

**IDENTITY AND INTERNAL BRANDING:
FROM INTERNAL BRAND MANAGEMENT TO
BRAND CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR - A CASE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

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| <p>Abstract</p> <p>Internal brand management efforts are a valuable tool in promoting brand citizenship behavior amongst employees. Committed employees are an important asset to any organization, so examining the corporate identity, the alignment of its vision, image and culture and performing necessary internal brand management measures should be on every organization's agenda.</p> <p>This thesis was executed as a case study for a company looking to develop its internal brand management processes. The objective was to examine the relationships between internal brand communication, brand identification, perceived brand value, brand commitment and citizenship behavior. To include all willing current employees, data was collected with an anonymous online survey. Quantitative approach was chosen to gain a more comprehensive view. The survey was sent to 1024 employees and 274 responses were gained during two weeks in March 2023. IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the research data and the model was assessed in SmartPLS 4, using PLS-SEM.</p> <p>As a result, all six proposed hypotheses were supported. The results indicated that internal brand communication had a positive effect on employees identifying with the corporate identity, which in turn had a positive effect on both employee brand commitment and employee perceived brand value, both of which then had positive effect on employee citizenship behavior. Additionally, employee perceived brand value was found to have positive impact on employee brand commitment.</p> <p>The findings of this study support existing theories on brand management efforts having a positive impact on generating brand citizenship behavior, but as this research is a case study, generalizing these findings requires further studies. This study contributes to existing literature on the importance of employee identification on building brand commitment and how brand commitment in turn is a recognized antecedent for employee endorsement behavior, or citizenship behavior.</p> | |
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1 INTRODUCTION

When thinking about corporate branding, the first thought often considers the image of the company, the concern of how the company is seen from the outside by its external stakeholders. In the shadow of the image, corporate identity can be mistakenly viewed as an entity that forms independently and evolves with time, the strategic vision of how the management wants to portray the organization somehow naturally becoming the truth of how it is truly seen from the inside. However, the truth can be much more complex. Identity is a concept that often first brings in mind people and their individual characteristics. What is a certain person like, what sort of values do they abide by, how they convey their self-image to the outside world. Intangible and seemingly tied to a persona, identities and images exist in the business world as well. Although inanimate, organizations can develop and manage identities and internal images through internal brand management processes.

Earlier research has showed that internal brand management is an important tool for encouraging brand citizenship behavior, or brand endorsement. Several aspects have been recognized and validated to have positive direct or indirect effects on citizenship behavior. Research by Punjaisri, Evanschitzky and Wilson (2009) indicated that internal branding has significant positive effects on employee brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty, that brand identification, in turn, has similar effect on brand commitment, which then affects positively on brand loyalty. Study by Soleimani et al. (2021) showed that employee brand loyalty is affected by internal branding efforts.

Furthermore, results of a study by Leijerholt, Biedenbach and Hultén (2020) pointed out that brand identification has significant positive effect on brand pride, which in turn has similar effect on brand commitment. A study by Xiong, King and Piehler (2013) showcased that employee brand commitment and employee perceived brand knowledge have significant impact on employer brand equity, consisting of brand endorsement, brand allegiance and brand consistent behavior. Research by Dechawatanapaisal (2019) proved internal branding having positive effect on brand identification and brand identification, in turn, having effecting brand citizenship behavior positively. These are just a few examples of previous research with which this study is consistent with. As a more novel element, employee perceived brand value, the possible positive effect employee identification might have on it and, in turn, the possible positive effect it might have on employee citizenship behavior was selected to be studied.

At the core of this case study is a research model formulated on the basis of earlier research done on the field of internal branding and brand citizenship behavior. The purpose is to examine the key concepts of this study and their relationships with each other: whether positive perceptions of internal brand management have positive effect on employees identifying with their employer's brand and does this in turn promote brand commitment and

employee perceived brand value, and whether they have a positive effect on brand citizenship behavior.

Brand citizenship behavior, or brand endorsement, was chosen as the main outcome, as it can be considered to be the manifestation of the most valuable asset for internal brand management efforts by earlier research. The constructs for this research were derived from peer-reviewed research, to offer the case company results that were measured through validated scales.

This research is a case study done for a subsidiary company operating in the B2B sector. During the years of its operation, the independent brand of the case company, though derived from that of the parent company, has only just begun to be more purposely managed as an individual brand, and the image is still heavily reliant on that of the parent company. However, the subsidiary is looking to seek more independent growth from abroad and from new, international B2B customers. This leads to a dilemma of identity: who are we identifying as? To further aid the development of their internal brand management, a quantitative study was conducted, with the respondents being current employees of the case company.

Another objective of this research is to study how the current employees of the case company perceive the internal brand communication of their employer, at what level they identify with their employer's identity and whether they experience perceived value with and feel commitment to their employer's brand, and if aspects of brand citizenship behavior can be noted. These results offer valuable insight for the case company of the status on how their employees are perceiving the brand of the organization and also their overall satisfaction levels concerning these elements, giving information on how to develop and target their internal brand management, and offer a base for monitoring the progress with future research.

