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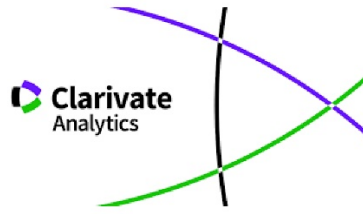
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A RESEARCH ON THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PERCEIVED CORPORATE IMAGE AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

According to the studies of organizational behavior theoreticians along the recent three decades, it is remarkable that organizations have tried to establish more meaningful relationships and stronger connection with their employees and they strive effort to strengthen the connection that already exist. In the core of these attempts, it is expected from employees to like their jobs, to feel commitment and loyalty towards their workplace and to be on the side of their organization when they encounter difficult circumstances and conflicts caused by differences, expect from employees to be proud of their work and work place. Organizational identification is considered as remarkable concept to address these expectations. In the present study which considers the relationship between corporate image and organizational identification, a survey method was utilized in collection of study data; then they were analyzed by means of arithmetic mean, correlation, regression and varyans analyses methods. According to the study findings, it was concluded that there is significant positive correlation between perceived internal and external image and organizational identification; and that both sub-dimensions of corporate image were positively effective on organizational identification.

Keywords: Image, Corporate Image, Identification, Organizational Identification, Organizational Behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, corporate image has been one of the significant subjects within the domain of management and organization. Especially under competitive environment of the contemporary period, organizations are required to take drawing a positive image before all stakeholders and the fact that it has been significant factor influent on organizational life through long-term relationships into consideration. A well-established corporate image is prerequisite of commercial relationships. Within the atmosphere of business world in which severe impact of globalization is felt, each step taken and each decision made by organizations result in undeniable impact on employees, customers given service, business partners, competitors and shortly all internal and external stakeholders. On the other hand, stakeholders could determine the future of organizations by gaining impression about the organization on the basis of what organizations made and state.

Olins (1999) describes corporate image as a phenomenon composed of belief, opinion, sense and information identified with an organization as a result of all activities of its activities (Dinnie, 2004: 3). In this sense, corporate image is not just a title or logo. Corporate image, instead of title of an organization, is considered as beliefs and senses of parties both from inside and outside of an organization about how they view the organization (Abratt, 1989: 68).

On the other hand, although organizational identification is not a new concept, it has been a significant variable for organizational behavior studies. In this regard, organizational identification has been viewed by researchers and practitioners as “desired connection” between individual and their organization (Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 21; Dutton et al., 1994: 239; Whetten and Godfrey, 1998: 245-246). In other words, organizational identification is considered as degree of integration between basic identification characteristics of an organization and personal identity of organization member (Dutton et al., 1994: 239-241).

Organizational theoreticians address that corporate image perceived by employees of an organization has substantial impacts on organizational identification. In relevant studies, it is reported that corporate image establishes psychological connection between employees and organization and allow identification of employees with their organization by enhancing cooperation and sense of organizational trust. In the literature, identification concept is evaluated by number of studies reporting about meaning of organizations in the eyes of individuals, loyalty and commitment felt towards organizations and degree of loyalty, direction of individuals and their desire to move on with their organization (Dutton et al., 1994: 239-263; Scott et al., 1998: 298-336; Smidts et al., 2001: 1051-1062; Dukerich, 2002: 507-533; Ashforth et al., 2008: 325-374).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Identification Concept

It can be observed that lexical meaning of “identification” word is used for two different reference: the first one is the process of participation into others’ life and sharing their emotions experienced by a person such that this process result in coalescence of their personalities; the second one is raising awareness and description of a person about self (www.tdk.gov.tr). Emergence of identification phenomenon requires person to have similarity, membership and loyalty feelings. Similarity refers having share interests and purposes with other individuals. Membership refers having solidarity feeling such that they can feel sense of belong. On the other hand, loyalty can be defined as inter-dependence among individuals to support and defend common purposes and policies share with others (Gautam et al., 2004: 302).

