



Predicting job offer acceptance of professionals in Taiwan: The case of the technology industry



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ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as a firm's behavior that goes beyond its economic interest to benefit stakeholders and is a critical factor for business organizations to implement in order to successfully increase the job offer acceptance of job applicants. This research examines such job offer acceptance by developing a model based on the social signaling theory and expectancy theory. The hypotheses of this research were empirically tested using the data from professional job applicants at three well-known career fairs for the high-tech industry in Taiwan. The test results show that business practice CSR engagement and recruitment procedural justice positively affect both career success expectation and a firm's attractiveness, which consequently influence job offer acceptance. At the same time, due to its insignificant effect on career success expectation, philanthropic CSR engagement only has a significant impact on a firm's attractiveness. The findings of this research complement prior studies by presenting how business practice CSR engagement, philanthropic CSR engagement, and recruitment procedural justice should be simultaneously taken into account to boost job offer acceptance. Lastly, managerial implications and limitations are provided.

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1. Introduction

Recruitment is one of the key success factors for building up a firm's competitive advantages (Lin et al., 2014; Yeh and Hu, 2011). A critical goal for recruitment campaigns is to enhance the job offer acceptance of job applicants so that a firm can successfully hire prospective employees it truly needs (Harold et al., 2016). Job offer acceptance is defined as the degree to which job applicants intend to accept job opportunities offered by a specific firm. Despite the fact that much literature has studied how and why firms choose job applicants, this study fills in a gap by looking at the other side of the coin — why a specific job offer is accepted by job applicants instead of being turned down. Being turned down by job applicants can seriously frustrate the hiring and personnel managers of firms, because the recruitment process takes a great deal of energy, lots of time, and spent opportunity costs to search for the right applicants to fill a specific job position. It would

be a great waste of organizational time and resources if prospective job applicants for a firm turn out to reject a job offer.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is very important for helping business organizations to successfully increase the job offer acceptance of job applicants (e.g., Harold et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2011; Shova, 2014). CSR is defined as a firm's behavior that goes beyond its economic interest to benefit stakeholders. Prior theoretical discussions about CSR and recruitment lead to three key traits that are regarded as business practice CSR engagement (business-focused engagement), philanthropic CSR engagement, and recruitment procedural justice (e.g., Nabi et al., 2014; Harold et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2011). These three traits are crucial for the efficient communication and understanding between a firm and its job applicants.

Business practice CSR engagement is defined as engaging in activities within a firm's core operations targeted at stakeholders among whom a market exchange exists (i.e., employees and customers) (Homburg et al., 2013), by simultaneously fulfilling the firm's economic obligations and taking business ethics into account. Complementarily, philanthropic CSR engagement is defined as participating in CSR activities targeted at philanthropic interaction with the community and non-profit organizations, which are secondary stakeholders outside a firm's core business operations (Homburg et al., 2013). Recruitment procedural justice is defined as the perceived fairness of the recruitment process.

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Drawing upon the social signaling theory, this study demonstrates that these three factors can jointly predict job offer acceptance.

Previous studies have called for more research to investigate critical mediators that facilitate or hinder job offer acceptance (Becker et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the job-seeking literature based on meta-analysis (e.g., Liu et al., 2014) or field surveys (e.g., Becker et al., 2010) has not reported results concerning any pre-hire expectation variable (e.g., career success expectation) in technology contexts. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap in the literature. It would be too arbitrary and assertive to conclude that job offer acceptance is simply increased by its predictors (e.g., CSR) without considering key mediators. For that reason, this study proposes two key mediators of career success expectation and firm attractiveness based on the expectancy theory and verifies their mediating roles in the development of job offer acceptance. Collectively, this study contributes to the literature on job offer acceptance by examining not only its exogenous predictors, but also its key mediators.

2. Research model and development of hypotheses

This study develops a research model that verifies job offer acceptance, its mediators, and its antecedents. Based on the signaling theory and expectancy theory, this study hypothesizes that the perceived signals of business practice CSR engagement, philanthropic CSR engagement, and recruitment procedural justice are indirectly associated with job offer acceptance via the full mediation of career success expectation and firm attractiveness. The literature has indicated that career development expectation (e.g., Ford et al., 2013) and firm attractiveness (Sohn et al., 2015) are major motivators for job applicants' decision to accept an offer. How job offer acceptance relates to these motivators can be principally explained by the expectancy theory.

A firm's attractiveness is defined as the degree to which job applicants would personally seek the firm out as their employer, whereas career success expectation is defined as the expectation of job applicants regarding their future accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes in the firm (Lin et al., 2012). The expectancy theory is a process theory of motivation, according to which motivation (e.g., job offer acceptance) is a function of individuals' perceptions of a potential employer and the expectations they form based on these perceptions (Fudge and Schlacter, 1999).

