

The influence of Organizational Image on Academic Success for International Students

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Abstract

Image as a concept that develops through personal, environmental, cultural, and organizational factors throughout history. Organizational image is the overall evaluation of people's views regarding an organization or system. The purpose of present study was to determine the relationship between international university students' academic achievement and perceived organizational image. As this is a descriptive research for it measures the image perceptions of the participants at a single time, quantitative research methods were used. The population of the research was 2208 international students at Uludag University in Bursa. Randomly selected 1718 students (% 77,8) who provided anonymous responses were the sample of the study. To examine the relation between organizational image and academic achievement, correlation analysis was used. To control the effect of the organizational image on the academic achievement regression analysis was used. Students' academic achievement was mostly affected by reputation and recognition, provided services and general view and physical infrastructure at moderate level. As the students' image perception towards the university increases, their academic success also increase. Perceived organizational image affected students' academic achievement significantly and explained 16% of the variance of academic achievement. General view & physical infrastructure provided services, reputation and recognition, and extra curricular activities from the sub-dimensions of organizational image perception have a meaningful effect on the academic success of students. Key findings are discussed and recommendations offered to address issues related to organizational image.

Keywords: Organizational image, Academic success, International students, Higher education, University

1. Introduction

Organizational image can be defined as the sum of the quality of products and services produced, activities organized and successes achieved by an organization since its establishment until present day (Arpan et al., 2003; Roberts, 2005; Melewer&Akel, 2005; Paden&Stell, 2006; Chandler et al., 2007; Tasci&Gartner,2007; Alves&Raposo, 2010). Organizational image does not only develop based on tangible and physical elements related to appearance, but it is also affected by visual, auditory and behavioral elements. It is observed that interest in studies on the organizational images of universities has been gradually increasing starting from the 1990s (Nguyen&LeBlanc, 2001; Ivy, 2001; Kazoleas, Kim&Moffitt, 2001; Palacio et al., 2002; Arpan et. all. 2003; Melewar&Akel, 2005; Cubillo et al., 2006; Paden&Stell, 2006; Chandler et al., 2007; Pampaloni, 2010). While there are numerous international studies on organizational image including universities related research is inadequate in Turkey (Saracel et al., 2001; Demir, 2003; Cerit, 2006; Doğan, 2006; Esener, 2006; Örer, 2006; Yıldırım, 2007; Aksoy&Bayramoğlu, 2008; Canoğlu, 2008; Çakmak, 2008; Polat, 2011; Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2015). The influence of perceived image has even been observed at the university level, where perceptions of image have positively impacted student loyalty and satisfaction and have been shown to be the strongest predictor of positive student attitudes (Alves&Raposo, 2010; Sung&Yang, 2008). Organizational image positively influences quality, reputation, prestige, trust, stability, attractiveness and originality. Moreover organizational image positive effects, organizational performance, motivation, identification, co-operation, job satisfaction and loyalty. A strong and positive image of the organization helps not only primarily to increase the confidence of the target group in the organization but also the organization escape from its competitors to increase its value, to occupy itself in internal and external markets, to gain brand value and ultimately influence the behavior of customers. Additionally, variables such as social and environmental responsibility, financial credibility,

innovativeness, marketing, communication, management, product and service quality are effective in image formation (Lemmink et. all., 2003). Organizational image affects many organizational outputs either directly or indirectly (Vigoda-Gadot&Ben-Zion, 2004; Vigoda-Gadot, et. all., 2004). Perceived organizational image yields several outcomes. The education programs, the physical possibilities of the school, personal and organizational environment, demographic features, environmental features, admission criteria, sports facilities, campus size, academic programs, library facilities, the academic staff, the graduates and the students who are currently studying and stories about the school (Arpan et. all., 2003; Kazoleas et. all., 2001; Paden & Stell, 2006).