1.1 Case company

The research presented in this study has been conducted for a case company. The case company is an organization operating in the industrial field, strictly in the B2B sector. The core competence of the company is in upkeep, mechanical engineering, and development of new digital solutions related to the sector, and it is seeking further growth in international markets. The case company has been founded relatively recently and it is operating as a subsidiary under a larger company.

The case company's operation is heavily linked with the parent company, and many of its current roughly 1000 employees have transferred to it from the parent company during the founding of the company. In addition, the case company shares many aspects of its brand and operations with its parent company, in terms of organizational values as well as visual identity. This close-knitted nature of the relationship between these two companies can be seen to

blur the line between their individual brands, even if their specializations differ from each other.

The brand of the subsidiary is heavily reliant of that of its parent company, both in visual aspects and in regards of the mission, vision, and values. The corporate culture has recently gained emphasis within the case company, as the concern strategy has been renewed and the employees have been heavily involved in reshaping the values, instead of them being incorporated to the company from the outside.

To form better understanding of how the current employees of the case company experience the identity of their employer, whether they perceive perceived value working for that company and feel committed to it, and whether these aspects have a positive effect on brand citizenship behavior, a survey was formed around the theoretical framework presented in this study. The goal is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the current employees of the case company feel about the elements concerning the internal brand of their employer and whether the proposed aspects could have a positive effect on ultimately generating employee citizenship behavior.

This master's thesis research was conducted by an author who worked as marketing communications intern at the case company in 2022–2023, during which time the case company underwent a large strategic reform on concern level, with re-setting the values through collective value workshops integrating employees into the process.

1.2 Research questions

As mentioned before, this research has been done for a case company, to offer a tool to start implementing better targeted internal branding efforts. Rather than look to generalize the research results, this research aimed to study whether the employees of the case company perceive their employers' internal brand communication positively, if they feel like they can identify with the corporate identity of their employer, whether they experience perceived value in working for that company, do they feel commitment towards their employers' brand, and whether they exhibit citizenship behavior. Furthermore, the objective was to examine the relationships between these constructs.

In addition to examining the relationships between these preferred outcomes of internal brand management efforts, the research has been designed to offer the case company insight into how favorably the current employees see and experience their employer and its' brand. Therefore, the research questions were formed to suit the objectives of the study.

The general advice concerning research questions is that they should be formed in accordance with the available previous studies and literature concerning the topic (Metsämuuronen, 2005). Brand management efforts and antecedents of brand citizenship behavior have been studied previously (e.g.,

King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2009; Piehler, King, Burmann & Xiong, 2016; Garas, Mahran, Mohamed, 2018; Leijerholt et al., 2020).

The results of previous studies argue that different internal brand management efforts have direct and indirect effects on the manifestation of employee citizenship behavior. Amongst the recognized constructs were, for example: internal communication, employee identification and brand commitment. These previous studies offer a background for this research and support the approach of the research topic through the analysis of the hypothesized relationships between the constructs (Metsämuuronen, 2005).

Considering the case company and the previously stated objectives, and based on the framework presented in this research, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1. Do perceptions of internal brand communication have positive effect on employees identifying with their employer's identity?

RQ2. Does employee identification with their employers' identity have positive effect on employees perceiving value with their employers' brand, and committing to the brand?

RQ3. Does employee perceived brand value have positive effect on employees experiencing brand commitment?

RQ4. Do employee perceived brand value and committing to the brand have positive effect on brand citizenship behavior?

Based on the information gathered from this research concerning the thoughts and satisfaction levels of the employees, and the possible positive effects these constructs might have on each other, as hypothesized later, the research aimed to offer insight into how best develop their targeted internal branding processes. The hypotheses presented later are formatted so that they aim to answer the research questions.

The discovered causal relationships between the constructs can be used as guides to help plan and execute internal brand management processes to nurture the aspects needed to promote brand citizenship behavior. The results can also act as indicators to help improve the overall satisfaction the current employees feel towards their employer, since poor results in some areas could point to possible rectification needs, whereas good results indicate that current internal branding efforts in that sector are working.

1.3 Research area and structure

This research is mainly focused on the construct of internal brand management and its different aspects that, if nurtured correctly, can be beneficial for the overall success of the organization. As how the brand is experienced within the organization is affected by more than just decisions made by the management,

namely the intangible experiences and actions of the people employed by the organization, the customs and habits adopted and the atmosphere felt within the organization, the subject is broad, and it consists of several abstract factors that can be considered to affect one another. Therefore, efforts aiming to manage the internal brand of an organization must consider the identity and the culture of the organization, as these aspects affect each other and there is no one single recipe to success that would work for all organizations. As can be seen from the figure 1 below, the research area is determined as the intersection of the main concepts of this research.

