

Exploring the Dimension of Internal Brand Citizenship Behavior in Malaysia: A Case of Northern Malaysia Hotel

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This study attempts to explore the dimension of internal brand citizenship behavior in Malaysia. As there is a dearth of research in understanding employees' brand behavior and inconsistent terminology used in explaining employees' brand consistent behavior, the study that attempt to explore the dimension of such behavior considered utmost important especially in facing this challenging business horizon. The random survey of 288 hotels' employees of three to five star hotels from four major states in the northern region of Malaysia revealed that brand citizenship behavior is best explained by multidimensional concept. The study revealed that, brand citizenship behavior consists of helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development and brand endorsement. Contribution, limitation and future research also were addressed at the end of the discussion.

Field of Research: Brand citizenship behavior, Internal branding, Service branding, Employee branding

1. Introduction

Internal brand behavior is rarely being discussed especially in academic literatures. In the last decade, brand management strictly focused from the perspective of customers which is directed to understand customers' behavior better towards the brand. Keller (1993) was one of the most cited literatures in brand equity that led to 'Customer-Based Brand Equity' (CBBE) theory which concerned on how customers' behavior contributed to a long term brand survival. However, in this challenging millennium, to sustain the brand's competitive advantage, organizations should have a balance perspective of brand management that emphasizes both external and internal brand management. This is because, employees who represent the brand have an opportunity to enhance brand image and reputation as well as brand performance through their attitude and behavior especially during the service delivery (Burmans, Zeplin & Riley 2008; King & Grace 2008; Burmans & Zeplin 2005). Therefore, management should identify and encourage employees' behavior that can enhance overall brand performance.

Despite the growing interest in academic literatures on internal branding practices that aim to align employees' brand consistent behavior such as Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009), King and Grace (2008), Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) and an attempt to conceptualize 'Employee-Based Brand Equity' (EBBE) (King & Grace 2010), there is no consensus of what are the expected brand-consistent behaviors from the internal branding perspectives. Moreover, past literature in internal branding also mainly focused on managements' and

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consultants' perspectives that limit in understanding on actual employees' brand-consistent behavior (Punjaisri & Wilson 2007). Therefore, the study that attempts to identify dimension of brand-consistent behavior from employees' perspective is most welcome especially in internal branding literatures. For the purpose of the study, employees' brand-consistent behavior will be conceptualized as brand citizenship behavior as proposed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) that recognized employees voluntarily display generic number of brand-consistent behaviors that could contribute to overall brand performance. The respondents from the hotel industry were approached to understand brand citizenship behavior. Hotel industry was chosen because based on the nature of services that demand employees to, (i) represent the brand in appropriate manner, (ii) engage in voluntary behavior on behalf of the brand, and (iii) sustain brand competitive advantage through service efficiency. As such, hotel employees were identified as the best platform to explore the dimension of brand citizenship behavior specifically on Malaysian perspectives.

2. Literature Review

Based on the literatures, brand-consistent behavior commonly discussed based on two major streams, namely (i) in-role brand behavior and, (ii) extra-role brand behavior. For instance, Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009), King and Grace (2008) and Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) highlighted brand-consistent behavior as more toward in-role brand behavior while Morhart, Herzog and Tomczak (2008) and Burmann et al. (2008) stated that brand-consistent behavior is best described as extra-role brand behavior. However, there is no consistent terminology used for both concepts of brand-consistent behavior. Another major issue concerned with such concept (in-role and extra role brand behavior) is regarding unidimensional versus multidimensional of employees' brand-consistent behavior. Therefore, the study at hand will examine whether such employees' brand-consistent behavior is unidimensional or best explained by multidimensional concept.

In essence, in-role brand behavior is related to an ability of employees to deliver the brand promise. According to Morhart et al. (2008), in-role brand behavior is meeting prescribed brand roles while Burmann et al. (2008) termed this as brand compliance. In-role brand behavior would be easily fulfilled by most organization. Extra-role brand behavior refers to employees' willingness to take extra miles on behalf of the organization's brand. This includes job or task or behavior that goes beyond formal prescribed brand roles such as positive word of mouth, participation, helping behavior, sportsmanship, brand enthusiasm and other employees' extra brand effort (Burmann et al. 2008; Morhart et al. 2008). Based on the assumption that organization sustained their brand competitive advantage through differentiation strategy, thus, extra-role brand behavior would be the best practice for brand differentiation. This is because, to engage employees with extra-role brand behavior that goes beyond their formal brand role is not easily found in every organization/brand. Moreover, Burmann et al. (2008) suggested that extra-role brand behavior is more superior than in-role brand behavior in stimulating favorable brand identity. As such, extra-role brand behavior will be examined in this study which is conceptualized as brand citizenship behavior.