O'Neill&Gaither (2007) found that the employees with a more positive image are likely to identify themselves with the organization more and there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational identification and cooperative behavior. In today's stiff competitive environment, organizations strive to have a difference over other organizations and gain more attention. Positive organizational image is one of the important variables that have a direct effect on the success of the organization as it enables the success of employees. In an increasingly competitive environment and to meet the demands of customers, it has become a necessity for higher education organizations to measure their image and be to ascertain how the constructed image is formed and how it can be modified in order to better reflect the intended image (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2015). Without customer feedback, it would be impossible for an organization to know whether they needed a change or not and it is rather safe to blame the customers themselves on this since it is their fault for not raising their voices when confronted with exceptionally poor service or quality. Besides, the organizations with positive images are more successful in achieving their goals for they are trusted by society and raise their reputation. For an effective management, it is important for university administrators to learn about the experiences and outcomes of organizational image. The existence of a supportive environment, good communication among university staff, students and the administration, high perceptions of organizational identity and personality result in an increase in the perception of organizational image. A good organizational image is vital for any organization. The formation of organizational image requires a long time and the maintenance of the desired image is very crucial for the organizations. Therefore, organizations should manage their images effectively. Individuals' needs should be satisfied in order to build a positive perception and achieve organizational objectives.

Organizational image is not only responsible for achieving success, but also for maintaining it. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between a university's image and the satisfaction students get from the university. Organizational image; is an important decision criterion in the selection of universities. Students choose their preferences either for undergraduate or graduate programs based on the image of the university, the faculty or even the department. (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001; Paden&Stell, 2006). Universities attract successful students using image appeal. Positive image perception also affects students' loyalty behavior and satisfaction level positively (Nguyen&LeBlanc, 2001; Palacio, Meneses&Perez, 2002). The image of a university with good infrastructure, physical resources, and social service units which contribute socialization and qualified academic staff, directly affects the success and performance of students. Organizational image is an important resource in this competitive context and positive organizational image help attract customers to the organization (Flavian, Guinaliu& orres, 2005). In this competitive context, universities seek to increase their image both to increase their share from the economic market and to attract the qualified faculty and students to their universities.

There are a few studies investigating the relationship between organizational image and academic achievement. Universities with a wide range of social impact and centers of attraction, it is necessary to have a positive and high level organizational image in order to be able to provide qualified graduates. For this reason, universities with a positive image attract high qualified students and those students have motivation and academic success. In today's world, where labor mobility has increased rapidly, international student mobility has also reached an important level. With increasing cooperation and interaction between countries, relations of production are gradually changing and the need for qualified human power, which is seen as the driving force of economies in parallel with the development and enrichment efforts of the countries, is getting even higher. In the twenty-first century, besides raising qualified human power, countries that can attract these people to themselves on a global scale, can evaluate the human power correctly and in place, produce new information by using global knowledge, transform information into economic and social benefit, and adopt a human-oriented development approach will be successful.

Making our higher education system a center of attraction for international students; will contribute to achieving a competitive higher education system on a global scale, sensitive to the needs of society and the economy. It is expected that the number of international students reaching 4.5 million in global level by 2012, will reach 8 million by 2020. When higher education system is turned into an attraction center for international students, this will contribute to achieve a competitive higher education system on a global scale, sensitive to the needs of society and

the economy. The number of international students coming to Turkey is also increasing. The direct and indirect economic opportunities provided by international education are one of the reasons why countries are increasingly interested in international students. According to statistics of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2012, 0,9 percent of international students prefer Turkey. While Turkey was among the first 20 countries preferred by international students in 2000, it was not among the top 20 countries attracting the most students in 2012, despite a significant increase in the number of students. While the number of international students in universities was 16,656 in 2000-2001 academic year, it reached to 48,183 in 2013-2014 academic year. The topic of international students has become one of Turkey's priorities with the Tenth Development Plan. At the end of 2018, the share of Turkey in the world international student market in higher education will be increased to 1,5 percent. Moreover, the higher education system will be transformed into a quality oriented, competitive structure within the framework of autonomy, performance orientation, specialization and diversity principles on the basis of accountability. To achieve this goal, universities carry out various studies, preparations and implementations both in the axis of higher education policy and individually. One of the most competitive alliances among universities is the field of distance education. It is noteworthy that the use of internet technologies in education has become widespread and that distance education which is made through these technologies has increased confidence and that universities have turned to these applications which are the material attraction (Engin, 2013).