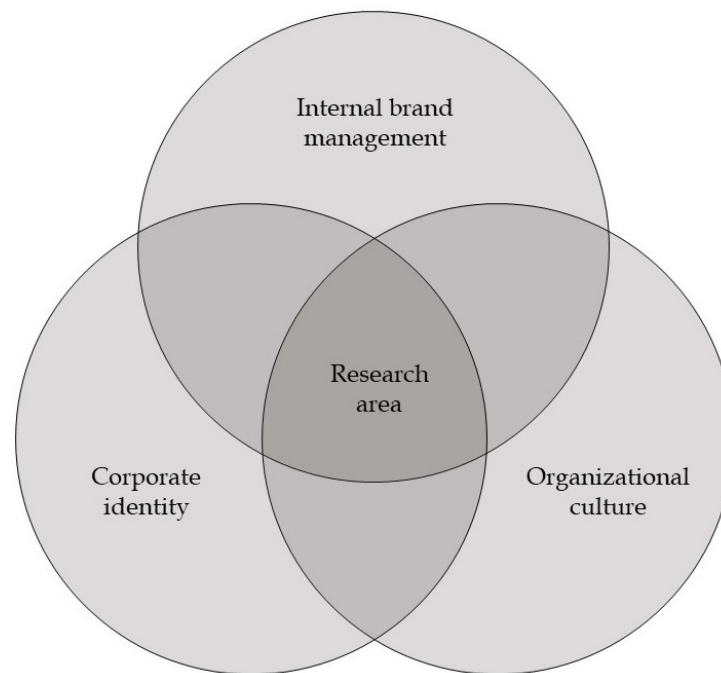


FIGURE 1 The research area

The main focus points of this research are related to internal brand management and internal marketing efforts, namely internal brand communication, employee identification with corporate identity, perceived brand value, brand commitment, and, ultimately, brand citizenship behavior. The proposed relationships between these constructs and the way they have been experienced within the case company form the backbone of this research. This narrowing of the topic leaves out constructs such as performance feedback, rewards, role clarity, brand knowledge, and employee socialization and involvement.

As these constructs do not exist in a void, aspects of corporate and organizational identity and organizational culture must be considered alongside internal branding. How the organization exists and is lived in need to be taken into account and understood, when planning internal brand management efforts, as these concepts interlink and affect each other. Related aspects that are excluded from this research include the vision, the external image of the organization, and external brand management and marketing efforts and their effect on the identity of the organization. Communication plays a significant role

in all of these fields, but this research is mainly focused on internal brand communication and its manifestations. This excludes for example informal communication between employees and supervisors and their subordinates, which can be considered an inseparable aspect of organizational culture. As this research is based on marketing, the purely sociological and HR focused perspectives are mostly excluded.

The structure of this research is divided into six chapters. After brief introduction, which will introduce the case company and the research questions, the theoretical framework offering the base for this study is presented in the next chapter. The key motivators for this research concerning the role of identity in corporate branding and internal brand management, and important concepts for the research model are introduced with the theoretical framework. Next, the proposed research model based on the theoretical framework will be presented. Along with it, the chosen quantitative research methods, the survey built to gather the research data, the measurement and the reliability of these methods are discussed and justified. After this, the research data and the analysis conducted are observed in detail, with the thorough assessment of the proposed research model and hypothesis testing. Lastly, the findings are discussed with theoretical and managerial implications, and the limitations of this research and suggestions for future research are addressed. Conclusions are presented at the end of this thesis.

This research conducted in 2023 as quantitative research. Quantitative research methods are considered suitable to be used in research the, when cause-effect relationships and model testing are observed (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2008). The research utilized SPSS, Smart PLS4 and Webropol. No AI based software were used to conduct this study.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework, related previous studies, and main concepts used in this research are presented in the following chapter. The concepts introduced include corporate and organizational identity, internal branding, perceived brand value, brand commitment, brand citizenship behavior, and organizational culture. The research model introduced later, and the proposed hypotheses introduced in this chapter are formed based on this theoretical framework.

2.1 Identity in corporate branding

Finding a unified, universal theoretical definition for the identity of an inanimate being such as a company can be challenging. Corporate branding literature describes corporate brand as a representation of the organization's identity and its core characteristics (Morhart, Herzog & Tomczak, 2009). When it comes to corporations, the original, somewhat outdated concept of identity still often refers to strictly logos, organizational nomenclature, and visual elements. In today's global and digital world, the voice and identity of an organization lives on a multitude of different channels and platforms. Every organization has its own identity, and by effectively managing it, they can build up understanding and even commitment among its stakeholders (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

The term of identity in this aspect holds multiple meanings, dependent on the disciplines and the context on which it is discussed, the definition of it having fragmented in academia. The approach has over time expanded from an image-centered, visual, and symbolic approach to a more holistic, interdisciplinary view, including both internal and external behavioral and communicational aspects. Corporate identity was described in 1995 in the first Strathclyde Statement by Balmer and Greyser, which was later revised as a collaborative effort, as something that "articulates the corporate ethos, aims, and values and presents a sense of individuality that can help to differentiate the organization within its competitive environment" (Balmer, Bernstein, Day, Greyser, Ind, Lewis, Ludlow, Markwick, van Riel & Thomas in Balmer & Greyser, 2003, p. 134). The identity of an organization, a brand, or corporation is thus a sum of different components and dimensions. Van Riel and Balmer (1997) have also stated that the identity of a corporation is a holistic concept which reflects the ethos, aims, and values of the company, helping it to differentiate from competitors by presenting a sense of individuality. According to Gray & Balmer (1998) and de Chernatony (1999), the key components include the strategy, philosophy, vision, culture, and organizational design. As mission, vision and value statements set the foundation of the strategic plan of an organization, the vision, defining the essence: why the brand exists and where it is aiming, should be communicated

to the employees in clear, inspiring way, to support the beneficial development of the culture.

