

NEW PACE OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTICS IN DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

The information and communication technology, especially the Internet, and the social networking websites based on web technologies are changing our world both quantitatively and qualitatively in the transition from the information age to the digital age with the effect of globalization. The pace of the change that digitalization forces businesses and persons to continue their existence in a highly competitive environment. In this environment of intense competition, from a strategic perspective, being employable for employees and increasing the employee promoter score for businesses are crucial. To increase the number of organizational citizens (good soldiers, supportive employees) and provide performance management, assessment and evaluation implementations for efficient recruitment, the moderating role of impression management tactics via social networking websites in the effect of employee promoter score on employability was researched in the banking sector which is one of the sectors having the most intense atmosphere of uncertainty. As a result of the study, the moderating role of the impression management tactics used via social networking websites is examined with 241 employees in the banking sector which goes through an intense adaptation process regarding digitalization.

Keywords: Employability; Employee promoter score; Impression management tactics via social networking websites; Displaying social standing tactic.

INTRODUCTION

The uncertainty that capitalism has created on human resources with the transition to the digital age and at the same time the pressure of sustainable profit and competition on businesses has changed the circumstances under which employees and businesses exist. While the irresistible pace of change takes away the lifelong employment guarantee, businesses must provide the employment of the human resources who will make a difference in competition instead of unskilled labor, and employees must develop their competences in terms of being “demanded” and “searched” all the time (ILO, 2000).

On the other hand, communication channels are changing with the increasing effect of digitalization, and social media, which ranks first among the purposes of internet usage by 80.9%, has become an undeniable medium for both organizations and employees (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2016). People adopt various methods that can make them different apart from the information and experience they have on this new medium, and they initiate a struggle for controlling the impression they create on other people. In this environment of intense competition, the social cognitive theory defends the facts that the cognitive, emotional, biological features and environmental factors are in interaction with each other and this interaction plays a significant role in determining people’s next behaviors. According to the social cognitive theory, business life makes necessary the circumstance that apart from physically being in the work environment, one must be in contact with the important actors and social activities of business life as well.

At today’s organizations that survive in digitalized competition, the information and experiences that people gain bring along several abstract sharing that are also expressed as social capital. From a strategic perspective, the most important of these sharing is thought to be the fact that people build the reputation of their business, by which they are employed, in the eyes of other people as well and the positive effect

they create on others about the business. This concept is also expressed as employee promoter score, and has such characteristics that create results that are as important as influencing the brand value of the business instead of the employee just using the business as a career step.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Employability

In today's business life, it is not enough that employees have only professional knowledge and skills but also various competences, adaptive skills and talents about flexibility. Employability is defined as the skills of finding jobs, holding on to one's job and gaining a seat in the employment market, and it is emphasized that employability varies by the people's level of knowledge, competence, their ability to utilize these competences, their experience, their ability to exhibit their professional knowledge to their managers and the situational features of their work environment (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). Rothwell defined two types of the perception of employability as the employability within the organization and the employability outside the organization (Rothwell et.al, 2007). In today's intense competition environment, the Social Cognitive Theory defends the view that the cognitive, emotional, biological features, behaviors and environmental factors are in interaction with each other and this interaction plays a significant role in determining people's next behaviours. According to the Social Cognitive Theory, business life makes necessary the circumstance that apart from physically being in the work environment, one must be in contact with the important actors and social activities of business life as well (McKenzie and Curtis, 2001). Regarding the Social Cognitive Theory, because of the expectations of the people with high employee promoter scores to exhibit their competences to other people, to affect the images of others about themselves positively and to create the perception of employability for themselves, a sample is considered in which there is a significant positive relationship between employee promoter scores of people and their employability perceptions.

