Internal Brand Management: Advancing the internal stakeholder’s perspective of brand management

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Themes:

Employees represent key sources of sustainable differentiation and competitive advantages for organizations, especially when competitive products and services become more homogeneous (Mosley, 2007). Therefore, employees, as internal stakeholder, have been found to play a crucial role in building and maintaining brand-customer-relationships (Sirianni et al., 2013), representing a relevant target group for brand management efforts, and bringing the brand promise to life.

Despite the intuitive appeal of managing the brand internally, particularly for service organizations, combined with a growing body of practitioner interest and investment in such a strategy, there remains a paucity of conceptual and empirical papers addressing this important issues. Furthermore, given its infancy as a research agenda, there is a lack of clarity and consistency regarding the definitions and conceptualizations of key internal brand management concepts such as brand understanding, brand identification, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behaviour (e.g., Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2009; Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014). Additionally, the research to date has focussed at the individual level, with an emphasis on psychological dimensions, with limited consideration being given to the drivers of such psychological outcomes as well as the effects that such outcomes have on organizational performance both internally and externally (e.g., Sirianni et al., 2013; Tavassoli et al., 2014).

Some research has investigated IBM practices that affect the outcomes, such as brand-oriented human resource management, brand-oriented leadership and internal as well as external brand
communication (e.g., Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Morhart et al., 2009; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; King and Grace, 2012; Hughes, 2013; Baker et al., 2014). However, from a practitioner perspective in particular, more specificity is needed with respect to these practices that influence internal stakeholders.

Limited consideration has also been given to aspects that may moderate an internal stakeholder’s brand-related attitudes and behaviour. Previous IBM research, albeit limited, has considered factors that strengthen (or weaken) employees’ ability to exhibit such behaviour, such as employee know-how or personal variables as well as organizational factors such as available resources or the work environment (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al., 2009, Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). In contrast, organizational factors are seldom investigated in the IBM research.

To better understand IBM theory and practice we invite conceptual and empirical contributions which are related (but not restricted) on the following topics:

- What theories may constitute the theoretical foundation of IBM?
- How does management, internal marketing, services marketing, and human resource management research inform IBM research?
- What are the similarities and differences in conceptual IBM for different stakeholder groups?
- What are relevant IBM outcomes beyond brand understanding, brand commitment, brand identification, and behavioural outcomes and how are they interrelated?
- What are dimensions of IBM outcomes and how are they interrelated with antecedents (e.g., IBM practices) and consequences (e.g., other IBM outcomes)?
- How does brand-oriented human resource management, brand-oriented leadership, internal brand communication, and external brand communication contribute to IBM outcomes? What additional IBM practices affect IBM outcomes?
- Is the effect of IBM practices on IBM outcomes culture-specific (regarding national culture or organizational culture)?
- What best practices exist for IBM?
- How can the relevance of IBM be empirically validated beyond stakeholder self-report or managerial observation (e.g., financial performance, customer outcomes, and brand strength)?
- How can an organization create a climate for ensuring brand aligned stakeholders?
- Conceptualization and measurement of employee-based brand equity (EBBE) and its theoretical and empirical relationship with customer-based brand equity (CBBE)?

Submissions and Deadlines:

Papers should be submitted directly to Guest Editor Rico Piehler via e-mail (rico.piehler@uni-bremen.de) by 31st October 2016 (please do not submit via the IBM online system). Papers must be formatted in accordance with the Journal of Brand Management style sheet (http://www.palgrave-journals.com/bm/author_instructions.html#Format-of-submissions). Please also address any inquiries regarding this Special Issue to Rico Piehler.

All papers will be double-blind refereed. Post-refereeing, the Guest Editors will propose a list of publishable papers for consideration by the Editors-in-Chief of the Journal of Brand Management – their agreement will be required prior to notifying Authors of final acceptance. The anticipated publication date is mid-2017.
Bibliography:


