A STUDY ON EMPLOYEE BRAND RELATED ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS IN BANKING INDUSTRY, TIRUCHIRAPPALLI

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the relationship between employee brand commitment and brand citizenship behaviours. To identify the relationship organisational socialisation, relationship orientation and employee receptiveness are also included in the study.

The research methodology adopted for this study was based on the development of a survey questionnaire that enabled the assessment of employees’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviour with respect to the application of internal brand management practices. In particular, the population of interest was employees working in a bank (Service-based industry). As the population of interest were employees working in a service industry, a purposive sampling technique adopted for the study. This was achieved through the database (650) of employees working in a Bank. The Questionnaire was distributed to all the employees. The questionnaire returned after completing was 501, yielding a response rate of 77 percent.

The findings revealed a significant positive effect between predicted (Brand Commitment and Brand Citizenship Behaviour) and Predictors variables (Organisational Socialisation, Relationship Orientation). The predictor variable Employee Receptiveness revealed that there is no significant positive effect with Brand Citizenship behaviour.

KEYWORDS: Brand Commitment (BC), Brand Citizenship Behaviour (BCB), Brand Management, Employees

INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid growth of service firms, both researchers and practitioners have come to acknowledge that employee performance plays a vital role in the success of a service brand. Unlike with product brands, for which consumers’ perceptions of a brand derive predominantly from a product’s tangible features, customers’ perceptions of a service brand depend highly on the attitude and behaviour of the employees. Thus, the task of getting employees to build and strengthen an organization’s brand image (i.e., to act as “brand champions”) is a challenge for service firms in many industries.

All employees in the service sector play a crucial role in brand management due to the fact that they are responsible for making brand related decisions, employees are considered particularly significant in the brand management of services. This is because the functional and emotional values of the service brand are delivered through personal interaction between consumers and employees. Therefore, it is argued that service brand success can be only be realised if the employee market is participatory, exhibiting positive attitudes and behaviour, thus resulting in service delivery that is commensurate to customer satisfaction.

Given that organisational culture and employee values have the potential to influence the cluster of values that are perceived by customers to be representative of a service brand, advocate influencing employee behaviour through the
internal communication of brand values. In turn, such communication results in brand values being comprehended by employees as well as being accepted and internalised so as to shape future behaviour.

In recognition of the relational or exchange association that exists between the employee and the organisation, the importance placed on such a relationship from an employee’s perspective, is equal to the effort desired to maintain it. In other words, if the employee perceives the relationship with the organisation to be a positive one, worthy of maintaining, then the employee has a high level of commitment to the organisation. Commitment, in this sense, is considered to be a key variable in determining organisational success as employees feeling of belonging influences their ability to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to achieve the organisation’s goals. The employee commitment results in employees willing to make considerable effort on behalf of the organisation. Therefore, as organisations embrace the knowledge that employee effort lies at the heart of organisational success, internal brand management has been promoted to be the means to ensure employees are attitudinally and behaviourally ready to deliver the brand promise. With commitment considered a prerequisite for employees to be brand champions (i.e. deliver the brand promise), it could be argued that the internalisation of brand values by employees is demonstrated through both attitudinal and behavioural factors.

Brand commitment (BC) and brand citizenship behaviours (BCB) will be the key determinants of brand strength as a result of internal brand management practices adopted in the service organizations. As such, in order to further understanding of effective brand building strategies in service firms, the antecedents (i.e. both organisational and individual) of Brand commitment and brand citizenship behaviours BCB will provide fruitful ground for investigation. This study, therefore, examines the network of relationships that exist between three such antecedents i.e. organisational socialisation, organisational relationship orientation and employee receptiveness with BC and BCB. In doing so, the findings demonstrate that it is the receptiveness (or openness) of the individual to the brand (or organisational) values that plays a key role in the development of strong service brands.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brand commitment is the psychological attachment or the feeling of belonging an employee has towards an organisation. This perspective of commitment is consistent with the higher order brand resonance that Keller (2001) believes is the pinnacle in external brand building and, therefore, essential for the creation of brand equity.

