EMPLOYEE RESPONSES TO CHANGING ASPECTS OF THE EMPLOYER BRAND FOLLOWING A MULTINATIONAL ACQUISITION: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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This study examines changing employment brands in the context of a multinational acquisition, specifically the implications for current employees. Using a sample (N = 251) from both the acquired and acquiring workforces, employees are tracked across 12 months following acquisition. The study explores predictors of identification with the acquiring organization, intent to quit, and discretionary effort. We focus on employment brand–related predictors, specifically perceptions linked to the provision of unique employment experiences, organizational identity strength, perceived prestige, and judgments of whether the acquiring organization acts in accordance with its corporate identity claims. The study showed that perceptions of prestige immediately after acquisition predict identification 12 months hence, as do judgments of whether the organization acts in accordance with its corporate social responsibility–based corporate identity claims. These judgments also predict subsequent levels of discretionary effort and long-term intent to leave, as do perceptions linked to the provision of unique employment experiences. Perceived change in these unique employment experiences is also related to change in identification and intent to leave across time. Importantly, these elements have a varied effect on the adjustment outcomes when comparing the two workforces.

Keywords: organizational identity, mergers, acquisition strategy

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Introduction

The human resources field has witnessed a considerable growth in attention to the phenomenon of employment brands (Cable & Turban, 2003; Edwards, 2010; Lievens, 2007), with claims made that successful management of employer brands will help organizations win the war for talent and lead to an engaged workforce (Martin, Golan, & Grigg, 2011). When companies experience major organizational turmoil, aspects of what is offered by an organization's employer brand may well change. The current study investigates implications of a changing employment brand in the context of a multinational acquisition. The employer brand is defined as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment" by Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) and "what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer" (Lievens, 2007, p. 51), and it is argued that each organization has a unique and distinct employer brand. When two organizations come together through a merger or acquisition, the postmerger employment experience may be different from that experienced before the merger, which is likely to affect employee attitudes. It is argued that the nature of an organization's employment brand will determine the degree to which current employees wish to leave (Ambler & Barrow, 1996) and whether they identify with the organization (Edwards, 2010), two key measures of successful integration. In acquisitions, a central concern of management often involves ensuring the smooth integration of separate workforces. Failure to ensure integration has been linked with negative outcomes, including higher staff turnover (Napier, 1989; Walsh, 1988) and poor postmerger organizational performance (Teerikangas & Very, 2006). Understanding how a changing employer brand can influence employee responses following a major acquisition can therefore add to our general understanding of postmerger integration.

Our approach involves examining four key aspects that branding research suggests are central to an organization's employment brand, and we explore how perceptions of change linked to these elements are associated with changes in indicators of employee integration.

Despite the considerable growth in practitioner attention paid to employer branding, little empirical research exists shedding light on the topic, and "empirical studies examining its assumptions and effects are scarce" (Lievens, 2007, p. 62), with only a few academic researchers addressing the concept (e.g., Cable & Turban, 2003; Lievens, 2007). In relation to acquisitions, Weber and Fried (2011, p. 778) note a number of deficiencies in the study of HR in post-acquisition periods, including that "few HR researchers have discussed the importance of employees' reactions, and fewer still have empirically tested this human behavior dynamic." At present, no research exists that examines the impact of changes in employment brands following a merger or acquisition; the current study fills this gap. In a major acquisition, there are likely to be two quite different employment brands experienced by the two workforces prior to the merging of organizations, and both groups may experience change in employment brands; thus, the current study examines employee reactions in both workforces.

Our approach involves examining four key aspects that branding research suggests are central to an organization's employment brand, and we explore how perceptions of change linked to these elements are associated with changes in indicators of employee integration. These four brand elements are: employee perceptions of the uniqueness of their employment experiences; perceptions of the organization's corporate identity strength; perceptions of organizational prestige; and judgments of whether the organization acts in accordance with its corporate identity claims. Each of these aspects can be considered important elements of an organization's employer brand. Importantly, we examine the role that these elements play in influencing three key employee outcomes linked to employee adjustment following organizational turmoil: organizational identification, intention to quit, and discretionary effort.

Organizational Turmoil and Changing Employer Brands

A key question that remains unanswered in the employer branding literature is what happens when an organization goes through major organizational turmoil of the sort that is likely to lead to a change in the employment brand associated with a particular employer, such as a merger or major acquisition. The literature on employer branding indicates that a particular employment offering is associated with each company, which becomes its recognized brand with both current and potential employees (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). It is argued that having a successful employer brand will mean that the employer has become differentiated from other potential sources of employment (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). By implication, aspects of the employer brand need to be relatively enduring for the employment experience to become firmly associated with a particular organization. However, when two companies come together in a major acquisition, it is very likely that there will be a change in the employment brand for the acquired workers and, often, for both groups.

A challenge faced by researchers interested in exploring the implications of changing employment brands is that despite the growth in literature focusing on the topic, exactly what makes up an organization's employer brand is still contested ground. This is partly due to fairly broad definitions presented by commentators but also due to the fact that it can be considered an "umbrella concept" (Edwards, 2010) that covers a wide range of activities and ideas previously considered to be separate people management activities. An often-cited definition presented by Ambler and Barrow (1996) shows the potential breadth of what might come under the umbrella of employer branding; they argue that an employer brand is made up of "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (p. 187). The potential scope that is covered by "functional, economic and psychological benefits" is considerable. Thus, when conducting research into changing employer brands, one needs to consider an array of different factors when examining the implications of any change.

Where research does exist, a number of different approaches have been taken to access information about employer brands. As examples, Cable and Turban (2003) focus on potential applicants' familiarity with a firm along with perceptions of its reputation, and Collins and Stevens (2002) focus on perceived job attributes (e.g., salary, etc.). Lievens (2007) considers aspects of the employment experience that go beyond considering specific terms and conditions or benefits provided by employment and tap other aspects linked to the organization's symbolic and instrumental image attributes and its reputational aspects (e.g., the perceived prestige available when working at the organization). Given the very broad nature of potential elements covered by an organization's employment brand, the current investigation considers four phenomena that can be considered central to the idea of employment brands. First, we specifically consider employee perceptions of the firm's organizational identity strength. Many authors' employment brand definitions include the idea of an organizational identity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Dell & Ainspan, 2001), and we therefore consider employee perceptions of organizational identity strength as a key element of an organization's employment brand. Second, much has been written about the fact that an employer's corporate image and corporate values will (and should) help form an organization's employer brand (Barrow &

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Mosley, 2005), so we focus on employee perceptions of whether the organization acts in accordance with its corporate identity or espoused values (which in the current study are corporate social responsibility [CSR] values). Third, since many authors make reference to the importance of an organization's reputation (Cable & Turban, 2003) linked to an employment brand and some include measures of prestige in their research (Lievens, 2007), we ask the employees to rate the prestige of their employing organization. Fourth, in presurvey interviews with HR managers at both the acquired and acquiring organization, we obtained a short list of employment experience elements that were identified as being "unique" (which is central to the idea of employer brands according to Edwards [2010]) to the employees in the study. In summary, drawing on ideas from existing employment brand literature, we measure employee perceptions linked to how strong the merged organizational identity is, the degree to which employees consider the organization to act in accordance with its espoused values, perceived prestige, and employee judgments of the degree to which there are unique elements of their employment experience provided by their employer.

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Context for the Study

The acquisition involved two US-based multinational firms, one of which was almost twice the size of the other globally; given the relative size of the two firms, the new formal identity was based mainly on that of the larger, dominant party. We examined the company in three countries (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Sweden), allowing us to control for the potentially important role of national context in shaping the employee responses following a major acquisition. The acquisition prompted a process of restructuring that involved some site closures and the spinning off of some activities, resulting in the size of the combined workforce in the three countries shrinking by 10 percent (in both organizations) in the year following acquisition. This period was also characterized by harmonization of terms and conditions that involved some substantive changes for both sets of workers, though these were more significant for the acquired workforce. Given the aims of the study, which involves an examination of the impact of changing employer brands, longitudinal research was required. Thus, we utilized a two-stage panel survey design: the initial stage was distributed two months after acquisition, before the restructuring had begun in earnest but at a point at which employees had some sense of what the acquisition meant for them; and the follow-up was some 12 months later, with organizational restructuring well under way.