An existing confusion is observed with definition of the identification concept. Whereas some researchers take organizational identification and identity together in the same meaning (Albert et al., 2000: 13-14; Haslam et al., 2003: 357), some others differentiate organizational identification and identity from each other (Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 21; Scott et al., 1998: 298-308; Dukerich et al., 2002: 507-533). Similarly, whereas some researchers suggest that organizational identification and commitment refer the same meaning (Riketta, 2005: 359-361), some of them address that they are different from each other in terms of empirically (Gautam et al., 2004: 310-311; Van Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006: 373-381; Ellis, 2008: 6). Indeed, it is necessary to distinguish identification from identity, commitment and internalization. When identification is differentiated from identity concept, at this point it is possible to state that identity is “individual’s or organization’s itself”; organizational identification is “perception of individuals themselves together with their organizations and viewing success or failures of their organization like their own” (O’Reilly and Chatman, 1986: 492-496; Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 21-34). With regard to differentiation from commitment



concept, it is possible to suggest that whereas commitment is related more with attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction; identification is related more with internal factors such as giving upon own interest for the sake of interests of organization or undertaking additional roles in organization (Ashforth et al., 2008: 333-334).

On the other hand, for identification and internalization concepts, Boros address by relying on studies of Levinson (1970), Ashforth and Mael (1989) that although identification is a perceptual concept, internalization is that coalescence of principles which guide personal behaviors and attitudes and values of the group where person belong or nesting with each other. Furthermore, recognition of social category where persons belong to as a personal dimension does not mean that they acknowledge values or attitudes of that group. Again, while identification implies a unique situation for organization; this situation may not apply to internalization and commitment concepts because of purposes and values shared. Indeed, each organization has different common organizational purposes and values. Commitment may arise as a result of a tool created by person for their personal career pursuits; and this person could abandon his group for another organization which satisfies all of his personal interests. In other words, individuals could replace their organizations with another social group in order to increase their personal benefits. However, for a person who is identified with a certain social group, it is not possible to leave his organization without “spiritual loss” (Boros, 2008: 3).

2.2. Organizational Identification Concept

Identification concept was used in the literature first to define the connection between global policies and personal attitude and behaviors and as concept relevant with psychological, sociologic and communication by an American political scientist Harrold Lasswell (1935). Lasswell defined identification concept as a process guided by emotional ties established with other people and in which resemblance perception arise; and stated that such a tie could only arise abundance of shared symbols and relationships (Cheney et al., 2010: 113; Tokgoz and Aytemiz Seymen, 2013: 63).

Organizational identification concept was first introduced to the literature by Edward Tolman (1943) and defined as “engagement of a person with a group which he/she feel like part of them”; in the context of this definition, Tolman describes the relationship between identification and group as that identified groups feel that they are part them; and thus, future of group becomes future of individual, purpose of group becomes purpose of individual, success or failure of group become success or failure of individual; and finally, prestige of group becomes prestige of person (Kose, 2009: 2).

Basically, it is possible to state that organizational identification arose when organization members start to characterize themselves in terms of their relationship with their organizations (Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 22-23; Dutton et al., 1994: 240). In this relationship, organizational identification concept is generally defined as “as a cognitive structuring, harmony between values of organization and persons; or being part of organization or feeling of person in the same entity with his/her organization, feeling belonging” (Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 34); and referred as coalescence of individual and his/her organization; or cognitive engagement of person with values and purposes of organization (Buchanan, 1974: 533).



In 1980s, upon consideration of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1985) by organizations, identification concept was introduced to the relevant literature from new point of view as “shared identity” (Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 23). Boros (2008: 2) claims that approaching identification concept from social identity theory was the most remarkable advancement in social sciences in the last two decades. From the point of this theory, Tajfel (1982: 2) describes identity as “an element of social context of a person which derives from personal knowledge, membership of social group or groups and their engagement to this membership in terms of sense and values”. On the other hand, Bartels emphasizes Tajfel’s (1972) statement that identity of an individual is considered not only by their personal characteristics, but also by their group or organization which they belong. Membership of group means that individuals share some feelings and values which belong to these groups. This situation contributes positively into personal identities of members and enhances their self-confidence. In this process, this functional process introduced by being member of an organization through identity is called identification with organization (Bartels et al., 2007: 173).