State universities have some difficulties in attracting international students to the university. The most outstanding difficulties are, international students are not able to benefit from part-time student status in universities due to the law, housing especially for the married students, the problems of marriage, the employment opportunities which are low and the language of education in many state universities is Turkish. In order to attract more international students to universities, it is necessary to establish a communication and management strategy accordingly. International students is a very highly competitive market. NUFFIC- (Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education) categorized the two factors that encourage students to international education. These are attraction and promotion that influence their choice of country, university and education program. In higher education, educational opportunities and services related to international students' perceptions, in short, is becoming increasingly important for organizational image.

1.1 Purpose

This research aimed to determine the effect of perceived organizational image on international students' academic success. The research also aimed to find the sub-dimensions of organizational image that affect students' academic achievement.

- Is organizational image of the university effective in explaining the international students' academic achievement?
- Is general view and physical infrastructure, provided services, educational quality, social responsibility, organizational culture, extra curricular activities, reputation&recognition subdimensions effective in explaining the international students' academic achievement?

2. Method

Descriptive relational research method was used in this study since the momentary perception of organizational image is measured. The target population of this research is the international students at undergraduate and graduate programs of Uludağ University at 2015-2016 academic year. As this is a descriptive research for it measures the image perceptions of the participants at a single time, quantitative research methods were used. Organizational image and sub-dimensions of the predictor variables when considering university students were considered as variables predicting academic achievement.

2.1 Sample

The population of the research was 2208 international students at Uludag University in Bursa. Randomly selected 1718 students (%77.8) who provided anonymous responses were the sample of the study. The academic grade point average scores of the students varied considerably. 24.27% (n=417) of the students have 1.99 or lower. 29.45% (n=506) have GPA between 2.00-2.99, 27.35% (n=470) have 3.00-3.49 and 18.91% (n=325) have 3.50 and 4.00.

2.2 Data Collection

The organizational image perceptions of the students at in relation to the university were determined through an instrument developed by the researcher with the aim of measuring images of higher education institutions and by taking into consideration the related literature and the unique dynamics of Uludag University (Küçükşüleymanoğlu,

2015). The instrument was composed of two sections. The first section included the Personal Information Form prepared to collect personal info about the students and the second section included 60 statements aiming to determine the organizational image perception of the university. To measure the organizational image 5-point Likert type with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree,' grading was used. In the study, in order to determine the factor structure, the exploratory factor analysis technique was used. Moreover, for the whole of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be $\alpha=.921$. for sub dimensions coefficients are I. general view and physical infrastructure ($\alpha=.871$) II. provided services ($\alpha=.925$) III. educational quality ($\alpha=.786$) and IV. social responsibility ($\alpha=.902$), organizational culture ($\alpha=.658$), extra curricular activities ($\alpha=.589$), reputation and recognition ($\alpha=.759$).

2.3 Data Analysis

To examine the relation between organizational image and academic achievement, correlation analysis was used. When the correlation coefficients are assessed, if the correlation coefficient is between 0.70 and 1.00, it has been interpreted as "high", between 0.69 and 0.30 it has been interpreted as "medium", and if it is 0.29 and below it has been interpreted as related to "low" level (Büyüköztürk, 2005) and when it gets closer to 0.00, it has been interpreted as irrelevant. To control the effect of the organizational image on the academic achievement regression analysis was used. This method is used to predict a relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables. Multiple regression also explains the relative degree to which a series of variables contribute to the multiple prediction of a variable (Williams & Monge, 2001). All correlations significant at $p < .01$.

3. Findings

This research has limitations that restrict the generalisation of its findings and open up directions for future research. Firstly, only Uludağ University international students were investigated. Future research stemming from the results of this study can employ larger and more diverse samples. Correlation coefficients regarding the relationship between organizational image and academic achievement showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between students' perceived organizational image and academic achievement ($r=0.39$, $p < .01$).