Job applicants tend to accept an offer from a firm that they like, adore, or admire (Cable and Graham, 2000), implying a positive relation between firm attractiveness and job offer acceptance. This is understandable, because a firm's attractiveness substantially bolsters the enthusiasm with which job applicants actively pursue job openings (Lee et al., 2013). At the same time, if job applicants expect that working for a firm represents great opportunities for their future success in their career, they are more likely to accept its job offer. Previous research suggests that firms should emphasize employees' job career development and opportunities for future success so as to attract quality workers to join the firms (e.g., Liu et al., 2015). Collectively, the hypotheses regarding the positive effects of firm attractiveness and career success expectation can be summarized into one below.

H1. Firm attractiveness and career success expectation positively relate to job offer acceptance.

In addition to its direct effect on job offer acceptance, firm attractiveness also has an indirect effect on job offer acceptance through career success expectation. As a firm's attractiveness is often based on people's perceptions of the firm's work values and visions (Tsai et al., 2015), job applicants who are more attracted by a specific firm are likely to have a higher expectation about their future career development in the firm. Previous research has found that job applicants are more likely to accept jobs from a firm with stronger attractiveness concerning its social and

environmental values (Gully et al., 2013). Therefore, the hypothesis regarding the indirect relation between firm attractiveness and job offer acceptance is described below.

H2. A firm's attractiveness indirectly relates to job offer acceptance via the partial mediation of career success expectation.

Business practice CSR engagement represents a firm's conduct regarding CSR and characterized by its business expertise and ability, such as the capability to improve the quality of a product (or service) for customers, to develop new product (or service) innovations (e.g., Lin et al., 2011), or to maintain high ethical standards in its business operations (e.g., Uen et al., 2011). Such engagement is likely to satisfy job applicants' needs and expectations for future self-enhancement in career development (Dawkins et al., 2014). In other words, working in a highly-capable firm in terms of business practices can increase the possibility of individuals' future success in their career, leading to a positive relation between business practice CSR engagement and career success expectation.

Mayer et al.'s (1995, p.717) conceptual model suggests that a firm's overall characteristics, such as competencies and corporate ability within its specific business domain, can straightforwardly increase the firm's attractiveness for job applicants. This is theoretically justifiable, because job applicants are likely to interpret business practice CSR engagement as a signal or cue about the firm's (or the recruiter's) superior strength or advantages (Einhorn and Hogarth, 1981), thus resulting in the increased firm attractiveness. To sum up, business practice CSR engagement is seen as a critical determinant of career success expectation and a firm's attractiveness.

H3. Business practice CSR engagement positively relates to both career success expectation and a firm's attractiveness.

Philanthropic CSR engagement represents a firm's humanitarian or altruistic promise that analogously signals the future opportunities of an employee's career development (Ensher and Murphy, 1997). The expectation of career success for job applicants is often based on their perceptions of the firm's defining characteristic (Dutton et al., 1994). Firms with philanthropic CSR engagement often have excelled in providing specialized training for employees, such that philanthropic CSR can be effectively implemented by their qualified workforce (Lê and De Nanteuil, 2015). For this reason, job applicants are more likely to expect successful career development in a firm if the firm shows strong philanthropic CSR engagement (Lin et al., 2012), suggesting a positive association between philanthropic CSR engagement and career success expectation.

Philanthropic CSR engagement also helps job applicants gain confidence about their working for a specific firm in the future, because philanthropic CSR engagement is regarded as a credible signal about its quality job environment (Lin et al., 2011, 2012) and thus strengthens the firm's attractiveness during applicants' job-selecting assessment (e.g., Maheshwari and Yadav, 2015). In other words, during the initial stage of job selection when there has been no prior employment relationship between job applicants and a potential employer, a firm's philanthropic CSR engagement signals the firm's high reliability (Lee et al., 2013), which substantially attracts job applicants (e.g., Jones et al., 2014; Van Hoye and Lievens, 2007). Collectively, the hypothesis about philanthropic CSR engagement is derived as below.

H4. Philanthropic CSR engagement positively relates to both career success expectation and firm attractiveness.

Recruitment procedural justice refers to a firm's fairness to job applicants in its recruitment process. Previous literature (e.g., Gilliland, 1993; Harold et al., 2016) indicates that compared to job applicants who perceive the recruitment-selection process as fair, those who perceive the process as unfair are likely to have serious doubts about future career development in the recruiting firm. On the contrary, the fairness of a

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