This design allows us to assess two elements of how the employment brand impacts on employees in the post-acquisition period. First, there are grounds for believing that the perceptions of employees in the immediate aftermath of the acquisition will have a sustained impact on their subsequent intentions and attitudes. Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, and Thomas (2010) stress the importance of the "transitional identity" that firms adopt immediately after a merger or acquisition. As they put it, "In the face of potentially paralysing fears, the construction of a transitional identity provides a necessary sense of stability in a precarious and ambiguous context" (p. 428). Thus, while elements of it may be vague, the transitional identity is something that gives employees a sense of what the new firm will look like and allows managers to reduce the problems associated with uncertainty. Given this, we might expect perceptions of the brand in the period immediately following the acquisition to have a lasting impact on employee identification, discretionary effort, and intentions to quit. Thus, we hypothesize and test the relationships between the former at the first stage (T1) and the latter at the second stage (T2). Second, there are also grounds for believing that changes in perceptions of the brand will matter, too. Clark et al. (2010) stressed that the transitional identity was far from set in stone; rather, it evolves as restructuring proceeds and the new organization takes shape. Other research has pointed to the ongoing negotiations and compromises between different groups in the postacquisition period that result in the employment offering changing over time (e.g., Rees & Edwards, 2009; Soderberg & Vaara, 2003). Given this, it is important to examine the impact of changes in the employment brand on employee attitudes. Consequently, we hypothesize and test relationships between changes in the brand and changes in employee attitudes between T1 and T2. In the following section, therefore, we build hypotheses of these two types for each of the four elements of the employment brand that we consider. While some previous research has examined different points in the postacquisition period (e.g., Melkonian, Monin, & Noorderhaven, 2011), our ability to test these hypotheses with longitudinal data in which certain employees are tracked is a unique feature of the article.

Theory and Hypotheses

Albert and Whetten (1985) discussed the notion of organizational identity, which entails the idea that the workforce will have an idea of the organization's central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics. As Ashforth and Mael (1996) and Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) argue, the strength and nature of an organizational identity is important in influencing the individual-organizational relationship. It is argued that where an organization has a strong, enduring, and distinctive identity, employees are more likely to form a stronger bond with the organization. As mentioned, some definitions of the notion of employer brands specifically include a reference to the organization's identity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Dell & Ainspan, 2001; Martin et al., 2011). Given that research in marketing emphasizes how strong brands tend to be attractive to customers (Hollensen, 2003), it is likely that organizational identity strength will have important implications for the degree to which current employees identify and link themselves with the organization. Cole and Bruch (2006) define organizational identity strength as the degree to which members perceive that the organization's identity is unique (p. 587). Existing research has shown a strong relationship between organizational identity strength and a range of employee outcomes, such as commitment, identification, and turnover intent (Cole & Bruch, 2006); they demonstrate that higher levels of organizational identity strength will lead to higher levels of identification and lower levels of turnover intent.

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In the context of the current study, a major acquisition, the initial perceptions of the strength of the identity immediately following the acquisition are likely to have a profound and potentially lasting impact on employees. Ravassi and Phillips (2011) point to the importance of "inertia" in organizational identity and suggest that there will be a sustained impact over time of the initial perceptions of the organization's identity. The relationship between organizational identity strength and organizational identification, turnover intent, and other employee outcomes such as discretionary effort may also be shaped by changes in the strength of the identity over time; Gioia et al. (2010) show how an organizational identity gradually emerges in a new firm, and we might anticipate a similar evolutionary element in a firm formed by a major acquisition (He & Baruch, 2009; Kovoor-Misra, 2009). It therefore follows that initial perceptions of the strength of an organizational identity, and the extent to which employees perceive a change in the organization's identity strength across the turmoil of restructuring following acquisition, are likely to influence employee responses. We argue that these aspects of identity strength will influence the degree to which employees identify with the acquiring organization, the extent to which they express a desire to stay at the organization, and the extent to which they report discretionary effort. Thus:

Hypotheses 1a–c: Organizational identity strength (T1) will be positively related to subsequent (a) identification (T2) and (b) discretionary effort (T2), and negatively related to (c) intentions to leave (T2).

Hypotheses 2a–c: Increases in perceived organizational identity strength across time will be positively related to positive change in (a) identification and (b) discretionary effort, and negatively related to (c) positive changes in intentions to leave.

As mentioned, it is suggested that a key aspect of an organization's potential employer brand should include features associated with its projected corporate identity, including its projected corporate values (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). We argue that employee perceptions that the organization remains true to its espoused corporate identity will influence the employee-organization relationship and employee responses following acquisition; in the current context, the dominant organization in the acquisition made specific corporate social responsibility identity claims, which can be considered to be projected identity claims (Elstak, 2007). There are two main reasons why we expect that perceptions linked to whether the organization acts in accordance with its corporate CSR claims will influence employees' responses to the acquisition (such as identification). First, there is evidence that the more socially responsible organizations are considered to be, the more employees will respond positively with greater commitment (Ellemers, Kingma, van de Burgt, & Barreto, 2011; Peterson, 2004) and less intention to leave (Riordan, Gatewood, & Bill, 1997) due to their greater moral worth (Dutton et al., 1994). Second, there is also work concerning the importance of organizational authenticity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Harter, 2002; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010) that argues that employees who perceive that their employer acts with authenticity tend to respond positively. Recent authors have argued for the importance of authenticity linked to an organization's identity in association with employer branding (Harquail, 2007; Martin et al., 2011). Thus, we argue that the more an organization is seen to act in accordance with its identity claims in the initial aftermath of an acquisition, the more that employees will respond positively over the next year as they see it as honest and true to itself and therefore are more likely to show greater pride in being associated with the organization. These positive responses will be apparent through increases in identification and discretionary effort and a reduction in intention to leave. Moreover, we contend that changes in perceptions of the extent to which the firm acts in accordance with its CSR claims are linked to changes in these three outcomes. Thus:

Hypotheses 3a–c: Perceptions that the merged organization acts in accordance with its corporate social responsibility identity claims (T1) will be positively related to subsequent (a) identification (T2) and (b) discretionary effort (T2), and negatively related to (c) intentions to leave (T2).

Hypotheses 4a–c: Increases in employees' perceptions that the merged organization acts in accordance with its CSR identity claims across time will be positively related to positive changes in (a) identification and (b) discretionary effort, and negatively related to (c) positive changes in intent to quit.

A further aspect of an organization's employment brand is the elements that make up the unique "employment experience." Many elements of the employment experience might constitute what Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) refer to as the "package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment" or what Edwards (2010) refers to as "the totality of tangible and intangible reward features that a particular organization offers to its employees" (p. 7). Key, however, is that these experiences should be relatively unique to the organization and they should be recognized as such by employees. In an acquisition context, the acquired group of employees may see some of the offerings associated with their previous employer disappear and be offered a new set of potentially unique employment experiences. Where the acquisition involves the merger of two large organizations (in this case), it is also likely that there will be change for the acquiring group of employees. Following the earlier logic, it is plausible that employees' initial perceptions of how unique the employment offering is will have an impact on employee attitudes and behavior over time and that change in these perceptions will lead to changes in attitudes. Given this:

Hypotheses 5a–c: Perceptions of the unique employment offering "package" experienced (T1) will be positively related to subsequent (a) identification (T2) and (b) discretionary effort (T2), and negatively related to (c) intentions to leave (T2).

Hypotheses 6a–c: Perceived increases in the unique employment offering "package" experienced across time will be positively related to positive changes in (a) identification and (b) discretionary effort, and negatively related to (c) positive changes in intentions to leave.

There is a body of research indicating that the organization's reputation is a key feature of its employer brand (Cable & Turban, 2003; Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998) and specifically that employee perceptions of how prestigious their organization is will influence employee identification, withdrawal cognitions, and discretionary behaviors (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, & Relyea, 2006; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Mignonac, Herrbach, & Guerrero, 2006; Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, Monden, & Lima, 2002). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is often drawn on to explain such links, as being associated with a prestigious organization will provide employees with the potential to bask in reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976). In the context of a major acquisition, the initial perceptions of prestige of the combined company will be informed by employees' views concerning the reputation of both companies prior to the acquisition and the perceptions formed at the time of coming together are likely to have a lasting, though not fixed, effect on employee identification, discretionary effort, and intention to quit. These perceptions of prestige may well change over the first year or so of the postacquisition period as the organization integrates and employees gather more information about the acquisition partner; these changes are likely to feed through into changes in employee responses such as identification, discretionary effort, and intentions to leave. Therefore:

Hypotheses 7a–c: Perceptions of organizational prestige (T1) will be positively related to subsequent (a) identification (T2) and (b) discretionary effort (T2), and negatively related to (c) intentions to leave (T2).

Hypotheses 8a–c: Increases in perceptions of organizational prestige across time will be positively related to positive changes in (a) identification and (b) discretionary effort, and negatively related to (c) positive changes in intentions to leave.