Table 1. Correlation Coefficients of Organizational Image and Subcales on Academic Success

Image Sub Scales	Academic Success
General view & physical infrastructure	.33 *
Provided services	.37*
Educational quality	.29*
Organizational culture	.18*
Social responsibility	.15*
Reputation&Recognition	.38*
Extra curricular opportunities	.14*
Organizational image	.39*

* $p < .01$

Correlation coefficients regarding the relationship between organizational image and academic achievement showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between students' perceived organizational image and academic success ($r=0.39$, $p < .01$). In terms of sub-dimensions, there was a moderate positive relationship between academic success and general view & physical infrastructure ($r=0.33$, $p < .01$), provided services ($r=0.37$, $p < .01$) and reputation&recognition ($r=0.33$, $p < .01$) whereas there is a low relationship between academic success and organizational culture ($r=0.18$, $p < .01$), social responsibility ($r=0.15$, $p < .01$), educational quality ($r=0.29$, $p < .01$) and extra curricular activities ($r=0.14$, $p < .01$). Students' academic achievement was mostly affected by reputation and recognition, provided services and general view and physical infrastructure.

Table 2. Simple Regression Analysis of Organizational Image and Academic Success

	Academic Success			
	B	ShB	b	t
Constant	.812	.112		4.348*
Organizational Image	.551	.037	.597	9.497*
R=0.404	R ² =0.163			
F(1-1717)= 3.614	p=.000			

*p < .01

The results of the regression analysis regarding how much perceived organizational image predict students' academic achievement is given in table 2. Organizational image perception is a significant predictive variable in explaining the academic success of students. (R=0.404; R²=0.163, p<.01) and explained 16% of the variance of academic achievement. It is seen that the perception of the organizational image of the students is influenced their academic achievement at a low level.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis of Organizational Image Subcales and Academic Success

Image Sub Scales	B	SEB	β	t
Constant				
General view & physical infrastructure	0.252	0.34	0,34	3.187*
Provided services	0.307	0.29	0,22	0.652*
Educational quality	0.074	0.22	0,09	0.334
Organizational culture	0.275	0.23	0,02	1.052
Social responsibility	0.081	0.12	0,06	1.657
Reputation & Recognition	0.743	0.30	0,23	0.243*
Extra curricular opportunities	0.561	0.33	0,16	3.24*
R=0.422		0.016		
R ² =0.31				
F(7- 1717)=4263,25	P=.00			

*p < .01

General view & physical infrastructure, provided services, reputation and recognition, and extra curricular activities from the sub-dimensions of organizational image perception have a meaningful effect on the academic success of students. (R=0,422, R²=0,31, p<.01). Variables that are influential on the academic success of students from sub-dimensions of organizational image explains 31% of the academic achievement of the students. When the t values of regression coefficients were examined, general view & physical infrastructure, provided services, extra curricular activities, reputation and recognition sub-dimensions were shown to explain students' academic achievement, whereas organizational culture, educational quality and social responsibility did not influence academic achievement significantly. When β coefficients were examined, students' academic achievement was mostly explained by general view & physical infrastructure (β=0,34), extra curricular activities (β=0,33), followed by reputation and recognition, (β=0,30), provided services (β=0,29) and respectively.

4. Discussion

This study has revealed a significant moderate positive relationship between university international students' perceived organizational image and their academic success. While a moderate positive relationship was found between students' academic achievement and general view & physical infrastructure, provided services and reputation & recognition; a low positive relationship was found between academic achievement and educational quality, organizational culture, social responsibility, extra curricular activities. The sub-dimensions of organizational image; general view & physical infrastructure, provided services, extra curricular activities, reputation and recognition influenced students' academic success significantly, whereas organizational culture, educational quality and social responsibility did not influence academic achievement. In conclusion, perceived organizational

image is a factor that significantly affects international students' academic achievement. Findings of the present study confirm and verify that to provide academic success, students' perceptions regarding the image of their university have to be increased.

