coefficient to test the significance of mediation effects. According to the authors, if VAF > 0.80, full mediating effect, 0.20 ≤ VAF ≤0.80, partial mediating effect. A VAF < 0.20 indicates that there is no mediating effect. The VAF (0.27) value in Table 9 shows us that organizational identification has a partial mediation effect between employer branding and turnover intention. When the confidence interval bias corrected in the table are checked, it is seen that none of the path coefficients contain a value of zero.

Table 10. Summary of hypothesis test

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Acceptance
H1	Symmetrical Internal Communication- Employer Branding	Yes
H2	Employer Branding-Organizational Identification	Yes
H3	Employer Branding- Turnover Intention	Yes
H4	Organizational Identification-Turnover Intention	Yes
H5	Employer Branding- Organizational Identification- Turnover Intention (mediating)	Yes

3. CONCLUSION

In this study, based on SIT and RBA, it was aimed to reveal the relationships between symmetrical internal communication, organizational identification, and turnover intention, which are thought to be related to employer branding. The relationships between these structures have been examined in separate studies in the literature. However, no study has been found that examines these variables together. Therefore, the research results are important in this respect.

In today's competitive environment, employees are considered an important resource for organizations. The basis of sustainable success for organizations is to attract qualified employees to the organization, as well as to ensure that existing employees identify with the organization and keep them in the organization. At this point, employer branding also emerges as a strategic concept for potential and existing employees. Employer branding emphasizes the features of the current working environment in the organization that are notable and different from those of its competitors. These features are considered within the scope of benefits offered to employees. While employer branding practices try to offer attractive value to potential employees about the organization, they also want to provide better and unique working conditions to current employees than their competitors.

Research results support the hypothesized relationships between empirically examined variables. In the analysis, it was determined that there was a significant and positive relationship between symmetrical internal communication and employer branding ($\beta = 0.840$; $p< 0.05$). In the literature, the relationship between internal communication and many organizational elements has been examined. It has been demonstrated in different studies that internal communication has a positive relationship with many areas such as organizational identification, job satisfaction, loyalty, employee commitment, positive employee communication behaviors, trust, empowerment, employee creativity, and organizational effectiveness (Jo & Shim, 2005; Kang & Park, 2017; Kang & Sung, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2021; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Smidts et al., 2001).

However, the relationship between employer branding and internal communication has not been examined in almost any study in the literature. Therefore, the result of the research is valuable in this respect. Because employer branding paves the way for organizations to remain strong in the competitive environment. The existence of this strong relationship between the two variables in the research results indicates the importance of creating an effective internal communication system in institutions. How the employer brand values are communicated to employees and how they are perceived by employees is an element related to how internal communication channels operate. The internal communication system plays a fundamental role in conveying the attractive features of the institution. At this point, feedback also emerges as a key concept. A symmetrical internal communication system also includes a feedback mechanism where employees can easily express their thoughts and problems. This two-way communication structure within the organization will positively affect the perception of the employer brand. Thanks to the feedback received from employees, existing practices within the scope of employer branding can be revised or new values can be created.

It has been demonstrated in different academic studies that a strong employer brand that will provide a competitive advantage to the institution brings many gains for organizations. One of these is that an effective employer brand increases organizational identification in employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Foster et al., 2010) and another is that a strong employer brand reduces employees' intention to leave (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; Priyadarshi, 2011; Rai & Nandy, 2021). Within the scope of this research, the mediating effect of organizational identification between employer branding and turnover intention was also examined. Accordingly, it has been determined that the indirect effect of employer branding on intention to leave is significant and that the relationship between employer branding and intention to leave is mediated by organizational identification ($\beta = -0.159$, 95% BCA CI [-0.260, -0.057]. Intention to leave is mediated by organizational identification. Quitting a job has many costs for the organization. Therefore, in today's competitive environment, no organization wants the qualified and experienced personnel who have been working within it for a long time and have been integrated with the organization to leave. Because organizations are aware that they cannot provide competitive advantage only with product and service quality in the current market conditions. Therefore, Qualified human resources have a strategic importance for them. The economic, social and developmental benefits offered to employees through employer branding and the values these benefits offer to employees can positively or negatively affect employees' perception of the employer brand. Therefore, the stronger this perception is, the more the employee will identify with the organization. and there will be no intention to quit the job.

This study has some limitations. One of these is that the subject was examined within a single sector. In future studies, comparative studies that include different sectors or even consider different sectors together can be suggested. Another limitation is related to the method. Only a quantitative design was used in this study. In future studies, qualitative studies, or a combination of both may be recommended to gain a more in-depth understanding of the subject. It is anticipated that this study will shed light on future studies on communication, public relations and employer branding.

For the study, ethics committee permission document dated June 29, 2022 and numbered 2022/27 was obtained from the Nişantaşı University Ethics Committee.

The study has been crafted in adherence to the principles of research and publication ethics.

The authors declare that there exists no financial conflict of interest involving any institution, organization, or individual(s) associated with the article. Furthermore, there are no conflicts of interest among the authors themselves.

The authors contributed equally to the entire process of the research.

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