With the same point of view, Pratt (1998: 194) claims that organizational identification arises under two conditions: when 1- individual perceives that organization identity is significant element of his/her own; and 2- individual start characterizes him/herself by identity of his/her organization. In the head, organizational identification “establishing an attitudinal, behavioral (Miller et al., 2000: 629) deep affective and cognitive (Dutton, et al., 1994: 242; Edwards, 2005: 207-220) connection between self-definition of a person and definition of his/her organization.

Individual who are identified with their organizations structures a strong ego perception by asking question of “who am I in terms of the relationship between my organization and me?”; and they differentiate themselves from others. On the other hand, employees who identified with their organizations increase their cooperation with their organization; and they develop various critical attitudes and behaviors such as continuance with organization and recognition (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999: 778; Miller et al., 2000: 629; Smidts et al., 2001: 1051-1062).

Organizational identification is also defined as “increasing harmony and conformity between aims of an organization and individuals” (Asforth and Mael, 1989: 23). In other words, when individuals are identified with their organization, they personalized themselves with their organization at some scale (Mael and Ashfort, 1995: 309-333). On the other hand, organizational identification is mostly substituted with organizational engagement concept. As it was laid above, while some researchers consider identification as an element of engagement, some think that they refer the same meaning. Riketta (2005: 358-384) claims that there is conceptual correlation between affective engagement and organizational identification; and that this is why confusion in practice is experienced.

Whereas Riketta (2005), on the basis of meta-analysis on organizational identification and organizational engagement, determined weak correlation between identification and job satisfaction; and desire to continue with job and discontinuance; and reported significant correlation between additional-role behavior and support and participation into job factors (Ellis, 2008: 6). In many other studies in the literature, it was reported that extra performance exhibited by employees than expected increases productivity and profitability of organization,



motivation and job satisfaction of employees; and this results in increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ashforth et al., 2008: 337).

Organizational identification level of a member in an organization indicates engagement level of members with their organizations. If organization membership has central place in the heart of member, and significance of this membership has developed to higher levels with respect to other memberships with other social groups, then, this person has been highly identified with this organization. High level of identification is remarkable in terms of its correlation with positive organizational behaviors; and in this sense, positive consequences of identification of employees with their organization at individual and organization levels have been emphasized (Witting, 2006: 4; Ashforth et al., 2008: 334-338).

The most frequently studies subject in organizational identification researches (Simon, 1976; Tomkins and Cheney, 1985; Bartel, 2001) is observed as that organizational decisions are taken through cooperative and joint efforts so as to increase organizational efficiency (Ashforth et al., 2008: 336-337). March and Simon (1958: 65) and McGregor (1967: 145) report that organizational identification combines individual and organizational aims and enhances harmony between them. On the other hand, Hall et al. (1970: 177) emphasize that this situation would result in commitment to organizational aims as organizational identification develops. Similarly, O'Reinelly and Chatman (1986: 494) identified employees are connected to their organizations through a psychological connection; and this connection allows employees to view themselves as part of their organization. Ensuring sense of belonging among members of an organization, members become more loyal to their organization. On the other hand, sense of safety created among employees develops their desire and intention to remain in the organization through internalization of norm and values (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999: 778). Moreover, there are numerous studies regarding positive correlations between identification and employee motivation; job-satisfaction and job commitment; organizational citizenship and etc. (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986: 496-497; Knippenberg and Van Schie, 2000: 138-141; Ashforth et al., 2008: 337-339).

2.3. Concept of Image

Although the image concept has been extensively discussed concepts in the literature, there is no generally recognized definition of image. Therefore, it is not surprising that various researchers have suggested different definitions for definition of image concept from different angles. Individuals have different opinions, either positive or negative, about brands, products, services and organizations. On the basis of these opinions, image is defined as “general impressions that arise as a result of detailed evaluation of products, services, brands or organizations” (Lemink, 2003: 3).

The image concept was first defined in 1955 by Sidney Levy as “sum of belief, attitude and impressions of persons and groups regarding certain subjects”; and then, it has been applied to various subjects (institution image, brand image and product image etc.) and expanded its scope (Barich and Kotler, 1991: 95-96). In general, image concept was taken as “positive or negative opinions about a subject or asset whose occurrence depends interaction of factors in people’s minds and time”; and thus, image concept has started be viewed that it could either be applied to a political candidate, a product or a country. It was emphasized that the fundamental factor



at this point is not behavior or quality of a person or something; rather, it is the total impression created in someone's mind (Dichter, 1985: 75).