As mentioned earlier, it is likely that all employees in a major acquisition will experience change in their organization's employment brand following an acquisition and organizational restructuring. This may include changes in terms and conditions, changes in management practices, and a change in management. The larger the acquisition, the more likely that change will affect both groups of workers. Furthermore, given that the two groups of workers come from quite different organizations (with their own employment brands), the implications of any change that occurs may well be different for the two groups. Research exists showing that in a merger-and-acquisition context, employees will often have different motivation and exhibit different responses depending upon which organization they originated from (Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001; Van Knippenberg et al. 2002). Van Knippenberg et al. (2002), for example, showed that predictors of identification differ in strength depending upon whether employees worked for the "dominated" versus the "dominating" organization. The dynamics of being a member of a dominated or dominating organization are different, and it is very likely that patterns of employee loyalties and employee expectations of, exposure to, and responses to changes in employment experiences will differ depending upon which organization that the employee worked for preacquisition. This raises the issue, therefore, that the strength and nature of the relationship between the four elements of the employment brand and identification, intent to quit, and discretionary effort may depend upon which organization the employees came from preacquisition. We do not have *prima facie* grounds for anticipating that these will be in any particular direction, but in an extension of the analysis, we examine each of the hypotheses separately for each organization and test whether there are significant differences in the results across the two groups.

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Method

Sample and Procedures

The study took place over a 12-month period and entailed a two-wave online panel survey at both the acquired and acquiring organizations of a multinational acquisition. The Time 1 (T1) data collection was carried out two months after acquisition, and this was followed by a further data collection 12 months later. In total, 893 surveys were forwarded to staff in both organizations at T1; 439 responses were returned (49 percent completion rate). At T2, 771 survey links were forwarded (the reduction in target population was due to layoffs at both organizations), and 407 were returned (53 percent response rate). Of those responding, 291 took part at T1 and T2, which reduced to 251 tracked employees (following listwise deletion). Of these, 93 employees worked for the acquired organization (37 percent), and 158 respondents worked for the acquiring organization (62.9 percent). The majority of the sample, 76.5 percent, came from the United Kingdom; 17.7 percent were from the Netherlands and 8.8 percent from Sweden. These country proportions are generally representative of the target population (77.8 percent, 13.7 percent, and 9.2 percent, respectively). In order to provide context to inform the questionnaire design, a series of telephone interviews and e-mail exchanges were conducted with HR staff at each organization prior to the initial T1 survey distribution. The notes were written up and informed the design of one of the measures (see following).

Measures

Likert scales (with 1–5, strongly disagree to strongly agree scales) were generally used to measure the main constructs; in all cases, the same measures were used both at T1 and T2.

Outcome Measures

Organizational Identification

The five-item Mael and Ashforth (1995) Organizational Identification scale was used to assess participants' identification with the merged entity; examples include "When I talk about XYZ, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'" and "XYZ's successes are my successes."

Intention to Quit

A four-item intent to quit scale was used (Price & Mueller, 1986); examples include "I often think about leaving this organization" and "I am not intending to leave [XYZ] in the near future (reversed)."

Discretionary Effort

A three-item discretionary effort measure was used based on items included in Moorman and Blakely's (1995) OCB scale. The items were: "I always work hard to deliver top quality work," "I carry out my job with extra special care," and "I always work hard to meet deadlines for completing work."

Independent Variables

Unique Employment Experience Elements

A 13-item scale was used, measuring the degree to which employees felt that they received a range of unique employment experiences in employment. Three of these were general questions, and the remaining 10 were specific to the organizations in the study. One of the general questions made specific reference to the uniqueness of the employment offering at the employing organization ("[Organization] offers me an employment experience that would be difficult to get elsewhere"), one made reference to terms and conditions ("As an employer, [Organization] offers terms and conditions that would be difficult to get elsewhere"), and another made reference to the compensation package ("As an employer, [Organization] provides me with a compensation package that would be difficult to get elsewhere"). The remaining items made reference to unique aspects of the employment offering identified by interviewees in the questionnaire preparation stage. The questions made reference to specific features provided by the employer and whether this was unique (and would be difficult to find elsewhere). These ranged from job characteristics ("As an employer, [Organization] provides me with autonomy that it would be difficult to get elsewhere") to aspects that made reference to broader experiences ("As an employer, [Organization] is more supportive of employees than you would expect to find elsewhere"). These features were ascertained through brief telephone interviews and a subsequent e-mail correspondence with 10 senior HR representatives across the two organizations. The interviewees were asked to "identify the top 5 aspects of employment that the workforce tended to consider as unique features associated with [Organization]." The element was used in the survey when it was mentioned by at least two of the representatives from each of the two organizations. The organizational referent used in these items differed at T1 between the two organizations. At T1 (before integration), the acquired organization (ABC) was referred to with the acquired employees and the acquiring organization was referred to with the acquiring workforce. Postintegration, the items made reference to the acquiring organization with both groups. Following exploratory factor analysis (EFA) procedures (see following), this measure was reduced to a seven-item scale.

A six-item scale was used to measure the degree to which respondents felt that the acquiring organization acted in accordance with its espoused identity claims. These identity claims were linked to espoused CSR value claims and were communicated on the corporate website.

Perceptions of Corporate CSR Identity Claims

A six-item scale was used to measure the degree to which respondents felt that the acquiring organization acted in accordance with its espoused identity claims. These identity claims were linked to espoused CSR value claims and were communicated on the corporate website. These identity commitments included two general claims linked to acting with integrity and equal treatment of diverse groups as well as claims made linked to respectful treatment of four key stakeholder groups. Examples include "XYZ always acts with integrity in its actions" and "in its actions, XYZ shows respect for its employees."

Perceived Prestige

Prestige was measured using a scale previously utilized by Van Knippenberg et al. (2002). Respondents were asked to judge the prestige of the acquiring organization on a 10-point scale (end points labeled 1 [extremely low] and 10 [extremely high]).

Acquirer Identity Strength

A three-item scale was used to assess employee perceptions of the acquiring organization's identity strength (Cole & Bruch, 2006). The items were "XYZ has a clear and unique vision," "XYZ has distinct and recognizable values," and "I could easily specify the central values of XYZ." These items have been used previously (anonymized) and were based on items from an identity strength measure used by Gioia and Thomas (1996).

Controls

Some controls were included in the analysis, which were: *gender*, which was included on the basis that "vertical gender inequality" has been shown to be an issue in international mergers (Tienari, Soderberg, Holgersson, & Vaara, 2005); *job tenure*, the rationale for which is that tenure has been found to consistently correlate with organizational identification (Riketta, 2005); *managerial status*, which was included because nonmanagerial employees may have more inward-looking conceptualizations of their organization than managers (Corley & Gioia, 2004); *country*, owing to the possible role of national institutions in shaping the presumptions and expectations of employees (Gallie, 1978); and *organization*, which was included because of the potential difference between those in the dominated versus dominating firms (Van Knippenberg et al., 2002). Also, *experienced job continuity* was measured at T2 to control for any job-related changes; the three-item measure used was based on that used by Van Dick, Ullrich, and Tissington (2006), an example item of which is "Since the acquisition of [ABC], nothing has changed in my job."

Results

Analytical Procedures

Panel attrition is often a problem with longitudinal models (Menard, 2002), and according to Ployhart and Vandenberg (2010), it is important to test for systematic demographic differences between those who responded in multiple waves ($N = 251$ in this case) and those who responded initially but did not repeat their participation ($N = 149$ in this case). Therefore, a series of χ^2 tests were carried out to test for differences in demographic categories (e.g., gender and trade union membership) across the repeating participation versus nonrepeating participation samples (none were found).