The question of what a corporation is, or identity in the organizational concept, can actually be roughly divided into two: corporate identity, examined in marketing and management studies, and organizational identity, examined by behaviorists and social psychologists. Corporate identity is more focused on exploring the roles of leadership and visual identity, conceptualized as a function of leadership and traditionally more focused on the visual aspects, whereas organizational identity examines the concept through the interaction between organizations and employees, referring to how the members feel and what they think about the organization they are linked with, how they perceive it and what the commonly-shared understanding of the characteristics and values of the organization are. (Balmer, 2008; Hatch & Schultz, 1997.) One important organizational identity aspect can be discovered in the values that are held by the employees (Balmer & Wilson, 1998, p. 17).

Arguably, the world has changed a lot in the past 30 years due to digitalization and emergence of new technologies and communication channels, so even though the logo and visual presentation are still valid foundations on which we start to form our conceptions of a brand, in today's world the company should be able to convey its identity and brand effectively in a more multidimensional way. Communicating with different types of content through different medias, sometimes in real-time, and maintaining a convergent presence and tone-of-voice is a challenging task. This has brought interacting with companies closer to the level of interacting with other individuals, resulting in new possibilities to showcase and exhibit the nature and identity of a company and manage the image seen and experienced by the public.

In addition to the external view of the organization, the identity and culture recognized and experienced internally within the company are very important. Senior management can communicate the symbolic construction of the corporate identity to the members of the organization, but the interpretation and enactment of the members, based on the cultural aspects of the organization is how organizational identity truly emerges, resulting in it being the outcome of ongoing interaction between organizational members and the influence from the top management. (Hatch & Schultz, 1997.)

Identity should be present in everything the organization does and communicates, from the details like décor, stationary, and design of catalogues and such, to the way employees behave in their work (Kotler et al., 2009). Managing identity can offer a strategic advantage for companies. Shaping the concept of who they are can help motivate and manage the strategy of where they are going (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Combining elements of both corporate and organizational identity can help to examine the term of identity in a more holistic way (Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

Favoring corporate branding instead of corporations hiding behind product or service brands has been an increasing trend (Kapferer, 1992). As suggested by Ind (1997, p.13): "A corporate brand is more than just the outward manifestation of an organization - its name, logo, and visual presentation. Rather it is the core

of values that defines it.” As compared to branding a product, or even a service, both of which can contain a set of more tangible features, corporate branding is a more complex and diverse entity laden with more social responsibilities, making the building and managing a coherent brand more difficult (Simões & Dibb, 2001).

Strong corporate identity and brand can be a powerful asset, positively affecting the perceptions employees have of organizational culture (Wheeler, Richey, Tokkman & Sablynski, 2006), but it can have less beneficial qualities as well. Whereas product brands can be viewed as being more tied to the present and to be easier to update, corporate brands and identities live in the past and future also (Olins, 1989). Time as an aspect has two sides: heritage and strong history adds trustworthiness, but can also be a burden, limiting the possibilities of credible change. Strongly imprinted identities can then constrain a company from making strategic choices aiming to help the company adjust to the changing environment effectively (Bouchikhi & Kimberly 2003).

Hatch & Schultz (1997) argued that the relationships between organizational culture, identity, and image are involved in circular processes with mutual interdependence. As illustrated in figure 2, this would make organizational identity a self-reflexive result of the processes of organizational culture. (Hatch, 1993, in Hatch and Shultz, 1997.) The perception of the external stakeholders, the vision communicated, and image perceived by the customers therefore should be taken into account when considering organizational identity, and vice versa.

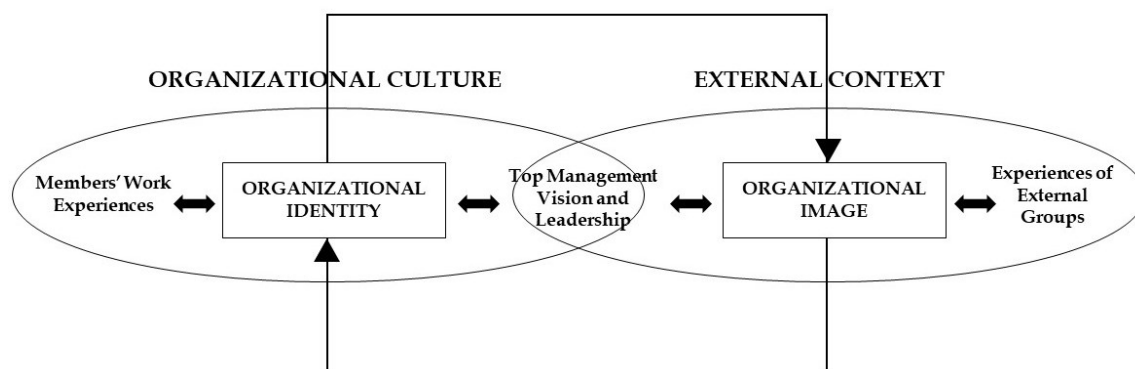


FIGURE 2 A model of the relationship between organizational culture, identity, and image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 361)

Hatch & Schultz (1997, p. 360) argue that organizational culture can be viewed as “a symbolic context within which interpretations of organizational identity are formed and intentions to influence organizational image are formulated.” Instead of being a concept developing strictly within the organization as a closed system, or being a variable induced by the top management, the organization and its culture are not closed off their environments.