Although image and identity concepts have sometimes been used in one place of another, it is not possible to conclude that they refer the same meaning. Corporate image has different meaning than organization identity; and it includes organizational identity as well. Identity is considered as value from the view of an organization. On the other side, image refers the value viewed by people in surrounding. Image refers how an organization is perceived by others; in other words, opinions and thoughts of people regarding an organization.

Although organization identity has been studied by numerous researchers (Gray and Smeltzer, 1985; Dorgan, 1991; Capowaski, 1993), study of Lambert (1989) suggests a strong model in this major. While Lambert (1989) approached organization identity in "iceberg" point of view, he tried to reveal two general characteristics of identity, which allow us to distinguish it from organization image. First, identity was described as provision of all appearances which differentiate organization from others; and it was associated with tip of an iceberg. In this case, elements on the tip of this iceberg were given as brand, logo and colors of organization; organizational identity only constitutes public aspect of an organization. In the iceberg approach, it was considered that the secondary factors remaining underwater are consisted of factors which cannot be seen clearly by people outside the organization such as written communications, structure and behavior of organizations (Alessandri, 2001: 174); and they are described as reflections of answers which could be given to the questions such as "who are you?", "what are you doing?" and "how are you doing?".

2.4. Concept of Corporate Image

Corporate image is composed of beliefs and senses in member's minds about their organization rather than an opinion of what this organization is (Abrat, 1989: 68). Dowling (1993: 104) defines corporate image as "sum of impressions in people's minds about an organization".

Plowman and Chiu state that organization brands, organization image, organizational reputation and organization identity concepts were confused with each other among academicians and professionals (Plowman and Chiu, 2007: 2). Especially there are studies which suggest that organization image and organization famousness concept in the same meaning (Caruana, 1997: 110); and that there are differences between these concepts indeed (Gray and Balmer, 1998: 696-699). Hatch and Schultz (1997) associate basic reason of this confusion to existence of two different opinions about conceptualization of corporate image. Whereas the first one is related with organization literature, the second one is related with marketing literature. From the organizational point of view, whereas corporate image refers perceptions and internal point of view about how do employees of an organization view their organization; from the marketing point of view, it refers an external view and beliefs considered as an image considered by persons outside the organization (Hatch and Schultz, 1997: 358); and this situation introduces different usage of concepts. According to aforesaid different usages, it was observed that while marketing literature does not include internal organizational factors, organizational literature studies internal subjects which could be effective on image more extensively.



As a common opinion, a corporate image is referred as perception of an organization from the outside. This perception arises as result of impacts of material and moral factors of organization on its surrounding; and in one sense, it exhibits a generally accepted picture of an organization. In one way, corporate image can also be viewed as reflection of reality of an organization. At this point, it is important how all purposes and plans are perceived. Organization image supports company products, services, management style, communication activities and other activities around the world (Okay, 1999: 259). Therefore, it is observed in the world that large and important companies in the world such as IBM, Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, and Motorola, make advertisements about their organization image rather than their products; and that they spend millions of dollars for these advertisement campaigns (Plowman and Chiu, 2007: 2). Indeed, organizations in the business world, regardless of their orientation such as “human” (hotel, sport, security, human resources management, and etc.), “process” (financial consultancy, law, public organizations and etc.), “idea” (advertisement, public relations, music and etc.), they spent effort to create a positive image continuously to protect or to advance their current position in the market (Dincer, 2001: 1-2).

Organizations have an image which occurs as combination of numerous factors from decisions made by senior managers to behaviors of workers at the bottom of management pyramid. It is formed as result of combination of many factors from the foundation of an organization such as quality of services and products supplied by organization, achievements of organization, activities and campaigns organized by organization, behaviors exhibited between employee-employer, sensitiveness displayed toward environmental issues and fulfillment of social responsibilities. In this context, corporate image is an important strategical element, which reflects stability of business in the market, quality of products in the eyes of customers, position of business with respect to its competitors as manufacturer or service provider, and willingness of individuals to stay as a member of organization (Bolat, 2006: 27).