According to Castro et al. (2005), the performance of employees within their work environment is a significant consequence of organisational commitment. This is premised by the fact that, employees, who are satisfied with their work environment tend to, or have a desire to, reciprocate (Wayne, 1997; Castro, 2005). Through their perception of fairness (Deluga, 1994) and support from the organisation (Wayne et al., 1997), employees exhibit behaviours that are beyond the formally articulated requirements of their job (Deluga, 1994; Beckett-Camarata, 1998). Such behaviours, identified as brand citizenship behaviour, are employee behaviours that are non-prescribed or “above and beyond the norm”, yet consistent with the brand values of the organisation, thus engendering positive organisational outcomes.

In relation to the terminology used with respect to brand citizenship behaviour, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) believe there to be subtle differences with respect to brand-related behaviour in contrast to organisational-related behaviour. As such, they promote a modified perspective to organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), namely brand citizenship behaviour (BCB). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) believe such a modification is warranted given that OCB is “considered” to have an internal focus. However, contemplation of the subtle changes Burmann and Zeplin (2005) made with respect to the OCB construct to coin BCB, is not believed, here, to be sufficient in delineating between the two constructs. As a result, it is suggested that they should be considered synonymous.
Organisational socialisation, therefore, is the process by which employees gain an appreciation for the values and beliefs of the organisation and the subsequent expectations of them by the organisation, in order to be a successful contributor (Kelley, 1992; Naude, 2003). Taormina (1994) takes a comprehensive view of organisational socialisation and promotes it as a process that encapsulates four key domains: (1) job training; (2) understanding; (3) co-worker support; and (4) future prospects.

In other words, organisational socialisation provides support to employees in relation to the required skills, knowledge and understanding needed to undertake their duties and responsibilities. Fundamentally, organisational socialisation is an important antecedent to employee behaviours and attitudes in general, for without such knowledge and skills transfer it is difficult for employees to emulate appropriate behaviour commensurate with organisational goals. In fact, Kelley (1992) found a positive relationship to exist between organisational socialisation and both motivational effort and commitment. This was consistent with Saks et al. (2007) findings that socialisation was positively related to organisational commitment and job performance.

Relationship orientation is defined as the extent to which the organisation exhibits positive behaviours towards employees (e.g. shows respect, is cooperative, communicates well, is trustworthy, encourages working towards a common goal). From this perspective, a positive relationship orientation provides the conduit through which mutually beneficial organisation/employee exchanges are realised. While this notion may seem commonsensical, the assumption that people will work together harmoniously and that senior management promote collaboration (Tjosvold, 1993), is impeded by the territorial nature of individuals to preserve their own domain (Ballantyne, 2000). As such, to assume consideration is given to aspects of relational exchanges is thought to be insufficient to realise positive employee behaviour. Rather the realisation of a successful exchange between employer and employee requires the articulation of positive organisational intent, coupled with employee receptivity. The attainment of favourable outcomes, such as customer conscious employees, is engendered through the relational exchange process between the organisation and the employee (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). This is because positive employment relationships have been linked to commitment (e.g. Herington et al., 2009; Schweitzer and Lyons, 2008) as well as brand supportive behaviours (e.g. Kim, 2009; Schweitzer and Lyons, 2008).

Employee receptiveness, on the other hand, is an antecedent variable which, in essence, depicts the degree to which the employee’s behaviour is open to receiving organisational information and dialogue from the outset, rather than how they behave after being subjected to such organisational efforts. In this sense, we view employee receptiveness as an enduring psychological state that remains relatively constant over time and different work situations. It is, therefore, proposed that employee receptiveness is an aspect of a proactive personality in line with Crant’s (2000) argument that individuals with proactive personalities tend to create and influence the work environment. In fact, proactive personalities have been found to influence career success (Seibert et al., 1999) and work performance (Crant, 1995). Given that employee receptiveness is argued to be a positive attitudinal/trait variable, it would, therefore, be expected that those employees who exhibit strong receptiveness would also be more likely to exhibit positive brand attitudes and behaviours.

**HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

1. Brand Commitment (BC) will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviour (BCB).
2. Organisational Socialisation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Commitment (BC).
3. Organisational Socialisation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours (BCB).
4. Relationship Orientation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Commitment (BC).
5. Relationship Orientation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours (BCB).

6. Employee Receptiveness will have a significant positive effect on Brand Commitment (BC).

7. Employee Receptiveness will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours (BCB).

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this study was based on the development of a survey questionnaire that enabled the assessment of employees’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviour with respect to the application of internal brand management practices. In particular, the population of interest was employees working in a bank (Service-based industry).

Survey Measures

All the scale items in the survey were drawn from existing scales that had demonstrated reliability and validity. For example, brand commitment (BC) items were drawn from larger organisational commitment scales of Ganesan and Weitz (1996) and Maltz and Kohli (1996) and organisational socialisation items were drawn from Taormina’ (1994) organisational socialisation inventory. In relation to the other constructs of interest (brand citizenship behaviour and relationship orientation), the literature provided guidance to the development of these items. For example, BCB items were based on the OCB work of Podsakoff (2000) and relationship orientation was based on the relationship scale of Herington (2003). Finally, given the absence of constructs that examine psychological traits in internal brand management, in particular, employee openness to organisational dialogue, scale items were developed from scratch for employee receptiveness. These items were developed according to the procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) and implemented by Kelley (1992). A pilot test was conducted, resulting in four items from the employee receptiveness construct being deleted due to cross loading or insufficient communality. Six items represented the employee receptiveness construct in the final survey.

Data Collection

As the population of interest were employees working (Private and Public Bank) in a service industry, a purposive sampling technique adopted for the study. This was achieved through the database (650) of employees working in a Bank. The Questionnaire was distributed to all the employees. The questionnaire returned after completing was 501, yielding a response rate of 77 percent.

RESULTS

First, the bivariate correlations between the dimensions within each construct were checked. All dimensions were within the acceptable range for factor analysis of 0.30 to 0.90. It is absolutely necessary to establish convergent and discriminant validity, as well as reliability, when doing a CFA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Average Variance Explained</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brand Commitment</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brand Citizenship Behaviour</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Organisational Socialisation</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Relationship Orientation</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employee Receptiveness</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To attain reliability and Convergent validity the study should attain CR > 0.7 (reliability), CR > (AVE) and AVE > 0.5 (Convergent Validity). The Composite reliability in the study is above .7, and all the Composite reliability values were higher than the average variance explained, the average variance explained were higher than .5. The analysis
indicated that all dimensions were valid and reliable measures for their respective constructs. The convergent validity is achieved.

**Correlation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organisational Socialisation</th>
<th>Employee Receptiveness</th>
<th>Relationship Orientation</th>
<th>Brand Citizenship Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee Receptiveness</td>
<td>0.371</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Orientation</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Citizenship Behaviour</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>0.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Commitment</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>0.558</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having computed the composite measures, an assessment of discriminant validity, as recommend by Gaski and Nevin (1985), was initiated, in that if the correlation between two composite constructs is not higher than their respective reliability estimates, then discriminant validity exists. Therefore, construct correlations were examined and compared to the reliabilities calculated via Cronbach’s alpha in the preliminary data analysis. Correlations ranged from 0.34 to 0.65 and the reliabilities ranged from 0.74 to 0.81. The comparison of individual bivariate correlations between constructs revealed that no correlations were higher than their respective reliabilities. This being the case discriminant validity was verified. The suitability of the data was conformed for further analysis.