Employee Promoter Score

Under the market conditions where dynamics based on competition are decisive, the concept of customer satisfaction has an irreplaceable importance regarding the efficiency and performance of businesses (Geller, 2008). That is why, with the measurement system called "Promoter Score" in the article written by Reichheld (2003) for the journal Harvard Business Review, businesses increase day by day the number of "supporter customers" who recommend them, and focus on the customers who do not "recommend" and gravitate towards the efforts for winning these people (Husgafvel, 2011). This measurement system was developed regarding the studies of Reichheld (2003, 2006) and it is called employee promoter score, in addition it is thought to have positive results concerning both the determination of the loyalty and satisfaction levels of employees and the decision-making processes of today's executives concerning the decisions that make businesses have a sustainable level of profitability (Legerstee, 2013). The Social Exchange Theory was introduced by Homans (1958), and the theory emphasizes the fact that people take advantage of some determinants about continuing their social relations and they act according to the decision they make because of their reward-cost analysis. In his relevant study, Blau (1964) expressed that people are motivated through the wins they hope to gain and they can exhibit some voluntary behaviours accordingly. It is an expected outcome that the fact that people encounter "organizational supporters" who will affect the perceptions, which will emerge about their careers, at the business they work or they plan to work leads them to get in a positive mood for the business they work and because of this win they gain, to exhibit voluntary behaviours. Thus, it is also possible to expect that this circumstance raises the sense of belonging and goal congruence of people for the business they work for, and in addition, according to the reciprocity principle, people exhibit some supportive behaviours that can affect the thoughts of other people about their business.

H1: The employee promoter score affects the employability perception significantly.

The Impression Management Tactics Used Via Social Networking Websites

The creators of the impression management tactics scale are Bolino et.al, and they define these tactics as the organizational behaviours that an employee exhibits to increase the positive perspectives, which he/she has created until that day, in the eyes of his/her colleagues and to remove the negative perspectives – if any (Bolino et.al, 2008). Apart from the impression management tactics that are utilized through face-to-face communication, the usage of virtual tactics for which social networking websites form a basis is also thought to have reached a remarkable amount (Cide Demir, 2016).

In their relevant study dated 2003, Hazer and Jacobson shared the finding that there is a positive relationship between the impression management tactics that people use and their employability levels. On the other hand, in her study, Wittekind (2007) concluded that the positive perception that people create about their own work profiles can influence the preferability of them by other employees as well. Thus, within the scope of the research model, a meaningful relationship is thought to exist between people's usage of impression management tactics and their employability skills.

According to the Social Exchange Theory that Homans (1958) introduced, the multilateral personality traits of people may guide them to behave in diverse ways at various times and in different environments, and this fact reveals that people exhibit their self-images they choose as they like instead of pretending. At this point, it can be an expected result within the scope of this study that the people who successfully use the impression management tactics distinguish in the eyes of their executives as more successful, talented or sophisticated and gain some financial or moral profits accordingly. Likewise, based on the studies of Bolino et.al (2006) and Chen and Feng (2008), it is possible to suggest that the employees who use impression management tactics mostly make a positive impression on other people and this positive impression can be a tool for these people to provide their employability. The used tactics “achieving their goals” and “gaining acceptance” in the eyes of other people as well can reinforce the belongingness of these employees to their organization and increase their loyalty. That is why, a meaningful relationship between net promoter score, which is defined as people giving others positive feedback about the business they work for, and perceived employability is thought to exist within the context of the sample. People do not only proceed in the direction that the business they work for show them but also, they are thought to engage in some works like using impression management tactics that can have a positive effect on their career successes (Hall and Chandler, 2005). For that reason, people's usage of impression management tactics is thought to have a moderating effect between their employee promoter score and their employability perceptions which is the dependent variable of the study. The employability perceptions of people are defined as the ability of people finding jobs, their ability to stay in these jobs and their ability to find new jobs and therefore gaining a seat in the employment market.

H2: The impression management tactics used via social networking websites have a moderating effect on the relationship between employee promoter score and employability perception.

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

Within the scope of the study, the white-collar employees working in the banking sector in the province of Istanbul, Turkey were included in the research, and questionnaires were handed out to 400 employees with the snowball sampling method from the date December 1, 2016. 300 evaluable questionnaires were obtained until the date January 15, 2017. 59 of the questionnaires were observed to be deficient and excluded. The collected data were analyzed with the SPSS 20.0 statistical software package and evaluated.