In contemporary business world, border between internal and external clients of organizations are about to disappear subject to increasing interaction among organization members and the one outside the organization. Just a while ago, organizations used to approach organization members from different perspective than external clients in the periphery of their organization; today, as requirement mandated by considered majors (reengineering, customer satisfaction, simplification of management and etc.), customer concept has been re-defined in terms of organization members; and this has resulted in mutation of interaction between internal and external customers (Hatch and Schultz, 1997: 357). Owing to these developments, the picture of organization drawn by target community on the basis of accumulation of messages received from the organization and its surrounding or organizational image defined as evaluation of capabilities and resources of organization by stakeholders have not only been evaluated for external target community, but also internal target community composed of employees (Derin et al., 2014: 138).

According to the aforesaid developments, in terms of considering corporate image as a whole from the today’s point of view, there are two sub-dimensions as internal image and external image. Internal image is the one before employees of organizations, which relates with stable, various and central characteristics believed by employee about their organization. This image type is referred as “perceived organizational identity” in number of studies (Dutton, et al., 1994:



243-248). Perceived external image is referred as well as “assessed external image” or “construed organizational image”. In emergence of this image, perceptions of individuals outside the organization in general about assessment and evaluation formed in their minds about a specific organization are efficient (Dutton et al., 1994: 248-250).

Corporate image has recently been one of the most emphasized subjects by researchers and practitioners in terms of organization-individual harmony. Image perception is important since it is capable of influencing both performances of employees in an organization and attitude and behaviors of stakeholders outside organization. In relevant studies reported in the literature, it was found that preliminary impressions left by organizations on individuals are significantly effective on their image perception; and especially, it is major determinant in their intentions regarding job application (Collins and Stevens, 2001: 1-4).

In the context of corporate image, the most significant issue is about perception of concept. Although activities and appearance of organizations are in a unity, perception levels towards them might vary according to persons. Although there is certain existence of an entity, perceptions of this entity could differ from one another. A message aimed to be expressed outside as a result of activities of an organization is perceived in various forms by different persons and groups; and thus, they could exhibit different attitudes in the end (Caruana, 1997: 110).

Organization image could either be positive, negative or neutral. Persons have either positive or negative images about other persons, groups, communities or organizations. There is nothing like being neutral about image; or not to have an opinion because if there is a perception, image exists undeniably. However, human beings could not have opinion about something that they do not know. Positive image is favorable convictions about what is perceived by human beings. Image makes positive associations about an organization with favorable reputation in an environment. On the other hand, negative image is the circumstance when these convictions are adverse. On the contrary to positive image, this is negative perception of an organizational or a product image by surrounding. Target community’s negative perception of organization, products and services and having adverse impression about them is referred as negative image. Whereas building a negative image by an organization is momentary incident, building a positive image is rather difficult and costly effort which requires long period of time (Tutar, 2009: 314-315). Image could be formed in many degrees in the range from negative to positive. An unpleasant experience with product of an organization, a negative public discourse and a negative circumstance experienced by a friend with an organization could result in negative image and switch the former positive image to negative one.

Although there are number of domestic and international studies on perception of corporate image especially by customers and their influence on customer behaviors, it was observed that there have been only limited researches on employees who are referred as internal customers. The present study approaches from this perspective and aims to measure perceptions of employees towards internal and external corporate images.

3. RESEARCH

3.1. *Purpose and Scope of the Research*

Organization theoreticians consider that perceived corporate image by organization employees has significant influences on organizational identification. In the relevant literature, it was



reported that corporate image establishes a psychological bond between employee and organization; and ensures employees identify themselves with their organization by enhancing cooperation and organizational trust feeling among employees. In the literature, there are great deal of studies which examine identification concept, meaning of organization in the eyes of individuals, level of engagement and commitment felt towards organizations, and tendency of individuals regarding staying with their organization. Mael and Ashfort (1992: 111-112) in their study conducted on 297 individuals graduated from a religious high school, tested the model concerning personal and organizational antecedents of organizational identification and organizational results. They concluded that corporate image is a major organizational antecedent of organizational identification. Moreover, the researchers stated in their study that one of the reasons for identification of individuals with a group is to enhance the respect shown towards them; and the self-respect felt by individuals who work for commonly known organizations is supported more. Bhattacharya et al. (1995: 54), in their study conducted on 306 people, concluded that organization image is required to be enhanced so that identification of its members can be strengthened.