**RESULTS**

Partial Least Squares Result for Proposed Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>Critical Ration</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Brand Commitment (BC) will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviour (BCB).</td>
<td>0.3120</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.7666</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Organisational Socialisation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours (BCB).</td>
<td>0.2910</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>6.1407</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Relationship Orientation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours (BCB).</td>
<td>0.3590</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.0226</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Employee Receptiveness will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours (BCB).</td>
<td>-0.1280</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-2.3498</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Organisational Socialisation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Commitment (BC).</td>
<td>0.3770</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>7.8628</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Relationship Orientation will have a significant positive effect on Brand Commitment (BC).</td>
<td>0.1420</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>2.3302</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Employee Receptiveness will have a significant positive effect on Brand Commitment (BC).</td>
<td>0.3140</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5183</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows the result of structural equation modelling with the help of Partial Least Squares (PLS) a multivariate technique which allows the estimation and examination of paths between the latent variables that are measured via multiple indicators. The hypotheses from H1 to H7 depict the path coefficients between the exogenous and endogenous variables, also average variance accounted, R² and critical ratios. The average variance accounted for the endogenous variables was .52. The individual R² were higher than the recommended value above .10, which is appropriate to examine the significance of the paths associated with the latent variables. As shown in the table it was apparent that the paths exceed the criterion where by the bootstrap critical ratios were of the appropriate size (1.64), except the path H4 (Employee Receptiveness will have a significant positive effect on Brand Citizenship Behaviours) were not significant.

The data showed that 58 per cent of the variance in brand citizenship behaviours was explained by brand commitment, relationship orientation, organisational socialisation and employee receptiveness. Collectively, employee receptiveness, relationship orientation and organisational socialisation explained 45 per cent of the variance in brand commitment.

DISCUSSIONS

Relationship orientation is found to be strong predictor of Brand Citizenship Behaviour, followed by Brand Commitment and Organizational Socialization. Employee receptiveness negatively influences Brand Citizenship Behaviour. Specifically employee receptiveness “Openness to experience” which is one if the Big Five Model of Personality should be developed, because openness tends to see out new and different experience.

Therefore in representing a positive individual disposition that affects employee behaviour through intellectual curiosity, the individual characterises of openness or receptiveness is considered relevant. Such kind of open attitude will realise positive work related outcomes such as commitment and satisfaction. Employee receptiveness will the maximize the likelihood of achieving successful outcomes, therefore employees must be active in seeking out information, should have desire to understand not only their jobs bur also their organizations, and be prepared to actively engage in the provision of feedback to their superiors.

Organization Socialisation is the strong predictor of Brand commitment followed by Employee Receptiveness and Relationship Orientation. To increase the employee brand commitment the organization should extent positive behaviours towards employees like show respects, Cooperative, communicate well, trustworthy and organization should continuously encourage their employees to achieve the common goal.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides insight to managers that covet organisational success through the adoption of internal brand management practices. In particular, it empirically validates the significance of the receptivity of employees in enhancing not only their commitment to the brand but the exhibition of “pro” brand behaviours as well. Without employees that are first receptive to organisational dialogue, the intentions of internal brand management initiatives are unlikely to be realised.

The importance of effective brand management in realising financial benefits for the organisation cannot be overstated. With increased interest being given to the engendering of such outcomes, particularly in the services arena, both practitioners and academics alike advocate the vital role played by the employee. Brand aligned employees, as demonstrated through employee commitment to the brand and the exhibition of brand citizenship behaviour, has been advocated in the literature to be the result of the appropriate application of internal brand management practices.
LIMITATIONS

First, any survey-based method, including that adopted in this study, involves measurement error. In other words, the elicitation of a scale measurement depends on the respondent’s ability to accurately report their level of agreement or feelings with regards to the survey statements. However, preliminary data analysis suggests that measurement errors do not appear to be problematic as reflected in the scale reliability estimates. Second, all the private and public banks could not be considered for the study, so the study could not be generalized. Third, Given that a purposive sampling technique was employed for this study, another potential limitation is that of non-observation errors, in particular non-coverage and non-response bias.

REFERENCES