As suggested in the aforementioned model illustrated in figure 2 (Hatch & Schultz, 1997), organizational culture is an inseparable part of the structure of

organizational and corporate identity. Like identity, it can be a challenging element to study, due to difficulty in measurement and conceptual diversity and vagueness (Yue et al., 2021). As companies form their identities and brands in ways similarly to individuals, these entities still consist of the people employed by them, the employees, and the culture they live up to daily have an impact on the identity of the brand. This makes organization's culture an essential part of the identity. (de Chernatony, 1999; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001.)

2.2 Internal brand management

Traditionally, companies have invested brand-building resources to target external stakeholders, trying to shape their perceived image to be in line with the vision of the company. In this view, the role of employees is not considered, even though research has shown that the behavior and mindset employees have towards the brand of their employer influences the perception customers develop of the brand. (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007.) Matanda and Ndubisi (2013) even argue that the brand of an organization should represent the relationship it has with its employees as much as it does that it has with its customers. The importance of the role of the employees and of the role culture plays in corporate identity is well emphasized in the following quote by Olins (1991):

The most important audience for any company is its own staff. I cannot understand how people can say that the most important audience they have is the consumer. Because if you cannot train your own staff in what you are, in what you think, in how to behave, and in what your moves and perceptions are, how the hell can you expect to train your customer? (p. 17)

Employees play an important role in influencing how external stakeholders are perceiving the corporate brand, including the identity and image of the organization. (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Mitchell, 2020.) This, in turn, means that the employees' internalization of the brand values could offer even competitive advantage for the organization. According to Stuart (2002, p. 30), employees that identify strongly with the organization they work for are more likely to uphold that identity also in their actions. Promoting the brand within the organization, or internal branding, aims to help achieve this alignment of employees and brand values and identity. (Mitchell, 2020.)

Internal branding, or even employee branding, can be conceptualized as the ensuring of the brand promise being transformed into reality and delivered by the employees, reflecting the brand values that set customers' expectations. Even if ultimately these endeavors are internal marketing practices, they require input from not only the marketing department. Rather, no department can be excluded

from these efforts. (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2010.) As mentioned before, implementing internal marketing should become a part of the branding process and instead of being dependent on one department, it must be successfully communicated and adopted throughout the entire company to generate widespread common understanding (Randall, 2000). Brand management should therefore be seen as a fundamental section of an integrated process instead of a value statement add-on or other superficial rhetoric. As employees' stance and attitude towards the corporation and its brand are vital elements in building and maintaining a strong corporate brand, the embodiment of the organizational identity and vision, managing the internal brand is important. Internal branding can be seen as a technique of brand management, aimed to build stronger corporate brands from the inside (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

Especially the employees who work at the customer interface, intersection of both the internal and external brand, deploy influence on the perception the customers and potentially other stakeholders have of the brand of the organization. (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Despite putting effort into marketing to external stakeholders, many companies still invest only little into ensuring that the brand messages are transformed into reality through customer experience. To ensure this, the brand messages aimed to employees can be considered to be at the very least as important as the ones that are sent to customers. (Boone, 2000).

As management cannot fully control the actualization of the identity or culture of the organization as they are, but rather they are the sum and everchanging outcome of multiple different factors and elements, systematic observation and methodical managing of the internal brand are arguably of the same importance as the efforts to manage the externally viewed company brand. Values and the corporate culture increase in importance in this scenario. Employees represent a crucial role in building and maintaining relationships between brands and customers, as they are responsible of delivering the brand promise to external stakeholders. (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Internal brand management aims to have employees not only understanding, but internalizing the values of the brand, identifying with it and thus exhibiting more brand commitment.

The Vision-Culture-Image (VCI) alignment model, pictured below in figure 3, first presented in 2001 by Hatch and Schultz, links organizational culture, corporate image, and strategic vision as elements that interconnect in corporate branding process. The base of the model relies on behaviorism and theory of organizational identity, and it to ensure the model tied in with the core of its elements and also the business world, it was developed together with both organizational theorists and experienced brand managers.

The research behind the VCI alignment model showed that brand management efforts require a more comprehensive approach in order to be truly successful. This would mean approaching the concept in a more identity-based way rather than narrowing brand management down to its external layer of elements like visual identity. In this model, vision represents the top management's visionary aspirations for the company, culture includes the behavior and values of the organization and reflections of its attitudes, describing

how employees feel about the company, and image is the overall impression of the company perceived by the outside world. (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2008.)



FIGURE 3 The VCI Alignment Model, combined from Hatch & Schultz, 2001, p.1047 and Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p.11

The base of the VCI model is the hypothesis that organizational identity is built by the strategic vision of the top management, those who create the organizational culture and the image perceived by responsive stakeholders, and the interaction and communication between these aspects. A successful cycle requires the alignment of these three dimensions, and results in maintaining a good organizational identity. (Hatch & Schultz, 2008.)

Gaps between these concepts indicate an underperforming corporate brand. The Vision-Culture gap can develop if management tries to move the organization in a strategic direction that is possibly too ambitious to implement, and not understood or supported by employees, described as a “breach between rhetoric and reality” (Hatch & Schultz, 2001, para. 10). Conflict between the external stakeholder image and organizational culture, the Image-Culture gap, could lead into customers being confused about what the company actually stands for, or the company not practicing what it preaches, leading to a tarnished image amongst stakeholders. The third gap is the Image-Vision gap, indicating a misalignment between external image and the strategic vision of the top management. (Hatch & Schultz, 2001.)

Simões & Dibb (2001) and Hatch & Schultz (2003) argue that instead of being a job only for the marketing department, internal brand management should be embedded in the whole organization as an integrated effort, and that the brand essence should be present in all functions and departments within the

company, from production to communication. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) argue that internal branding should be a joint effort between management, corporate marketing, and human resources. They have stated that internal branding can increase employee commitment and brand loyalty, thus encouraging brand advocacy.

Internal management of the brand is at a vital role, especially when a broad variety of staff is communally delivering it. External stakeholders are evaluating the brand of the organization through their interactions with the employees, amongst other communicational efforts. Managing the brand well internally therefore can have quite direct effect on how the brand reputation amongst stakeholders is formed. (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001.) Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006) argue that especially in the service industry, where the product is more intangible, the company brand is of increased importance.

Approaching the concept of internal brand management with a more holistic perspective helps delivering the brand with integrity throughout the organization. (Rubinstein 1996.) The primary mission and goal of internal branding is to establish the attitudinal and behavioral keenness of the employees to support, and also represent, the brand of the organization (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). To succeed, the management needs to understand the viewpoints of the employees and the complexity of the values and the culture of the organization. Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005), suggest that in order to generate brand supporting behavior, the employees should be treated as internal customers, and they would need to not only understand, but to identify with the brand and also to commit the brand.

Internal brand management's theoretical foundation can be found in organizational behavior research, and brand citizenship behavior has often been seen as the primary outcome of internal brand management practices (Piehler et al., 2016). Brand commitment (King & Grace, 2010) and brand identification (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005) appear as the antecedents in these studies. A study by Burmann, Zeplin and Riley (2009) sought to conceptualize the outcomes internal brand management and introduced an internal brand management model (figure 4) to illustrate the process and aspects of managing a brand internally.

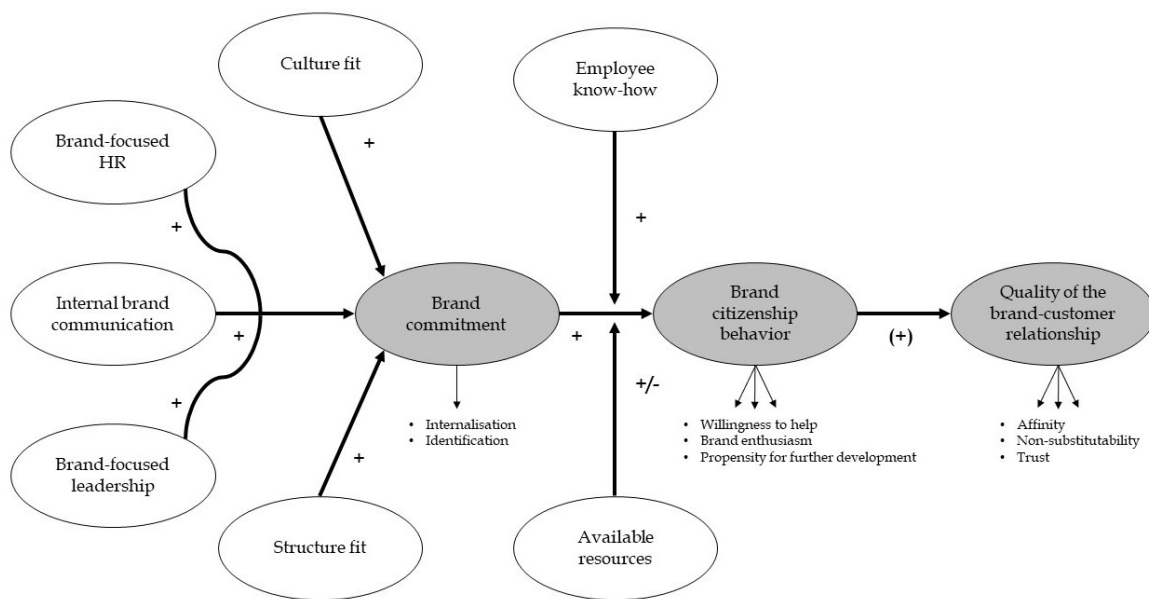


FIGURE 4 The Internal Brand Management Model (Burmam et al., 2009 p.281)

The research by Burmann et al. (2009) supported the view that internal brand management efforts can be used to substantially strengthen a brand, and that the model maps the fundamental processes of fruitful internal brand management efforts (Burmam et al., 2009). The research showed internal brand communication, together with brand-focused HR and brand-focused leadership, having direct causal effect on brand commitment, which in turn has similar effect on brand citizenship behavior, all of which are important aspects in this case study as well.

Company culture and employee's role as a brand advocate are highlighted on encounters with the customers, as their perception of the brand relies heavily on these experiences with the employers. It is important that all employers have precise understanding of the brand, and corporate culture is what defines the values of the organization and encourages the preferred employee behavior (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). However, the employees cannot be considered as a homogenous mass, but rather the managers should have the awareness that the impact of internal brand efforts is not likely to be constant and uniform across all organizational members (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). An earlier study by Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) also shows that internal branding process is affected by multiple factors, resulting in increased brand identification and brand commitment. These previous studies lead to the presentation of the concepts used in this case study and the hypotheses proposed.

2.2.1 Internal brand communication

Baker, Rapp, Meyer, and Mullins (2014) have argued, that internal branding initiatives start only when appropriate brand information is communicated to employees in such a meaningful manner, that it enables them to deliver the brand

experience up to its standards. Communication can be seen as a key factor for generating affective responses to internal branding endeavors, and as such, an effective internal brand communication program is a base for working for internal branding (Burmann et al., 2009). Internal brand communication has been identified as one of the most critical activities in internal brand management (Zhang & Xu, 2021).

A broad subject stretching from the visual recognizability to the discussions between management and employees, internal communication aims to influence the brand knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of employees. Instead of being viewed simply as a mean of distributing brand information, conscious internal communication efforts should focus more broadly on creating shared brand understanding and develop commitment to organizational values and goals (Dryl, 2017).

Previous studies have suggested that effectively managed internal communication can have significant influence on employees identifying with the brand of their employer (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). In this study, internal brand communication is conceptualized as the internal communication with the employees to generate positive behavioral changes, in accordance with Punjaisri and Wilson (2007).

Successful internal brand communication impacts employee's knowledge of the brand. Xiong et al. (2013) state that researchers have often taken this knowledge for granted, but this should not be the case. Without successful communication efforts, knowledge has no proper base to form, and knowledge, in turn, is key for generating understanding needed from employees to be able to deliver the brand promise. From internal brand management perspective, internal brand communication is key in affecting how employees perceive the brand, as both internal and external brand information that employees receive and interpret offers a base for how they perceive the brand (Miles & Mangold, 2004).

Even though Chen, Silverthorne and Hung (2005) have stated that higher levels of top-to-down communication can generate higher levels of commitment and performance, it needs to be acknowledged that the truth is much more complex. Instead of utilizing informative one-way, top-to-down communication techniques, notion should be paid to inaugurating two-way communication (figure 5) to generate more trust and empowerment within the organization.

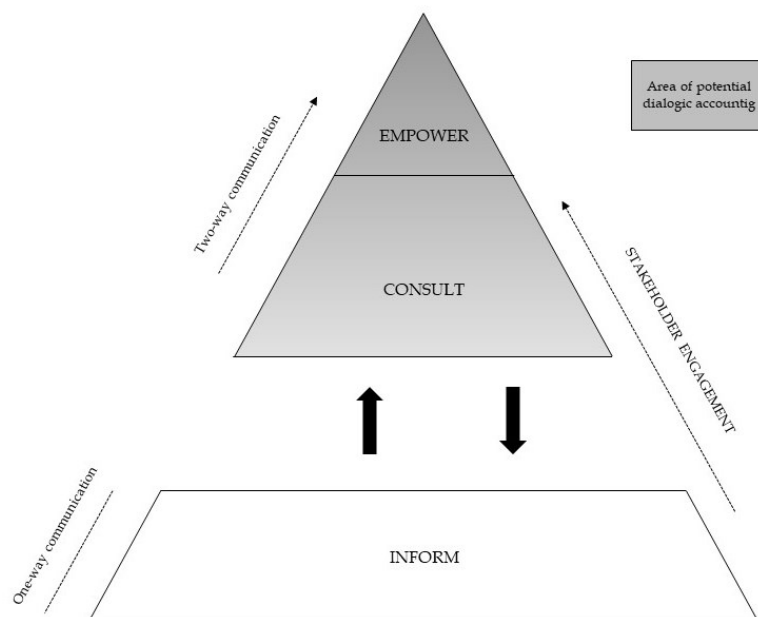


FIGURE 5 One-way or two-way communication supporting different levels of stakeholder engagement (Bellucci, M., Biagi, S. & Manetti, G. 2018, p. 47)

Dryl (2017) accordingly points out, that internal brand communication is an important effort for developing strong commitment to the organizational values and goals. It can be suggested that it is an important effort, but most likely informative top-to-down communication should not be the only one effort to reach best results, but rather promoting engagement through empowering two-way communication should be encouraged.