Analyses

To collect data for the study, the Employee Promoter Score Scale composed of two items which was developed by Legerstee (2013), the Impression Management Tactics measurement tool composed of totally 19 items which was developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999) and which was adapted by Cide Demir (2016), and the Perceived Employability Scale composed of 11 items which was developed by Rothwell et.al (2007) were utilized. The utilized scales were measured with 6-point grading system from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Since the Cronbach's Alpha value of all the questions is 0.913 as a result of the reliability analysis, the questionnaire has been considered as very reliable (Kalaycı, 2009).

Findings

The answers to the demographic questions, which aimed to get to know the participants, were subjected to frequency analysis. 44.2% of the participants are women and 55.8% of them are men; 60.4% of them are single and 39.6% of them are married; 3.8% of them are high school graduates, 4.6% of them are college graduates, 65.4% of them are university graduates, 25% of them have master's degree and 1.3% of them hold PhD degree. The average age of the participants is 34.20, their average term of employment in their current jobs is 8.43 years and their average term of employment in their working lives is 12 years.

Table 01. Correlation Analysis

	Ave	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
EPS	2,71	1,067	(.73)								
SPROAM	1,75	,937	,261**	(.90)							
EXEMP	2,37	,982	,263**	,522**	(.93)						
INGRT	2,26	,944	,290**	,615**	,595**	(.90)					
DSST	1,99	,923	,240**	,541**	,462**	,551**	(.90)				
IMP	2,09	,769	,324**	,822**	,799**	,849**	,781**	(.93)			
PE-O	3,54	1,058	,368**	,058	,170**	,143*	,080	,140*	(.86)		
PE-I	3,93	,769	,293**	,094	,233**	,175*	,168**	,207**	,375**	(.71)	
PE	3,73	,761	,403**	,088	,235**	187*	,141*	,201**	,884**	,765**	(.83)

Notes: a) EPS= Employee Promoter Score; SPROAM= Self Promotion; EXEMP= Exemplification; INGRT= Ingratiation; SP= Displaying Social Standing Tactic; IMP= Impression Management Tactics via Social Networking Websites; PE= Perceived Employability; PE-O= Perceived Employability (Outside); PE-I= Perceived Employability (Inside) b) Reliabilities are noted in bold on the main diagonal. c) * $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$

According to the results attained, the variables have come under the factors employee promoter score, perceived employability (*within and outside the organization*) and impression management tactics via social networking websites (*endearing by introducing one's qualifications, making one look like an ideal employee, endearing oneself to people by dignifying others and displaying social standing*) as they were foreseen. The variables which have factor loads less than 0.50 (three variables) were excluded from factor analysis. The determined factors explain 71.85% of the total variance (KMO sample adequacy criterion: 0.895; Bartlett's Sphericity Test: 4379.531; DF: 378; $p < 0.000$). The Cronbach's Alpha values vary between 0.71 and 0.93.

The averages reveal the fact that the employee promoter scores of the participants, the impression management tactics they use on social networking websites and their perceived employability dimensions range between the values 2 and 4 in the Table 1. The standard deviation values of the variables were calculated between 0.761 and 1.067, therefore it is possible to conclude that the amount of variability between these variables is at an adequate level for a valid analysis (Yilmaz, 1999; Alpkın et.al, 2005). Within the scope of the sample, the correlation coefficients reveal that there are significant and strong one-to-one relationships between the variables with 5% error rate (r has values between 0.141* and 0.403**). Employee promoter score and perceived employability has the strongest relationship with each other.

Table 2. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable:			
Perceived Employability	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control Variable			
Age	-,065	,013	,022
Gender	,100	,034	,016
Tenure	-,045	-,090	-,080
Main Effect			
EPS		,251***	,280***
IMP		,108	,075
Interaction Effect			
EPS*IMP			,166*
R ²	,022	,108	,133
ΔR^2	,022	,086	,025

Notes: Notes: a) EPS= Employee Promoter Score; IMP= Impression Management Tactics via Social Networking Websites; PE= Perceived Employability. b) * $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$

Within the context of the sample, the examination of the effect of employee promoter score on perceived employability exhibit that employee promoter score ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.01$) has a positive and significant effect on perceived employability (H_1 hypothesis is supported).

Within the scope of the sample, the moderating role of the impression management tactics used via social networking websites was examined with hierarchical regression analysis in the relationship between employee promoter score and employability perception. In Model 1, the control variables age, gender and experience were included in the model. In Model 2, the control variables, Employee Promoter Score (EPS) and Impression Management Tactics via Social Networking Websites (IMTSNW) were included in the research model. While EPS ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.001$) has a positive and significant effect on perceived employability, no effect of IMTSNW ($\beta = 0.108$, n.s.) on perceived employability was observed. In Model 3, the control variables, EPS, IMTSNW and the product term (EPS* IMTSNW) were included in the model. While EPS ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.001$) has a positive and significant effect on EPS*IMTSNW ($\beta = 0.166$, $p < 0.05$), IMTSNW ($\beta = 0.108$, n.s.) has no effect. According to the significant increase in the R^2 value, IMTSNW is observed to have a moderating effect in this relationship. Because of the significant change in the interactional term and its contribution to the perceived employability variance, the impression management tactics used on social networking websites (IMTSNW) are determined to have a moderating role in the relationship between employee promoter score (EPS) and perceived employability within the scope of the sample (H_2 hypothesis is accepted).

As a result of the slope test (Aiken and West, 1991; Preacher et al., 2006), which was performed to research the form of interaction, also to reveal that it is in the assumed form and if it is zero or not, the impression management tactics used on the social networking websites (IMTSNW) are determined to have a moderating role in the relationship between employee promoter score and perceived employability. In addition, the individuals who use high level of impression management tactics on social networking websites are revealed to have high incidence of employability.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study reveal that the impression management tactics used on social networking websites are determined to have a moderating role in the relationship between employee promoter score and perceived employability within the scope of the sample.

Hazer and Jacobson found in their 2003 study that the impression management tactics used can affect the self-employability perception of a person, and Wittekind found in her 2007 research that the impression management tactics used can affect the perceptions of other employers about a person's employability. These results support the findings of this study. In that sense, as it is suggested in the research of Crane and Crane dated 2002, this study also suggests the utilization of a performance evaluation system by executives which contains objective and measurable criteria and in which everybody can observe who does what to avoid the negative consequences of the usage of these kinds of tactics by the employees in the organizational life.

Today's businesses in the digital age, which follow the strategies of being the most preferred brand for employees and increasing their organizational citizens, they are thought to have the competences of transferring the people with high employee promoter scores to other organizations and businesses also are thought to utilize the people with high employee promoter scores by employing them to support the efforts to increase the number of these people at the business. In addition, determining the people with low employee promoter scores by this means and taking the necessary actions accordingly become more important day by day. Inefficient employees increasingly become a cost element for businesses and this is regarded as a big obstacle in front of a sustainable growth.

Since employee promoter score is based on the perceptions of employees in the sense of the extensive usage of social media, the measurement and evaluation of employee promoter score should not be based only on satisfaction and promoter but also concurrent loyalty and commitment variables, and this is thought to provide convenience regarding the usage of this concept in all sectors. The sharing on social media containing promoter by especially senior executives and board of directors will set an example for such an increase. The positive effect that is created with the help of the reward and incentive practices to increase the number of employees having high employee promoter scores can motivate businesses to allocate resources for researching this concept more.

The limitations of the study are described as the facts that no sectors except the banking sector is included in the study, the persons who are responsible of recruitment practices are out of the scope of the study and the subjective way of evaluation due to the collection of the research data from a single source.

For subsequent researches, long-termed field researches that aim to measure the long-termed effects of digitalization and proceeding with a wide-ranging model which presents the antecedents and successors of employee promoter score and which can carry out comparative evaluations with business results are suggested.

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