Brand citizenship behavior (BCB) is a relatively new concept that explains how employees could improve their brand delivery performance by aligning their attitude and behavior to the organization's brand. In essence, brand citizenship behavior refers to the

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employees' voluntary basis to project a number of generic employees' behaviors that enhance the brand identity (Burmam & Zeplin 2005). BCB originated from organizational citizenship behavior that acknowledged the internal micro-level performance (i.e. employee's brand performance) to external target groups rather than macro-level performance (i.e. job and organizational performance) alone.

According to Burmann et al. (2008), BCB is built up by seven constructs which is believed to represent the brand-related behavior of employees to enhance the organization's brand success and later sustain the organization's competitive advantages. The constructs are as follows:

- *Helping Behavior.* Helping behavior is associated with positive attitude, friendliness, helpfulness, and empathy towards internal and external customer, taking responsibility for tasks outside of own area if necessary such as following up on complaints.
- *Brand Consideration.* Brand consideration refers to employee's adherence to brand-related behavior guidelines and reflection of brand impact before communicating or taking action in any situation.
- *Brand Enthusiasm.* Brand enthusiasm refers to employee's ability to show extra initiative while engaging in brand-related behavior.
- *Sportsmanship.* Sportsmanship is associated with no complaining, even if engagement for the brand cause inconvenience; willingness to engage for the brand even at the opportunity cost.
- *Brand Endorsement.* Brand endorsement refers to employee's recommendation of the brand to others also in non-job-related situations for example, to friends; passing on the brand identity to newcomers in the organization.
- *Self-development.* Self-development refers to employee's willingness to continuously enhance brand-related skills.
- *Brand-advancement.* Brand advancement refers to employee's contribution to the adaptation of the brand identity concept to changing market needs or new organizational competencies, such as through passing on customer feedback or generating innovative ideas.

In general, the constructs cover employees' consideration towards the brand that goes beyond their formal prescribed job mainly to deliver the brand promise in appropriate manner. Thus, based on the comprehensiveness of the brand behavior construct proposed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005), brand citizenship behavior will be adapted because it provides a more holistic view of brand performance in the context of employees as opposed to other's works. However, the research findings of Burmann et al. (2008) revealed that only three out of seven constructs (namely helping behavior, brand enthusiasm and brand development) significantly explained brand citizenship behavior. As such, there is the need to test the construct with the new data set mainly to increase the superiority of the construct.

3. Methodology

A total of 30 hotels in Perlis, Kedah and Penang states were invited to participate in this study. The invitation letters were sent to General Manager/Human Resource Manager for their approval and consideration. However, only 12 hotels managed to participate in

this study. The remaining 18 hotels refused to participate mainly because of; (i) takeover of new management, (ii) under renovation, (iii) internal policies, and iv) other management constraints. A total of 435 sets of questionnaire were randomly distributed to the identified employees. However, only 314 sets of questionnaire were returned. As such, the response rate is 72.2% which is considered as high. However, only 288 were proceed for data analysis. A total of 26 sets of questionnaire were considered as damage and/or incomplete.

Both frontline and backstage employees from three to five star hotels were included in this study because in advance service economy, both are equally important for the brand success (Burmam & Zeplin 2005). For the purpose of the study, the original brand citizenship behavior measure as proposed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) is used mainly in 6-point Likert Scale from 1 for 'strongly disagree' to 6 for 'strongly agree'.

To identify the dimension of BCB in Malaysia especially among northern region hotels' employees, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. EFA is a variable reduction technique which identifies the number of latent constructs and the underlying factor structure of a set of variable (Child 1990).

4. The Findings

Table 1 summarized the respondent's profile of the study. Numerous authors had set several assumptions for factor analysis. Hair et al. (2006) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) highlighted both assumptions on conceptual and statistical issues. Hair et al. (2006) suggested that there is a need to confirm that there is a strong conceptual foundation that a structure does exist before proceed the factor analysis. As for this study, the conceptual was developed based on the strong conceptual foundation and based on the extensive literature review. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggested that 300 cases are good enough for factor analysis. However, according to the authors, it is still can be tolerated if there are few mutually exclusive factors with strong and reliable correlations emerged from the analysis. In addition, it also suggested that Barlett's Test of Sphericity is significant (sig. <0.05). Measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) must exceed 0.50 for both overall test and each individual variable. Values less than 0.05 should be omitted from the factor analysis (Hair et al. 2006). In addition, according to Flyod and Widaman (1995), the different of value between one factor to another factor should be at least 0.01 to avoid cross loading. Thus, cross loading factor also suggested to be omitted from the factor analysis. In addition, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy should be greater than 0.60 (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001).