Smidts et al. (2001: 1055), in parallel to current studies in the literature, concluded that perceived organizational image enhances organizational identification based on their study conducted in three different companies. Moreover, they pointed out in their study that perceived external image is more effective on organizational in companies with higher identification recognition and image according to communication climate. On the contrary, it is reported that communication climate in companies with low recognition has greater effect on organizational identification. In sum, employees would like to work in highly known organizations socially recognized by individuals from outside of the organization and having positive image. In other words, as perceived corporate image increases, employees would demand higher identification level with their organization; and their organization would be more meaningful.

The relevant hypotheses concerning corporate image and organizational identification were structured as below:

H₁: As external corporate image perceived by employees increase, their organizational identification level increases, too.

H₂: As internal corporate image perceived by employees increase, their organizational identification level increases, too.

3.2. Method

Universe of the study is composed of employees who work at the textile companies located in Denizli and listed in the first and second 500 largest industrial corporations of Turkey published by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry in 2013 and who work other textile companies located in Denizli. In this scope, Denizli textile companies listed in the first and second 500 company lists of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry were determined from the official website of the chamber. Based on the published lists of the first and second 500 companies, totally 5 companies were determined (www.iso.org.tr). However, during data collection period of the study, one of these companies from the first 500 list was not doing actual business I textile industry even though its title includes “textile” operation. These companies in the aforesaid list were contacted; and after serious efforts, four of these six companies agreed to participate in the present study. In addition to the companies from the first and second 500 companies and which agreed to participate in



this study, other nine companies from the textile industry and but not included in these lists agreed. About 1,500 survey forms were distributed to employees of totally thirteen companies which agreed to participate in our study. In the end of the period, 74.5% of survey forms returned; and 32 of these 1,188 forms were discarded because they were not found reliable. Finally, 1,156 survey forms were included in the evaluation phase.

As data collection tool in the present study, 17-item scale compiled by Buyukgoze (2012: 90-91) to measure corporate image perception; and 6-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992: 122) to measure organizational identification, one of the determinants of the concept were employed.

3.3. Findings

Results of the reliability analysis conducted to evaluate internal consistency of scale were exhibited in Table 1. Reliability level of 6-item organizational identification scale was estimated at 73.3% ($\alpha = .733$). In terms of 17-item corporate image scale employed in the study, whereas reliability level of 7 items of the scale which measure internal image was estimated at 84.3% ($\alpha = .843$), reliability level of 10 items which measure external image was estimated at 88% ($\alpha = .880$). The minimum alpha coefficient is considered as 0.7 for a reliable scale (Akbulut, 2010: 81). Since alpha coefficients estimated for scales employed in the study were greater than 0.7 for all dimensions, it is possible to conclude that structured scales were reliable and appropriate for analysis.

Table 1: Results of Reliability Analysis

Dimensions	Number of Expression	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Organizational Identification	6	.733
Internal Image	7	.843
External Image	10	.880

General demographical data about general characteristics of 1,156 employees who participated in study was summarized in Table 2. In terms of gender distribution of participants, it was observed that male and female percentages were 32.6 and 67.4, respectively. In terms of education levels of participants, whereas 52.2% were primary and secondary school graduates, 25.2% were high school graduates, 6.5% were holding associate degree, and 14.4% bachelor degree and 1.7% were holding a graduate degree. Textile industry necessitates laborious activities in all over the world; and usually employees unskilled workers (Eraslan et al., 2008: 268). It was determined that education levels of participants in this study were low similar to their peers in the world. According to age distribution of participants, 3% were in 16-20 age group; 40.1% were in 21-30 age group; 43% were in 31-40 age group; 12.2% were in 41-50 age group; 1.6% were in 51-60 age group; and only 2 employees were in age group of 61 and older. It was remarkable that majority of participants were in 21-40 age group. Regarding marital status of participants, whereas 75% were married, 25% were single. According to distribution of experience of employees in their organization, it was determined that 19.7% of employees has work experience 1 year and less; 32.4% has 2-5 year experience; 26.4% has 6-10 years; 15.3% has 11-15 years; and 6.1% has 16 years and more experience.