As one of the ways to increase the academic success of the students is to improve the organizational image of the university positively; It is necessary for university administrators to search for ways to improve the image of universities. To create a good image of the university, students' needs and expectations should be taken into account. An obvious implication of these findings is that, in order to increase students' intention to apply to or enroll in a school, university marketers need to enhance the students' familiarity with the school's name. Extra curricular activities and to advertise them especially via social media contributes to the positive image of universities reputation and recognition. University administration should improve the university's image by encouraging public relations and advertising such activities. In Turkey, it is not common for state universities to advertise in newspapers or magazines. As a matter of fact, state universities often do not have the habit of filling their quotas. Moreover, they do not have to enter into a lot of customer acquisition struggle in the education market because they are not profit oriented. However, in recent years, it has been observed that in order to preserve the reputations and academic strengths of state universities or to raise higher levels, they have provided some scholarship and accommodation opportunities for successful s succesful international students.

The current findings suggest that such non academic factors do in fact influence image of although they are not often considered especially by state university administrators as important. Universities should improve themselves in campus facilities, architecture, name and brand reputation, sports a nad library facilities, student clubs for extra curricular activites that form some of the image perception. The physical and social facilities and guidance services of higher education institutions are among the things to be considered first for the international students because they play a critical role in the choice of country for education. There are some problems such as learning Turkish, socialization and accommodation for international students coming to Turkey. It is necessary for the international students to be provided with sufficient number of dormitory facilities. The physical conditions and social facilities of university dormitories should be arranged to meet the expectations of international students. It is thought that if the Build-Rent and Build-Operate-Transfer models are applied for making dorms, the need for international students' accommodation can be improved to some extent. Also, solutions should be provided to the problems of housing of the international students coming with their family. In addition, university campuses and dormitories should be organized in such a way as to facilitate the lives of international students. It is much more likely that students will prefer universities with physical facilities such as clean, modern classrooms, laboratories, etc., with a constantly vibrant campus with various social cultural events (Soutar&Turner, 2002; Price et all.,2003). Modern living arrangements, the presence of communication and information technologies, and a good working environment are criteria for academic success. The various academic and financial assistance opportunities that college students provide to their students may also be factors that students consider in the academic success (Yusof et. all., 2008 , İsmail, 2009). For example, it is necessary to employ personnel who speak English and some other foreign languages in dormitories, administrative offices and libraries. Places of worship for students belonging to other religions should be provided.

Extracurricular activities should be improved and supported. Programs should be organized to support the social life of the students outside the university, creating opportunities for cultural interaction with other students and the community. Ensuring international student participation in student communities operating at universities will have positive effects on socialization, language learning and academic achievement. In addition, international students should be encouraged to set up their own communities and be supported to organize events on important days of their country. Orientation services should be provided to help students survive the cultural joy of living. Students should be given practical information about Turkish culture and city life.

International students need a structure that will guide them through their entire education period from their initial contact with a new culture and find solutions to their problems. In international applications, units called international student offices play an important role during the time students are educated, including the orientation process. International students will be guided by universities, and units should be set up to assist them when they first arrive in the country, and physical and administrative capacities of existing ones should be developed. It should be ensured that these units are able to communicate directly and continuously with the candidate students. Guidance for international students should guide and assist the student in the bureaucratic procedures of public institutions such as admissions, visas, health insurance and work permits. In this context, experts should be hired to serve. Regular surveys should collect information on the needs, problems and expectations of international students. In the direction of the internationalization of higher education and the aim of improving the trends and living conditions for foreign

students, the primary responsibility of universities is seen as one of the important factors in the country and university preferences of international students. Scholarships given to international students are important in terms of developing political, economic and cultural relations between countries and laying the groundwork for co-operation. Scholarships given by public and non-governmental organizations have a critical importance in the internationalization of the Turkish higher education system, to attract more students and to promote the image of universities as a brand, the selection mechanism and qualifications of scholars as well as the number of scholarships should be established and developed. In this context, the international students should be analyzed according to the geography, social structures and successes.

Further, longitudinal studies could be conducted to determine if and how the importance of the dimensions of international students selection practices are affected by organizational image perceptions.

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