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Table 1
Respondent Profiles

No.	Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Hotel Star Rating</i>		
	<i>Three star</i>	139	48.2
	<i>Four star</i>	67	23.3
	<i>Five star</i>	82	28.5
2.	<i>Customer-Contact</i>		
	<i>Front-line employees</i>	187	64.9
	<i>Back-stage employees</i>	101	35.1
3.	<i>Department</i>		
	<i>Reception/Counter</i>	48	16.7
	<i>Restaurant/Food & Beverages</i>	47	16.3
	<i>Housekeeping</i>	52	18.1
	<i>Support Services/Maintenance</i>	16	5.6
	<i>Human Resource/Admin</i>	32	11.1
	<i>Account/Finance</i>	28	9.7
	<i>Sale & Marketing</i>	31	10.8
	<i>Other</i>	34	11.8
4.	<i>Job Status</i>		
	<i>Permanent</i>	238	82.6
	<i>Temporary</i>	19	6.6
	<i>Contract</i>	31	10.8
5.	<i>Job Tenure</i>		
	<i>Less 1 years</i>	62	21.5
	<i>1 to 3</i>	94	32.6
	<i>4 to 6</i>	60	20.8
	<i>7 to 9</i>	29	10.1
	<i>10 and above</i>	43	14.9
6.	<i>Academic Attainment</i>		
	<i>Primary</i>	10	3.5
	<i>Secondary</i>	178	61.8
	<i>College/University</i>	98	34.0
	<i>Other</i>	2	0.7
7.	<i>Monthly Salary</i>		
	<i>Below RM500</i>	35	12.2
	<i>RM501 to RM1000</i>	136	47.2
	<i>RM1001 to RM1500</i>	51	17.7
	<i>RM1501 to RM2000</i>	39	13.5
	<i>RM2001 to RM2500</i>	20	6.9
	<i>RM2501 and above</i>	7	2.4
8.	<i>Gender</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	132	45.8
	<i>Female</i>	156	54.2
9.	<i>Age</i>		
	<i>Less than 20</i>	9	3.1
	<i>21 to 30</i>	149	51.7
	<i>31 to 40</i>	98	34
	<i>41 to 50</i>	29	10.1
	<i>More than 50</i>	3	1
10.	<i>Ethnicity</i>		
	<i>Malay</i>	204	70.8
	<i>Chinese</i>	36	12.5
	<i>Indian</i>	33	11.5
	<i>Other</i>	15	5.2

Based on the above consideration, the following Table 2 shows the result of factor analysis of this study. Based on the principle component analysis with Varimax rotation, the original seven dimensions of brand citizenship behavior were dropped into four major components which are labeled and discussed as follows:

i. Helping behavior

Helping behavior is conceptualized as consist of five items (1 to 5). However, principle component analysis with Varimax rotation revealed that helping behavior is developed based on eight items namely items 1 to 8. Items 6 and 7 that are supposed to represent brand consideration are loaded as helping behavior. One

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item of brand enthusiasm i.e. item 8 is also loaded into helping behavior. As such for the study at hand, helping behavior received three additional items.

Table 2
Factor Analysis for Brand Citizenship Behavior

No.	Items	Co. 1: Helping behavior	Co.2: Self-brand- development	Co.3: Brand endorsement	Co.4: Sportsmanship
1.	I have a positive attitude towards customers and other colleagues.	.712	.339	.078	-.018
2.	I am always friendly towards customers and other colleagues.	.764	.331	.012	.057
3.	I am always helpful towards customers and other colleagues.	.792	.294	-.020	-.024
4.	I am are always try to put myself in the customers' or other colleagues' positions in order to understand their views and problems.	.831	.118	.158	.063
5.	I am always take responsibility outside of my own competence area if neccessary (e.g. in handling customer claims or complaints).	.709	.163	.170	.134
6.	I feel so sad on any of bad news regarding this organization's brand.	.686	.291	.186	.068
7.	I act according to the organization's identity, even when I'm not controlled by anyone.	.623	.272	.345	.065
8.	I take special care in my work and check the quality of my work outcomes, if this has a positive effect on the organization's identity.	.705	.334	.134	-.070
9.	I would accept even extra work, if this would influence the organization's image positively (e.g. for finishing a customer order/request in time).	.495	.459	.229	.003
10.	I would never use competitor brands, even in private.	.461	.344	.250	.278
11.	I complaint frequently about the effort that is made to generate a positive organization's image.	.057	.120	.125	.892
12.	I lament frequently the difficulties and annoying duties of my jobs.	.028	.031	.198	.870
13.	I would stay with this organization, even if a competitor offered more sallary.	.030	.080	.749	.260
14.	I would always recommend this organization to friends, acquaintances or relatives, also in private conversations.	.171	.224	.793	.132
15.	I try to convey our organization's identity to new employees, e.g. in informal conversations or by assuming a mentor role.	.398	.345	.639	.032
16a.	I ask other colleagues actively for feedback.	.335	.623	.335	-.046
16b.	I strive to develop expertise by reading manuals, guidebooks or professional journals.	.292	.770	.287	.012
16c.	I regularly take the initiative to participate in trainings.	.291	.835	.052	.156
16d.	I always report customer feedback or internal problems directly to the person in charge.	.370	.767	.172	.035
16e.	I take initiative to develop ideas for new products, services or process improvements.	.321	.729	.102	.174
<i>Eigenvalues</i>		9.043	2.060	1.267	1.057
<i>% variance explained</i>		45.214	10.302	6.334	5.286
<i>KMO</i>				.918	
<i>Barlett's Test of Sphericity:</i>					
<i>Chi-Square</i>				3569.779	
<i>Df</i>				190	
<i>Sig.</i>				.000	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