A two-step EFA–confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach was taken to confirm the validity of the scales used for measurement. Following recommendations presented by Worthington and Whittaker (2006) when testing the factorial structure of a new scale, we carried out EFA first with a different (separate) sample than the study's main dataset, on which CFA was subsequently conducted. As the study used two waves of surveys in panel form, only participants who completed all of the survey at T1 and T2 were included in the main study ($N = 251$). However, a completely separate sample was available for EFA purposes (not utilized in the main study), which included a set of responses to all scale questions; this additional sample consisted of respondents who completed surveys at T1 but not T2. This T1-only sample ($N = 149$) therefore was used to conduct EFA on the multi-item scales. The resulting factor structure produced by the EFA was subsequently tested using CFA in the separate two-wave sample (used in the remaining analysis of the study) and subsequent regression analysis. Principal component analysis using Varimax rotation was used as an EFA method. This analysis was a particularly important part of the scale validity testing with the two newly constructed scales (unique employment experiences and perceptions of the corporate CSR identity claims); however, carrying out EFA with existing validated scales also helps confirm scale unidimensionality before conducting CFA on the study's main sample. Following EFA, the resulting scales (see Table I) were therefore tested using CFA (Lisrel 8.8). There were three steps to this CFA analysis. As an initial CFA step, a Harman test (Harman, 1976) was conducted at Time 1 and then at

Time 2, which compares the fit of a model where all items from scales were loaded onto a single conglomerated factor to the fit of a model that loaded all items on their intended (separate) latent factors. The second step involved checking for the factorial separation of each construct from all other constructs measured in the study at each time point. This analysis was carried out by comparing the full seven-factor model (T1) with a series of six-factor models, where, in turn, items from each latent construct were made to load together with items from one of the other constructs (in turn). Ensuring that each construct was at some point combined with all of the other constructs meant that 21 of these six-factor (T1) models were tested (each T1 model had a different set of two-construct combinations while leaving the remaining five of the study's main variables separate) against the fully separated seven-factor (T1) measurement model (see Table II). The same approach was taken at T2 apart from the inclusion of the three-item job continuity control variable; this meant that the fully separated model at T2 consisted of an eight-factor structure and the 21 sets of model comparisons that had two factors combined were seven-factor structures. Each of these models could be tested against the fully separated factor structures. Where the χ^2 differences indicated that the fully separated factor structure had a significantly better fit (which was the case in all comparisons here), this confirms that the items combined each time should actually be loaded onto the separate factors.

The third CFA step involved testing the fit of a series of two-factor Time 1 and Time 2 factor solutions for each repeated scale compared to a one-factor structure that disregarded the temporal separation of measurement. Here, each set of items measured at T1 was loaded onto one latent structure, and the corresponding T2 items from the same scale were loaded onto a separate latent structure; errors of the repeated items were allowed to correlate across time (following Pitts, West, & Tein, 1996). These two-factor structures were compared to a one-factor structure that loaded the repeated measures together. Where two-factor structures show an improved fit on a one-factor structure, the validity of the latent structure separation across time is confirmed.

Following the confirmation of the study's measurement model, we constructed mean composites for each variable and then moved on to testing structural predictions using a series of regression analyses. Before this, correlations were conducted linking all of the study's measures, reliability analysis was conducted on all scales (see Table III), and a series of paired *t*-tests were conducted to assess changing perceptions across time (comparing T1 and T2 responses). Finkel's (1995) panel analysis recommendations were followed to assess structural predictions across time. Initially, the T2 dependent variables were regressed[1] onto independent variables (T1) to check for relationships between the employer brand features and the subsequent outcome measures (T2). Subsequently, we then regressed each T2 dependent variable onto the T1 independent variables, each T1 dependent variable, and the T2 independent variables. This assesses the relationship between change in the independent variables and change in the dependent variable; where the T2 independent variables are shown to be significant, this indicates that there is a significant relationship between change in the independent variables and change in the dependent variables (Finkel, 1995). These analyses were carried out with the entire sample (Table IV); subsequently, a series of multigroup path models were tested using Lisrel 8.80 (with free versus equal constraints set on particular paths) to check for significant differences in paths when comparing the acquired and acquiring workforces (the groups were employees from

Where the χ^2 differences indicated that the fully separated factor structure had a significantly better fit (which was the case in all comparisons here), this confirms that the items combined each time should actually be loaded onto the separate factors.

TABLE I Final Factor Component Structure With the Exploratory Factor Analysis Sample ($N = 149$)

Item: / Factor:	Unique Employment Experience*	Organizational Identification*	Perception of CSR Identity Claims*	Intention to Leave*	Discretion-ary Effort*	Identity Strength*
Unique employment experience	0.737	–	–	–	–	–
Unique terms and conditions	0.785	–	–	–	–	–
Unique development opportunities	0.735	–	–	–	–	–
Unique global structure	0.664	–	–	–	–	–
Unique compensation package	0.737	–	–	–	–	–
Unique flexibility	0.784	–	–	–	–	–
Unique autonomy	0.765	–	–	–	–	–
When someone criticizes [Org], it feels like a personal insult	–	0.795	–	–	–	–
I am very interested in what others think about [Org]	–	0.563	–	–	–	–
When I talk about [Org], I usually say "we" rather than "they"	–	0.779	–	–	–	–
[Org]'s successes are my successes	–	*0.642*	–	–	–	–
When someone praises [Org], it feels like a personal compliment	–	0.773	–	–	–	–
[Org] always acts with integrity	–	–	0.714	–	–	–
In its actions, [Org] shows respect for local communities	–	–	0.721	–	–	–
In its actions, [Org] shows respect for its customers	–	–	0.610	–	–	–
In its actions, [Org] shows respect for shareholders	–	–	0.656	–	–	–
In its actions, [Org] shows respect for employees	–	–	0.590	–	–	–
[Org] treats diverse groups equally	–	–	0.698	–	–	–
I often think about leaving this organization	–	–	–	−0.794	–	–
I would prefer to work somewhere other than this organization	–	–	–	−0.667	–	–
I am not intending to leave this organization in the near future (rev)	–	–	–	−0.755	–	–
I would like to stay working at this organization until I retire (rev)	–	–	–	−0.706	–	–
I always work hard to deliver top quality work	–	–	–	–	0.895	–
I carry out my job with "extra special care"	–	–	–	–	0.817	–
I always work hard to meet deadlines for completing work	–	–	–	–	0.878	–
[Org] has a clear and unique vision	–	–	–	–	–	0.691
[Org] has distinct and recognizable values	–	–	–	–	–	0.775
I could easily specify the central values of [Org]	–	–	–	–	–	0.732
Eigenvalues:	7.877	3.799	2.466	2.090	1.361	1.147

*Highest loading in rotated component matrix (none of these items cross–loaded onto another factor to within 0.2 of the weights presented).

TABLE II Confirmatory Factor Analyses Testing the Separation of the Study's Main T1 and T2 Variables

Measurement Models	*df*	χ^2	χ^2/df	*SRMR*	*RMSEA*	*RMSEA 90% C I (;)*	*CFI*	$\chi^2\Delta$
T1 Seven-factor structure								
Null model	406	8,596.08						
Seven-factor model	357	611.87	1.7	0.055	0.053	0.046; 0.061	0.97	
Six-factor: OID and discretionary effort combined	363	875.93	2.4	0.071	0.075	0.069; 0.082	0.94	264***
Six-factor: OID and turnover intent combined	363	846.26	2.3	0.066	0.082	0.076; 0.088	0.94	234***
Six-factor: OID and CSR identity perceptions combined	363	962.79	2.7	0.075	0.097	0.091; 0.10	0.93	351***
Six-factor: OID and uniqueness combined	363	1,129.57	3.1	0.093	0.120	0.11; 0.12	0.91	518***
Six-factor: OID and prestige combined	363	1,056.11	2.9	0.088	0.100	0.097; 0.11	0.92	444***
Six-factor: OID and identity strength combined	363	866.41	2.4	0.070	0.078	0.071; 0.84	0.94	255***
Six-factor: Discretionary effort and turnover intent combined	363	922.38	2.5	0.079	0.079	0.072; 0.85	0.93	311***
Six-factor: Discretionary effort and CSR identity perceptions combined	363	899.02	2.5	0.075	0.077	0.071; 0.83	0.93	287***
Six-factor: Discretionary effort and uniqueness combined	363	1,721.39	4.7	0.093	0.120	0.12; 0.13	0.89	1110***
Six-factor: Discretionary effort and prestige combined	363	943.42	2.6	0.088	0.080	0.074; 0.086	0.93	332***
Six-factor: Discretionary effort and identity strength combined	363	1,030.40	2.8	0.11	0.086	0.080; 0.092	0.92	419***
Six-factor: Turnover intent and CSR identity perceptions combined	363	1,040.97	2.9	0.077	0.110	0.010; 0.11	0.92	429***
Six-factor: Turnover intent and uniqueness combined	363	1,281.18	3.5	0.085	0.100	0.095; 0.11	0.92	669***
Six-factor: Turnover intent and prestige combined	363	1,248.06	3.4	0.089	0.099	0.093; 0.10	0.92	636***
Six-factor: Turnover intent and identity strength combined	363	938.88	2.6	0.077	0.080	0.073; 0.086	0.93	327***
Six-factor: CSR identity perceptions and uniqueness combined	363	1,554.04	4.3	0.099	0.110	0.11; 0.12	0.90	942***
Six-factor: CSR identity perceptions and prestige combined	363	1,604.19	4.4	0.110	0.120	0.11; 0.12	0.90	992***
Six-factor: CSR identity perceptions and identity strength combined	363	762.96	2.1	0.060	0.066	0.06; 0.07	0.95	151***
Six-factor: Uniqueness and prestige combined	363	1,446.09	4.0	0.100	0.110	0.10; 0.12	0.91	834***
Six-factor: Uniqueness and identity strength combined	363	1,009.66	2.8	0.10	0.084	0.078; 0.091	0.93	398***
Six-factor: Prestige and identity strength combined	363	955.07	2.6	0.093	0.081	0.075; 0.087	0.93	343***

(*Continued*)

TABLE II Confirmatory Factor Analyses Testing the Separation of the Study's Main T1 and T2 Variables (Continued)

Measurement Models	*df*	χ^2	χ^2/df	*SRMR*	*RMSEA*	*RMSEA 90% C I (;)*	*CFI*	$\chi^2\Delta$
T2 Eight-factor structure (including the T2 control of job continuity)								
Null model	496	8,596.08						
Eight-factor model	437	767.27	1.8	0.056	0.055	0.049; 0.061	0.97	
Seven-factor: OID and discretionary effort combined	444	1,131.88	2.5	0.070	0.079	0.073; 0.084	0.94	365***
Seven-factor: OID and turnover intent combined	444	1,088.43	2.5	0.065	0.076	0.070; 0.082	0.95	321***
Seven-factor: OID and CSR identity perceptions combined	444	1,010.76	2.3	0.061	0.071	0.066; 0.077	0.96	243***
Seven-factor: OID and uniqueness combined	444	1,199.94	2.7	0.071	0.083	0.077; 0.088	0.95	433***
Seven-factor: OID and prestige combined	444	1,443.21	3.3	0.11	0.095	0.089; 0.10	0.94	676***
Seven-factor: OID and identity strength combined	444	1,001.20	2.3	0.062	0.071	0.065; 0.077	0.96	234***
Seven-factor: Discretionary effort and turnover intent combined	444	1,682.83	3.8	0.14	0.110	0.10; 0.11	0.92	916***
Seven-factor: Discretionary effort and CSR identity perceptions combined	444	1,094.13	2.5	0.071	0.077	0.071; 0.082	0.94	327***
Seven-factor: Discretionary effort and uniqueness combined	444	1,173.92	2.6	0.078	0.081	0.075; 0.087	0.94	407***
Seven-factor: Discretionary effort and prestige combined	444	1,179.72	2.7	0.089	0.081	0.076; 0.087	0.94	412***
Seven-factor: Discretionary effort and identity strength combined	444	1,241.74	2.8	0.12	0.085	0.079; 0.090	0.93	474***
Seven-factor: Turnover intent and CSR identity perceptions combined	444	1,183.17	2.7	0.067	0.082	0.076; 0.087	0.95	416***
Seven-factor: Turnover intent and uniqueness combined	444	1,076.44	2.4	0.063	0.075	0.070; 0.081	0.95	309***
Seven-factor: Turnover intent and prestige combined	444	1,425.88	3.2	0.10	0.094	0.089; 0.100	0.93	659***
Seven-factor: Turnover intent and identity strength combined	444	1,198.64	2.7	0.067	0.082	0.077; 0.088	0.95	431***
Seven-factor: CSR identity perceptions and uniqueness combined	444	1,167.83	2.6	0.070	0.081	0.075; 0.086	0.95	401***
Seven-factor: CSR identity perceptions and prestige combined	444	1,521.63	3.4	0.110	0.099	0.093; 0.100	0.93	754***
Seven-factor: CSR identity perceptions and identity strength combined	444	856.39	1.9	0.058	0.061	0.055; 0.067	0.96	89***
Seven-factor: Uniqueness and prestige combined	444	2,011.22	4.5	0.100	0.120	0.11; 0.12	0.92	1,244***
Seven-factor: Uniqueness and identity strength combined	444	1,060.89	2.4	0.070	0.075	0.069; 0.080	0.95	294***
Seven-factor: Prestige and identity strength combined	444	1,162.55	2.6	0.099	0.080	0.075; 0.086	0.94	395***

each of the two organizations). In each case, where the χ^2 statistic showed a significantly better fit (a Wald test) with models that freed each specific path compared to models that constrained these paths to be equal, a significant difference in the paths across the organizations is indicated (Table V). Note that controls are included in these analyses. However, for parsimony, these are not included in Table V.

Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

As mentioned earlier, a series of EFAs were carried out on a separate dataset to test the validity of the assumed factor structures (before moving forward on CFA and regression analysis). For the unique employment experience scale, the 13 items produced two factors, on which four items cross-loaded (with loadings within .15 of each other and loadings greater than 0.4 on both factors). Of the remaining nine items, seven loaded cleanly onto factor 1 and two loaded cleanly onto a second factor. As only two items cleanly loaded onto the second factor and four items cross-loaded with this factor, the researchers disregarded these six items, leaving a clean seven-item unique employment experience scale. This seven-item scale was then explored again with EFA, and this produced only one factor (with an eigenvalue of 4.17), on which all items loaded above 0.7. These seven items were therefore used with CFA in the main study sample and consist of those making reference to the uniqueness of: the general employment experience, the terms and conditions, developmental opportunities, working in a global structure, the available compensation package, autonomy, and flexibility. EFA was also conducted with the six-item scale measuring perceptions of the acquirer's specific CSR claims. Only one factor was produced (with an eigenvalue of 3.1) with these six items, and all items were therefore used in the CFA analysis with the main two-wave study sample. EFA was also conducted separately on all of the remaining scales; in all cases, the scales were unidimensional, and all produced eigenvalues above 1 (organizational identification = 3.0, discretionary behavior = 2.2, intent to leave = 2.9, identity strength = 2.1). One final EFA was carried out with this T1-only dataset where the following items were all included in a single EFA: the seven-item unique employment experience scale, the six-item perceptions of the CSR identity claims scale, the three-item identity strength scale, the five-item organizational identification scale, the three-item discretionary effort scale, and the four-item intent to leave scale. The rotated structure produced six factors, and each of the 28 items loaded cleanly onto its expected factor (highest loading component structure presented in Table I).

CFA and Measurement Model Results

At T1, a seven-factor CFA structural model (χ^2 = 611.87, df = 357, χ^2/df = 1.7, SRMR = 0.055, RMSEA = 0.053, CFI = 0.97) showed a significantly better fit ($\chi^2\,\Delta$ = 4,243.77, df Δ = 21, $p < 0.001$) than a T1 single conglomerated factor model (χ^2 = 4,855.64, df = 378, χ^2/df = 12.845, SRMR = 0.15, RMSEA = 0.22, CFI = 0.71). All 21 additional six-factor (T1) CFA models that combined each variable with all of the study's other variables in sequence showed a significantly worse fit (the $\chi^2\Delta$ exceeded $p < 0.001$ in each case; see Table II) to the data than the seven-factor (T1) fully separated model, thus confirming the factorial separation of all sets of items for each T1 variable. A similar set of results was found at Time 2 with an eight-factor (which this time included experienced continuity as a control) structure that showed a good fit to the data (χ^2 = 767.27, df = 437, χ^2/df = 1.8, SRMR = 0.056, RMSEA = 0.055, CFI = 0.97); being significantly better ($\chi^2\Delta$ = 5,560.87, df Δ = 28, $p < 0.001$) than a single T2 factor structure (χ^2 = 6,328.04, df = 465, χ^2/df = 13.609, SRMR = 0.13, RMSEA = 0.225, CFI = 0.75). In addition, all 21 of the seven-factor (T2) models that combined each of the study's main variables with all other variables in sequence showed a significantly worse fit (the $\chi^2\Delta$ exceeded $p < 0.001$ in each case) than the eight-factor (T2) fully separated model, thus confirming the factorial separation of all sets of

TABLE III Correlations Between All Variables, Reliability Statistics, and Means Before and After the Restructuring Following Acquisition

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Mean	SD
1. OID T1	*.83*†																3.32	.73
2. OID T2	.64***	*.81*															3.39	.65
3. Discretionary Effort T1	.29***	.18***	*.84*														4.39	.54
4. Discretionary Effort T2	.23***	.29***	.51***	*.85*													4.29††	.57
5. Intent to Quit T1	−.57***	−.39***	−.18**	−.13*	*.88*												2.36	.86
6. Intent to Quit T2	−.33***	−.51***	−.04	−.16*	.55***	*.85*											2.50††	.84
7. Job Continuity T2	.15*	.10	.02	−.11*	−.14*	−.14*	*.90*										3.20	1.08
8. CSR Identity T1	.42***	.35***	.22***	.25***	−.41***	−.28***	.15*	*.86*									3.72	.61
9. CSR Identity T2	.34***	.50***	.17**	.32***	−.32***	−.48***	.12	.56***	*.80*								3.74	.55
10. Unique Aspects T1	.21**	.22***	−.002	.17**	−.46***	−.60***	−.07	.25***	.33***	*.85*							3.24	.70
11. Unique Aspects T2	.31***	.45***	−.00	.20**	−.46***	−.60***	.06	.31***	.51***	.60***	*.88*						3.06††	.75
12. Prestige T1	.38***	.42***	.06	.12	−.52***	−.36***	−.06	.39***	.32***	.32***	.37***	–					7.15	1.61
13. Prestige T2	.23***	.36***	.05	.10	−.33***	−.45***	−.02	.28***	.39***	.30***	.43***	.54***	–				7.16	1.60
14. Identity Strength T1	.43***	.31***	.19**	.23***	−.39***	−.22**	.11	.56***	.36***	.26***	.30***	.36***	.18**	*.79*			3.46	.70
15. Identity Strength T2	.42***	.51***	.18*	.24***	−.35***	−.38***	.12	.49***	.63***	.36***	.50***	.39***	.39***	.57***	*.81*		3.59††	.70
16. Tenure	.02	.06	.01	−.14*	.00	.01	.05	−.14*	−.08	−.06	−.10	.01	.03	.10	.11	–	9.53	7.8

$*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$.
†Cronbach's alpha coefficients on the diagonal.
††Where the T1–T2 comparison is significantly different, $p < 0.05$.

TABLE IV Panel Regression Analyses Predicting Organizational Identification (OID) With the Acquirer, Intent to Quit, and Discretionary Effort

Independent Variables: / Dependent Variable:	OID T2	OID T2	Discretionary Effort T2	Discretionary Effort T2	Intent to Leave T2	Intent to Leave T2
Number of Observations	$N = 251$	$N = 251$	$N = 251$	$N = 251$	$N = 251$	$N = 251$
Step 1: Control Variables						
Organization (Acquirer/Acquired)	−0.197*	−0.064	0.024	−0.011	0.086	−0.067
Gender	−0.040	−0.027	0.086	0.041	0.027	0.011
Job Tenure	0.008	0.082	−0.075	−0.106	−0.026	−0.036
Manager	0.014	0.059	−0.003	−0.026	0.018	−0.017
Netherlands Dummy	−0.042	0.029	−0.081	−0.016	−0.156**	−0.193***
Sweden Dummy	−0.040	0.032	−0.043	−0.038	0.108	0.064
OID Acquirer T1		0.462***				
Discretionary Effort T1				0.483***		
Intent to Leave T1						0.322***
Experienced Job Continuity T2	0.003	−0.046	−0.006	−0.011	−0.237***	−0.130*
Judgment on CSR Identity T1	0.156*	−0.069	0.172*	−0.020	−0.088	0.093
Judgment on CSR Identity T2		0.210**		0.203*		−0.234***
Unique Employment Experience T1	0.100	−0.093	0.068	0.056	−0.305***	0.013
Unique Employment Experience T2		0.177**		0.076		−0.354***
Prestige Merged Organization T1	0.301***	0.085	−0.017	0.010	−0.251***	0.015
Prestige Merged Organization T2		0.074		−0.048		−0.155**
Organizational Identity Strength T1	0.082	−0.076	0.097	0.065	0.007	0.035
Organizational Identity Strength T2		0.167*		−0.067		0.033
R^2	0.258	0.561	0.108	0.350	0.301	0.562
F	7.55***	18.70***	2.633**	7.880***	9.347***	18.74***

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

TABLE V Summary of Results Testing for Differences in Coefficients When Comparing the Acquired With the Acquiring Workforce With the Panel Regression Analyses Predicting Organizational Identification (OID) With the Acquirer, Intent to Quit, and Discretionary Effort

Dependent Variable:†	OID T2	OID T2: T2 IVs and T1 DV Included as IVs	Discretionary Effort T2	Discretionary Effort T2: T2 IVs and T1 DV Included as IVs	Intent to Quit T2	Intent to Quit T2: T2 IVs and T1 DV Included as IVs
Number of Observations	$N = 158/93$	$N = 158/93$	$N = 158/93$	$N = 158/93$	$N = 158/93$	$N = 158/93$
Employment Brand Independent Variables:						
Judgment on CSR Identity T1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Judgment on CSR Identity T2		Different		–		–
Unique Employment Experience T1	–	–	–	–	Different	–
Unique Employment Experience T2		–		–		Different
Prestige Merged Organization T1	Different	–	–	–	Different	–
Prestige Merged Organization T2		–		–		Different
Organizational Identity Strength T1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Organizational Identity Strength T2		–		–		–

† All controls (apart from the "organization" control) and variables presented in Table IV were included in these analyses but not shown for parsimony.
Where "Different" indicated = paths are significantly different when comparing the acquired versus the acquiring organization; details provided in the Results section.

items for each variable from all other key sets of items. With all of these tests, the single-item prestige measure required a starting value to be set for "scale" error; we used Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommendation, setting error at 10 percent of variance (assuming reliability of .90).

Finally, as mentioned earlier, to test for temporal separation of all of the study's multi-item repeated measures scales, a series of two-factor repeated measure CFA models were tested, and these were compared with one-factor models. The series of two-factor models loaded the item sets for each variable at T1 onto a separate factor to the corresponding T2 item sets (while allowing errors to correlate over repeated items), and these were compared with a model that loaded the repeated items for each construct onto a single factor (while again allowing errors to correlate over repeated items). The two-factor model for the organizational identification repeated measures showed a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 28.10$, df = 29, SRMR = 0.028, RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 1.0), significantly better than the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 168.22$, df = 30, SRMR = 0.062, RMSEA = 0.14, CFI = .95). The two-factor model for the unique employment experiences repeated measures showed a good to acceptable fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 288.89$, df = 69, SRMR = 0.071, RMSEA = 0.11, CFI = 0.94), significantly better than the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 766.52$, df = 70, SRMR = 0.10, RMSEA = 0.20, CFI = .86). The two-factor model for perceptions of the organization's corporate CSR claims showed a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 97.06$, df = 47, SRMR = 0.047, RMSEA = 0.065, CFI = 0.97), significantly better than the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 457.23$, df = 48, SRMR = 0.094, RMSEA = 0.18, CFI = .87). The two-factor model for turnover intentions showed a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 19.95$, df = 15, SRMR = 0.025, RMSEA = 0.036, CFI = 1.0), significantly better than the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 336.48$, df = 16, SRMR = 0.11, RMSEA = 0.28, CFI = .86). The two-factor model for discretionary effort showed a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 4.64$, df = 5, SRMR = 0.021, RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 1.0), significantly better than the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 197.88$, df = 6, SRMR = 0.11, RMSEA = 0.36, CFI = .81). The two-factor model for identity strength showed a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 5.08$, df = 5, SRMR = 0.022, RMSEA = 0.01, CFI = 1.0), significantly better than the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 112.89$, df = 6, SRMR = 0.077, RMSEA = 0.27, CFI = .89).

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability statistics are presented in Table III. Of the variables measured, only four showed a significant change across time. A reduction was found with discretionary effort (T1 mean = 4.39, T2 mean = 4.29, $t(250) = 2.79$, $p < 0.01$). Turnover intent showed an increase (T1 mean = 2.36, T2 mean = 2.50, $t(250) = -2.71$, $p < 0.01$). The mean rating for organizational identity strength increased (T1 mean = 3.46, T2 mean = 3.59, $t(250) = -3.11$, $p < 0.01$). Perceptions of unique employment elements decreased (T1 mean = 3.24, T2 mean = 3.06, $t(250) = 4.31$, $p < 0.001$). Perceptions of the corporate CSR identity claims showed no overall change across time (T1 mean = 3.72, T2 mean = 3.74, $t(250) = -.34$, $p > 0.05$); perceptions of prestige also showed no change (T1 mean = 7.15, T2 mean = 7.16, $t(250) = -.041$, $p > 0.05$). No significant differences were found between the EFA sample ($N = 149$, participants who only responded at T1) and the study's main sample ($N = 251$, T1 and T2 responders) when comparing the male/female frequencies ($\chi^2 = 0.967$, $p > 0.05$), nor the management versus nonmanagement frequencies ($\chi^2 = 1.494$, $p > 0.05$), nor the union versus nonunion member frequencies ($\chi^2 = 1.180$, $p > 0.05$), and there were also no significant differences in tenure across these two samples ($t(223.21) = 1.930$, $p > 0.05$). As such, we can be confident that there were no systematic differences in the characteristics of the Time 1 participants who failed to respond at Time 2 compared to those who responded both times.

Structural Hypotheses Testing With the Entire Sample (see Table IV)

Predicting Identification

T2 Dependent Variable Regressed Onto T1 Independent Variables. When T2 identification was regressed onto the controls and T1 employment brand aspects, CSR identity judgments and prestige significantly contributed to the model in a positive direction (Beta = 0.156, $p < 0.05$ and Beta = 0.301, $p < 0.001$, respectively). Organizational identity strength did not, however (Beta = 0.082, $p > 0.05$), nor did ratings of unique employment experiences (Beta = 0.100, $p > 0.05$). Of the controls, only "organization" (acquirer vs. acquired) was significant (Beta = –0.197, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that the acquired workforce identified less than those from the acquirer.

Where employees showed an increase (across the 12 months) in judgments of whether the organization acted in accordance with its espoused CSR identity, an increase in perceptions of unique employment experiences, and an increase in perceptions linked to organizational identity strength, they exhibited increases in identification (across the 12 months).

Examination of Change. When T2 identification was regressed onto T1 identification, controls (including job continuity), and T1 and T2 independent variables, the results showed that change in judgments of CSR identity, change in ratings of the unique employment experience, and organizational identification strength were significantly related to change in identification across time (T2 CSR identity judgments Beta = 0.210, $p < 0.01$; T2 unique experiences Beta = 0.177, $p < 0.01$; and T2 organizational identity strength Beta = 0.167, $p < 0.05$). Where employees showed an increase (across the 12 months) in judgments of whether the organization acted in accordance with its espoused CSR identity, an increase in perceptions of unique employment experiences, and an increase in perceptions linked to organizational identity strength, they exhibited increases in identification (across the 12 months).

Predicting Discretionary Effort

T2 Dependent Variable Regressed Onto T1 Independent Variables. When T2 discretionary effort was regressed onto controls and the T1 employment brand features, CSR identity judgments significantly contributed to the model in a positive direction (Beta = 0.172, $p < 0.05$). Ratings of the unique employment experience, prestige, and identity strength failed to predict T2 discretionary effort (Beta = 0.068, $p > 0.05$; Beta = –0.017, $p > 0.05$; and Beta = 0.097, $p > 0.05$, respectively). No controls significantly contributed to the model.

Examination of Change. When T2 discretionary effort was regressed onto T1 discretionary effort, the controls (including job continuity), and T1 and T2 independent variables, the results showed that change in judgments of CSR identity predicted change in identification across time (T2 CSR judgments Beta = 0.203, $p < 0.05$), but no other change in the employment brand aspects contributed to the prediction of change in discretionary effort. Where employees showed an increase in the judgments of whether the organization acted in accordance with its espoused CSR identity, they tended to exhibit an increase in discretionary effort.

Predicting Intent to Quit

T2 Dependent Variable Regressed Onto T1 Independent Variables. When T2 intent to quit was regressed onto controls and T1 employment brand aspects, unique employment experiences and prestige significantly contributed to the model in a negative direction (Beta = –0.305, $p < 0.001$; Beta = –0.251, $p < 0.001$). No remaining employment brand features made a contribution to intent to quit (CSR identity judgments Beta =–0.088, $p > 0.05$, organizational identity strength Beta = 0.007, $p > 0.05$). Of the control variables, the Netherlands dummy variable contributed to the model (Beta = −0.156, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that those in the Netherlands were more likely to express an intent to leave compared to those in the United Kingdom. Also, the T2 control variable of job continuity did reach significance (Beta = −0.237, $p < 0.001$), indicating that those who experienced greater change (less continuity) in the nature of their job were more likely to express an intention to leave at Time 2.

Examination of Change. When T2 intent to quit was regressed onto T1 intent to quit, controls (including job continuity), and T1 and T2 independent variables, the results showed that change in judgments of CSR identity, change in unique employment experiences, and change in prestige were related to change in intent to quit (T2 CSR judgments Beta = −0.234, $p < 0.001$, T2 unique employment experiences Beta = −0.354, $p < 0.001$, T2 prestige Beta = −0.155, $p < 0.01$). However, change in identity strength was not significant (T2 Beta = 0.033, $p > 0.05$). Where employees showed an increase in judgments that the organization acted in accordance with its CSR identity, an increase in unique employment experiences, and an increase in judgments of prestige across time, they were more likely to show a decrease in intent to quit. The Dutch sample showed less intent to quit than those from the United Kingdom (Beta = −0.193, $p < 0.001$) as did those expressing greater levels of job continuity (Beta = −0.130, $p < 0.05$).

Testing Differences in Structural Predictions Comparing the Acquired Versus Acquiring Workforces

Table V summarizes the results of analysis where employment brand structural paths predicting the study's outcome variables were compared across the acquired versus the acquiring organizations. Where the paths were found to be significantly different, these are discussed here.

Predicting Identification

T2 Dependent Variable Regressed Onto T1 Independent Variables. Prestige (T1) significantly contributed to the model predicting T2 organizational identification in a positive direction (Beta = 0.295, $p < 0.001$) at the acquired workforce. This is a significantly more positive relationship than the contribution of prestige in the acquiring workforce (Beta = 0.290, $p < 0.05$, χ^2 diff = 6.31, $p < 0.01$).

Examination of Change. When T2 identification was regressed onto controls (including job continuity), T1 and T2 employment brand aspects, and T1 identification and compared across the two organizations, change perceptions of CSR identity claims were significantly more positive with the acquired workforce (T2 Beta = 0.227, $p < 0.05$) when predicting change in identification across time compared to the acquiring workforce (Beta = 0.150, $p > 0.05$, χ^2 diff = 4.84, $p < 0.05$).

Predicting Discretionary Effort

None of the structural paths predicting discretionary effort were found to be significantly different when comparing the analysis across the acquired versus the acquiring organizations.

Predicting Intent to Quit

T2 Dependent Variable Regressed Onto T1 Independent Variables. When T2 intent to quit was regressed onto controls and T1 employment brand features at the acquired workforce, ratings of the unique employment experience significantly contributed to the model in a negative direction (Beta = −0.356, $p < 0.01$) to a greater extent than with the acquiring workforce (Beta = −0.315, $p < 0.01$, χ^2 diff = 12.41, $p < 0.001$). In addition to this, prestige significantly contributed to the model to a greater extent with the acquiring sample (Beta = −0.248, $p < 0.01$) than the acquired (Beta = −0.229, $p < 0.05$, χ^2 diff = 4.55, $p < 0.05$).

Examination of Change. When T2 intent to quit was regressed onto T1 intent to quit, controls, and T1 and T2 independent variables, the results showed that change in employment experiences predicted change in intent to quit at the acquired organization (T2 employment experiences Beta = –0.320, $p < 0.01$) to a lesser degree than at the acquiring organization (T2 employment experiences Beta = –0.372, $p < 0.001$, χ^2 diff = 9.49, $p < 0.01$). Change in prestige showed a significant and more negative relationship with change in quit intent at the acquired organization (T2 prestige Beta = –0.209, $p < 0.05$) compared to the acquirer (T2 prestige Beta = –0.162, $p < 0.05$, χ^2 diff = 4.97, $p < 0.05$).

When T2 intent to quit was regressed onto T1 intent to quit, controls, and T1 and T2 independent variables, the results showed that change in employment experiences predicted change in intent to quit at the acquired organization to a lesser degree than at the acquiring organization.

Support for Hypotheses

In summary, the preceding results support Hypotheses 2a, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5c, 6a, 6c, 7a, 7c, and 8c (see Table VI).

Discussion

When an organization goes through the turmoil of a major acquisition, aspects of the organization's employment brand are very likely to change, and the main aim of the article has been to explore the impact of such a change. In general, the findings demonstrate that perceptions linked to aspects of the employment brand that were formed just after the acquisition affected employee attitudes concerning identification, discretionary effort, and intent to quit a year later and that changes in the perceptions of the employment brand also affected changes in these attitudes. These findings in themselves are powerful support for the notion that an organization's employment brand will have important consequences and will influence the employee–organization relationship (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010).