Table 2: General Characteristics of Participants

		Number	Percentage
Gender Distribution	Male	377	32.6
	Female	770	67.4
Age Distribution	16-20	35	3
	21-30	463	40.1
	31-40	497	43
	41-50	141	12.2
	51-60	18	1.6
	61 and older	2	0.2
Marital Status	Married	867	75
	Single	289	25
Experience	1 year and less	228	19.7
	2-5	375	32.4
	6-10	305	26.4
	11-15	177	15.3
	16 years and longer	71	6.1
Education Status	Primary School	604	52.2
	High School	291	25.2
	Associate Degree	75	6.5
	Bachelor Degree	166	14.4
	Graduate Degree	20	1.7

Descriptive analysis results indicating standard deviation, and correlation among variables concerning organizational identification levels of participant employees and mean scores measuring their internal and external image perceptions toward their employer were exhibited in Table 3. According to the table, it can be observed that employees' organizational identification levels as well as their internal and external image perception which constitute their corporate image perception were high. In terms of correlation levels among variables, whereas it was estimated as .733 for internal and external images; it was estimated as .571 for corporate image and organizational identification. The correlation between external image dimension of corporate image and organizational identification was estimated as .569, higher with respect to the correlation with internal image. If previous studies are taken into consideration, it can be seen that their correlation levels display similarity with our findings. In fact, while Bhattacharya et al., estimated the correlation between organizational identification and corporate image as .51 in their study conducted on museum employees; Smidts et al. estimated the correlation between perceived external corporate image and organizational identification as .60 in their study in which they investigated the impact on the organizational identification (Bhattacharya et al., 1995: 53; Smidts et al., 2001: 1055).

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Values Determined for Collected Data

	Mean (x)	S.D.	1	2	2a
1. Organizational Identification	4.29	.404			
2. Corporate image	4.29	.449	.571**		
2a. Internal Image	4.24	.502	.497**	.936**	
2b. External Image	4.34	.464	.569**	.925**	.733**

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels.



One-way anova test was conducted in the variance analysis to examine whether employees' organizational identification, internal and external image perception levels exhibit difference with respect to company status. According to the anova test results exhibited in Table 4 ($p < 0.05$), organizational identification, internal and external image perception levels exhibit significant difference with respect to company status. The mean scores estimated for the companies from the first 500 company list were determined higher than the companies in other two groups in terms of organizational identification ($\bar{x}=4.40$), perceived internal image ($\bar{x}=4.41$) and perceived external image ($\bar{x}=4.50$). Moreover, it was observed that organizational identification, perceived internal and external image levels of companies in category of "other" were higher than the companies from the second 500 companies list. The basic reason for this is considered as the reputable and established companies with categorized under "other" title have long been operating in Denizli.

Table 4: Results of Variance Analysis with Respect to Company Status

	Company Status	Mean (\bar{x})	S.D.	Sig (p)
Organizational Identification	The 1 st 500	4.40	.402	.000
	The 2 nd 500	4.23	.391	
	Other	4.30	.405	
Internal Image	The 1 st 500	4.41	.476	.000
	The 2 nd 500	4.13	.437	
	Other	4.26	.519	
External Image	The 1 st 500	4.50	.465	.000
	The 2 nd 500	4.22	.423	
	Other	4.37	.469	

Linear regression analysis was conducted to test hypotheses of the study. Table 5 summarizes analysis results. In the analysis conducted to test the first hypothesis (H_1), it was determined that external corporate image perception has significant and positive effect on organizational identification ($p < 0.05$) ($B = .569$). In other words, one unit increase in external corporate image perceptions of employees could result in 0.569 unit increase in their identification with their organization. According to determined variance level ($R^2 = .324$), it could be understood that external corporate image perception could explain 32.4% of organizational identification. Thus, the H_1 hypothesis is accepted. In the examination of the effect of the determined external image on organizational identification level, the effect was determined as positive and estimated at 0.37 (Dukerich et al., 2002: 522). Similarly, in study of Lievens et al. (2007: 53), it was concluded that various factors determinants of external corporate image perception have various but positive effects on organizational identification. In another research, the hypothesis which suggests that as it was stated by employees as member of organization, external corporate image was significantly and positively correlated with organizational identification was accepted (Fuller et al., 2006: 708). Rho et al. (2015: 5-6) reported that perceived external image,

regardless of industry type, has positive effect on organizational identification at 0.207 level according to the result of their study conducted on 1220 employees from public and non-profit organizations.

Table 5: Results of Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta (B)	t	p	Adj. R ²
Organizational Identification	Perceived External Image	.569	23.354	.000	.324
	Perceived Internal Image	.497	19.433	.000	.246

According to the results of the analysis conducted to test the second hypothesis (H₂) of the research, it was determined that internal corporate image perception has significant and positive effect on organizational identification ($p < 0.05$) ($B = .497$). That is, one unit increase in employees' internal corporate image perceptions could result in 0.497 unit increase in their identification with organizations. According to determined variance ($R^2 = .246$), it could be seen that internal corporate image perception could explain 24.6% of organizational identification. Thus, H₂ hypothesis of the present research was accepted as well. According to Magalhães, organizational identification level is subject to internal corporate image perceived by employees (Magalhães, 2014: 82). Based on a general consideration, it was concluded that effect of the external image perception on organizational identification was higher than internal image perception.

Table 6: Results of Comparative Regression Analysis

	The 1 st 500			The 2 nd 500			Other		
	Beta	P	Adj. R ²	Beta	P	Adj. R ²	Beta	P	Adj. R ²
Perceived External Image → Organizational Identification	.607	.000	.364	.498	.000	.245	.573	.000	.327
Perceived Internal Image → Organizational Identification	.530	.000	.275	.468	.000	.219	.488	.000	.237

Table 6 exhibits the results of regression analysis conducted according to the company statuses. According to comparison of these results, internal image and external image perceptions of the employees from the companies selected from the 1st 500 list have greater effect on organizational identification with respect to the employees from the categories of the 2nd 500 list and "Other". Internal and external image perceptions of employees from the companies in "other" category have greater effect on organization identification with respect to the companies from the 2nd 500 list.

4. RESULT

While employees identifies with their organizations to satisfy their belonging needs and reduce uncertainty, this situation is desirable for organizations since they believe that performance of



employees would be enhanced through identification. Corporate image concept is considered one of the core concepts of maintaining existence and competition capability in globalizing business world. Within the present study, perception of corporate image by employees of an organization was taken into consideration; and corporate image was investigated in two different dimensions. These two dimensions were perceived internal image defined as the image illustrated in employees' minds about practices of organization and perceived external image defined as the image illustrated in employees' minds about how people outside the organization could view their organization. In this context, how do perceptions of employees regarding their organizations' images affect their organizational identification defined as a strong bond between employees and their organization was investigated. According to obtained findings, high level of corporate image perception and high level of organizational identification were determined. It was considered with publicly known companies that both corporate image dimensions and organizational identification levels could be higher. In the analysis conducted to that end, it was observed that the difference between them was significant; and that perceived corporate image and organizational identification levels were both higher in companies listed in the ISO 500 index. According to another analysis, it was concluded that increase in perceived internal and external corporate image could result in increase in organizational identification; and thus, research hypotheses were accepted. These findings were consistent with previous studies (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Smitdts et al., 2001; Dukerich et al., 2002; Fuller et al., 2006; Lievens et al., 2007; Rho et al., 2015). It was determined that effect of perceived external image on organizational identification was greater with respect to internal image. That is, employees' belief that organization is perceived more positively by the third persons enhances organizational identification in comparison with their positive perceptions toward internal policy and practices of organization.

Another conclusion drawn from the present study is that in comparative studies conducted based on the belief that this correlation could be stronger in publicly known companies; this effect was greater as it was expected among the employees of the companies from the ISO 500 list. However, regarding comparison of the textile companies in the 2nd 500 list and in the category of "other", it was observed that this effect was greater on the companied from the category of "other". This is because companies in the category of "other" were reputable and established companies which have been in business in Denizli for long years.

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