ii. Self-advancement/brand development

Self-advancement and brand development dimension are loaded as one component. This component is labeled as self-brand-development. The component consist of five items namely items 16a, 16b, 16c, 16d and 16e.

iii. Brand endorsement

Based on the factor analysis, brand endorsement is made up by three items (namely items 13, 14, and 15) with additional one item from its original conceptualization. Item 13 that is supposed to be loaded into sportsmanship is loaded as brand endorsement.

iv. Sportsmanship

Based on the factor analysis, sportsmanship consists of two items namely 11 and 12. Item 13 is loaded into brand endorsement.

Overall, the basic requirements of factor analysis were met where, KMO is above 0.50 and Barlett's test is significant. However, two items namely item number 9 and 10 that were supposed to represent brand enthusiasm were dropped because the coefficient values were less than 0.50. The dimension of brand consideration and brand enthusiasm is not extracted in this factor analysis. As such, only four main dimensions namely; (i) helping behavior, (ii) self-brand-development, (iii) brand endorsement and (iv) sportsmanship were identified to represent brand citizenship behavior. Among the dimensions, helping behavior consist of the most items (8 items) and the variance explained by these items were 45.2%. In conclusion, the factor analysis for this study extracted four different dimensions of BCB as opposed to the findings of Burmann et al. (2008). In the study of Burmann et al. (2008), BCB consists of three main dimensions namely; helping behavior, brand enthusiasm and brand development based on the surveys among employees of 14 major service and product brands in Germany. As such, with different data set, different research setting as well as respondents' background, this study contributes to new dimension of BCB namely; (i) helping behavior, (ii) self-brand-development, (iii) sportsmanship and (iv) brand endorsement.

5. Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to extend the boundary of knowledge in internal branding especially in understanding internal brand citizenship behavior. Based on the study, employees' brand consistent behavior is not exclusively referred to conformance to the brand promise per se (in-role brand behavior). Besides, this study found that Malaysian hotels' employees were also ready to engage in extra-role brand behavior especially brand citizenship behaviors such as helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development and brand engagement.

This study contributes that brand citizenship behavior indeed is best explained by multidimensional construct namely; (i) helping behavior, (ii) sportsmanship, (iii) self-brand-development and (iv) brand endorsement. This is inconsistent with previous studies of King and Grace (2008), Morhart et al. (2008) and Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) that assumed brand consistent as unidimensional construct. In addition, based on the studied sample, factor analysis extracted additional one dimension of BCB as opposed to earlier study of Burmann et al. (2008) with only three dimensions namely; helping behavior, brand enthusiasm and brand development. However, the dimensions extracted from this study also inconsistent with Burmann et al. (2008) except for helping behavior

and self-brand-development. Sportsmanship and brand endorsement rather newly extracted to explain brand citizenship behavior of Malaysian hotels' employees.

For practitioners, this study provides an evidence that hotels' employees were willing to (i) help their customers and colleague (helping behavior), (ii) sacrifice for the sake of brand image and reputation (sportsmanship), (iii) seek new skills and adopt innovation on brand-related performance (self-brand-development) and (iv) be a brand ambassador for public (brand endorsement). As such, practitioners could use the above strength to differentiate their organization's brand for long term brand success. Furthermore, practitioners also should identify appropriate internal branding practices to stimulate such behavior among their employees for benefits of brand competitive advantage and survival.

6. Limitation and Future Research

This study is cross-sectional study that involves only three to five star hotels' employees from northern region of Malaysia. As such, the interpretation only hold true at the time the survey is done and for the specific sample of the study. Therefore, generalization to population should be used with caution. This study is limited in term of coverage and number of sample. Future research should consider larger sample that cover nationwide as well as covers other field of services mainly to increase the superiority of the BCB's construct.

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