We have shown that the precise patterns of prediction across the study's three outcomes differ according to the various aspects of the employment brand. The element of the brand that has the most consistently significant effect is whether the organization acts in accordance with its CSR identity claims; this reinforces arguments presented by branding authors that the organization's corporate identity is an important element of the organization's employment brand (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). The initial perceptions of the organization's post-completion CSR identity were positively related to subsequent discretionary effort and organizational identification, while changes in these perceptions were positively related to changes in identification and discretionary effort and negatively related to change in quit intentions. In contrast, the element of the brand that has the least consistent impact on the attitudes of interest was the strength of the organizational identity, which was only significant in that changes in this factor positively affected changes in employees' identification with the organization. This is an interesting finding; it may be that identity *strength* in itself is less important than the *nature* of the identity, apart from, that is, the effect that changes in identity strength have on changes in employees' identification (which builds on a cross-sectional relationship found by Cole and Bruch [2006]).

The other two aspects of the employment brand were significant in some cases and not in others. Specifically, perceptions of the unique employment offering and of the prestige of the firm have clear effects on intent to quit; the stronger employees' initial perceptions of these two aspects are, the less likely they are to intend to quit 12 months later, and increases in the two aspects are associated with decreases in intent to quit over time. In addition, increases in the uniqueness of the employment offering predict increases in identification, while stronger initial perceptions of the prestige of the organization mean that employees are more

TABLE VI Summary of Support for the Study's Hypotheses

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	A Organizational Identification	B Discretionary Effort	C Intent to Quit
Strength of Organizational Identity	1 T1 IVs predicting T2 DV			
	2 Change in IVs predicting change in DV	√		
Organization Acts in Accordance With CSR Identity	3 T1 IVs predicting T2 DV	√	√	
	4 Change in IVs predicting change in DV	√	√	√
Unique Employment Offering	5 T1 IVs predicting T2 DV			√
	6 Change in IVs predicting change in DV	√		√
Organizational Prestige	7 T1 IVs predicting T2 DV	√		√
	8 Change in IVs predicting change in DV			√

likely to identify with the organization 12 months later. In general, these findings support arguments made by Ambler and Barrow (1996) and Edwards (2010) about the importance of unique employment experiences as well as arguments presented by (among others) Cable and Turban (2003) and Fuller et al. (2006) about the importance of prestige. Interestingly, these two elements had no impact on discretionary effort. The varied pattern of prediction with different aspects associated with the employment brand strongly supports both our approach of identifying the separate elements linked to an employment brand and of investigating the effect both of the initial perceptions of the brand and changes in these perceptions.

Our research design and analyses enable us to assess whether the hypothesized relationships hold across both the acquired and the acquiring organizations. As Table V shows, the pattern here was of some variation in employee responses depending upon whether employees worked for the acquiring versus the acquired organization. Some differences are evident across the two organizations with regard to identification. For example, changes in judgments of whether the acquiring organization acts in accordance with its corporate social responsibility claims shows a stronger relationship with changes in identification among those in the acquired workforce when compared with their counterparts in the acquiring workforce. Another example is that while in both organizations the most important element of the changing employment brand that predicts higher intentions to leave is where employees demonstrate a reduction in the degree to which they rate particular employment experiences as being provided and as unique, this is a significantly more important factor among the acquiring versus the acquired workforce. However, for the majority of the issues, any differences between the two groups were not significant, and for the issue of discretionary effort, there were no significant differences at all. Overall, the picture seems to be one of the elements of the employment brand having some different but mainly similar effects, across both segments of the workforce.

The results indicate that while any change will have profound effects on both parties, certain changes will have differential impacts on the two workforces, and there is unlikely to be a one-size-fits-all solution to the management of changes in employment brands that ensure a successful integration.

In addition to the detail mentioned earlier where it is clear that different aspects of changes in the organization's employment brand have different effects, the regression models indicate that some outcomes are influenced to a different degree by changes in the employment brand. Turnover intentions and identification with the acquirer are generally influenced to a much greater extent than discretionary effort. Considerably more variance is accounted for in the models predicting variation in identification and intentions to quit than discretionary effort. This is particularly interesting in the context of understanding the effects of employment brand changes; where effects are felt, it is more likely to be in the degree to which employees maintain, develop, or lose a sense of oneness with their employer and the degree to which they wish to stay or leave than the degree to which they are willing to exert extra effort on their jobs.

Conclusion

A key assumption of the branding literature is that an organization's employment brand will be important for current employees in terms of the degree to which employees internalize aspects of the organization's identity via processes of identification and the degree to which employees want to stay in the organization and exert effort that will benefit the organization. We have extended our understanding of these issues in a number of ways. First, we have explored four different aspects of an employment brand and showed that they have varying effects on the outcomes in question. Thus, while the umbrella concept of a brand is useful, we have demonstrated the importance of breaking it down into constituent parts. Second, we have implemented an innovative research design that is genuinely longitudinal in the sense that particular employees are tracked over time, something that is very rare in the literature. This has enabled us to explore change over time, which is of course particularly important in times of major organizational change. Third, we have investigated the issues in the context of the postacquisition period, something that is difficult to do given the sensitive issues at stake but is invaluable given the widespread problems that firms have in integrating their operations following an acquisition. To the extent that HR integration is a part of these problems, understanding how employees' perceptions and attitudes evolve in the postacquisition period is crucial. Fourth, and related to the third point, we have been able to test whether the relationships hold across employees in both parties to an acquisition. The results indicate that while any change will have profound effects on both parties, certain changes will have differential impacts on the two workforces, and there is unlikely to be a one-size-fits-all solution to the management of changes in employment brands that ensure a successful integration.

Study Limitations

Despite the strong longitudinal research design, the current study is not without its limitations. A key limitation is that self-report perceptions of employees do not necessarily measure actual behavior, and the current study has two measures that might suffer from this problem: discretionary effort and intent to quit. Some validation of intentions to quit is, however, found by the fact that those employees who left voluntarily following T1 showed significantly higher levels of intent to quit at T1 compared to those who did not leave. A further limitation of the study is that the prestige variable used is a single-item measure and cannot be checked for reliability. The use of this single-item measure is supported by two main arguments: (1) it has been used by previous authors (Van Knippenberg et al., 2002) and (2) it has been validated in a separate study, as it shows a very high correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) with a composite four-item perceived prestige measure (details available from the authors). Finally, as is often the case with longitudinal research, the response rate decreased when restricting the data to those who responded both times; despite this, the completion rate was still respectable (33 percent). The reduced sample size did, however, have a negative consequence that the N for the acquired organization fell below 100 and the criterion variables need to exhibit stronger relationships with outcomes in order to reach significance. The reader should, therefore, bear this in mind.

Implications for Practitioners

The study has numerous practical implications, particularly that it provides key insights that may help in the challenges of managing employee integration and employee adjustment following a major acquisition. A key aspect of the employment brand changes that feature as important in all adjustment outcomes is the degree to which employees perceive aspects of their employment experience to be unique, though this is particularly important with the acquiring workforce. This shows how important it is for managers responsible for employee integration following major acquisitions (and indeed mergers) to undertake an audit of what employees perceive as being unique employment experiences offered by employment at both the acquiring and the acquired workforces; managers will need to carefully consider the degree to which these unique experiences are likely to change (for both groups) due to an acquisition. Furthermore, another key finding that the study shows as being important is that the acquired employees will be particularly sensitive to whether the acquiring organization is considered to act in accordance with its corporate identity claims (CSR identity claims in this case). Ultimately, the study shows how important it is that when an acquiring organization makes corporate social responsibility claims, these claims must be followed through when navigating the rocky waters of subsequent integration and restructuring. The acquired employees will be particularly sensitive to whether these claims are fulfilled. Importantly, in terms of post-merger-and-acquisition integration, managing the employment brand campaign will require a careful consideration of the two constituencies, as any one change could well lead to different responses in the two groups. While intuitively this may make sense and could be considered obvious to those managing the integration process, the current study provides real evidence that employees in the two workforces react differently to changes in different employment brand elements, which adds significantly to our understanding of the impact of changing employment brands.

Note

1. As the sample incorporated a country grouping, it was necessary to test whether the participants' responses were independent within countries. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) results testing the three dependent variables across countries produced intraclass correlations (ICC1) that indicate responses within countries are independent of each other (and multiple regression can therefore be used). The ICC1 statistic was less than 1 percent (ICC1 $= -0.0001$) for organizational identification ($f(2,248) = 0.937$, $p > 0.05$), less than 2 percent (ICC1 $= 0.019$) for discretionary effort ($f(2,248) = 2.629$, $p > 0.05$), and 3 percent (ICC1 $= 0.031$) for intent to leave ($f(2,248) = 3.713$, $p < 0.05$).

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