Yue, Men and Ferguson (2020) have researched the effects of internal communication on the organizational identification of employees and how strategic internal communication can help construct positive emotional culture within an organization, and Dechawatanapaisal (2019) has confirmed internal branding having a positive effect on brand identification. Even though one-way communication cannot be considered as the only effort, considering the complex nature of organizational culture, these studies have justified the use of management-based internal brand communication as one of the key elements for successful internal branding. Based on these previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Internal brand communication has a positive impact on employee identification with corporate identity

2.2.2 Employee identification with corporate identity

Positive employee identification can occur when organization members experience their membership as self-defining. Social identity theory, on which brand identification research leans on, describes the person's sense of self being

based on their group memberships, with a higher level of identification determining how they apply the different characteristics of the group to themselves and develop similar behavior with other group members (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Succeeding in creating a sense of identification among a workplace can be seen as a critical issue in good management. (Rock & Pratt 2002.) Employee identification is valuable to any organization, as it increases the likelihood of employees showcasing supportive attitude towards the organization and acceptance of its premises, but also make decisions consistent with organizational objectives. (Stuart 2002.)

Employee identification can be viewed as a circular process, where the action of employees identifying with the company brings about an increase in stability and consistency of the corporate identity. This in turn would encourage employees to further uphold that identity in their actions. However, if the organization is too focused on the external views of itself, it can weaken employee identification and thus impact negatively on the identity of the organization. (Stuart 2002.)

Identificating with the identity or the brand of the organization can be summarized as “a sense of belonging to the group determining the brand experience, and a perception of being intertwined with the group’s fate” (Burmam & Zeplin 2005, p. 285). This emotional attachment can result in a strong bond, promoting brand commitment, which requires employees to emotionally bond with the brand. Extant research has indicated that identificating with the brand promotes such connection, where employees demonstrating higher brand identification have tendency to grow stronger brand commitment. (Piehler et al., 2016.)

Yue et al. (2021) proposes that when employees start identifying with the organization, they conceive themselves as part of it, feel attached to it and experience pride in their membership. Earlier studies have also indicated that in order to feel a sense of pride in the organization, to perceive such value of it, requires employees to identify with the organization they work for (Gold 1982).

The positive relationship between identification and commitment has been studied and validated in earlier research. It has been noted that identification can provide a basis for affective commitment, indicating that employees who are deriving aspects of their identity from associations with a brand, and have positive feelings of belonging to it, should experience a sense of emotional attachment to it (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), and that identification affects emotional attachment (Cole & Bedeian, 2007). Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) define brand commitment as the level with which employees identify with and emotionally attach to the brand of the organization. Thus, following hypotheses are proposed:

H2. Employee identification with corporate identity has a positive impact on employee brand commitment

H3. Employee identification with corporate identity has a positive impact on employee perceived brand value

2.2.3 Employee perceived brand value

Xiong et al. (2013) have stated that individuals need to experience their work meaningful and valuable to them in their value system. Employees perceiving extra value of the brand of their employer can be explained with the sense of pride: “the pleasure of being associated with the corporate brand” (Helm, Renk & Mishra, 2016, p.62). This sense of pride and satisfaction can be considered to make employees see the brand of their employer as valuable to them. In other words, employees can perceive value with their employer’s brand, because it promotes good things to them personally. Employees’ perception of meaningfulness of the brand of the employer is seen as antecedent for creating commitment and brand ambassador behavior. In addition, employees need to perceive the brand as a valuable resource for achieving organizational success. (Kapferer, 2004; Urde, 2003.) Based on these factors, a concept of employee perceived brand value as the sense of employees experiencing meaning, pride, and pleasure through association is proposed to being the antecedent to brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior.

As brand commitment has been studied to be positively affected by employees finding their job meaningful and feeling a sense of brand pride (Helm, 2011), it could be suggested that employees experiencing value of their employer’s brand could have a positive effect on brand commitment. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. Employee perceived brand value has a positive impact on employee brand commitment

Accordingly, the job characteristic theory (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976) suggests that before employees can develop desired behaviors and attitudes, they must first find their job meaningful. This indicates that employees must first perceive that the brand of their employer is meaningful to them, before developing positive brand-related behaviors (Piehler et al., 2016). Based on this and the statement that a sense of pride can reflect positively on employees showing commitment towards the company they work for (Helm, 2011), the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Employee perceived brand value has a positive impact on employee brand citizenship behavior

2.2.4 Employee brand commitment

Brand commitment deals with the psychological level of attachment employees feel towards the brand of their employer and it can develop if employees interpret the brand in so that it makes it both relevant and meaningful to them (King & Grace 2006). It is a key element in brand management perspective, as it significantly influences the attitudes and behavior of the employees (Buil,

Catalán, & Martínez, 2016). Employee's willingness to engage in brand advocacy behavior has been researched to be positively influenced by them experiencing brand commitment. (Burmam et al., 2009).

Brand commitment in itself is a broad subject, as employees might have different reasons to feel committed to an organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) have presented three components, that are normative commitment, continuance commitment, and affective commitment. Out of these, normative commitment is based on the feeling of obligation towards the company, continuance commitment to employee feeling they are not able to leave the company due to losses it would cause, such as lack of new employment options or financial loss, and lastly affective commitment, which is derived from the employees' genuine commitment towards the organization. Affective commitment can be considered the strongest of these determinants of employees' attachment to the organization, and it is the aspect of brand commitment this research is focusing on. It has been claimed that normative and continuance forms of brand commitment are not as probable to result in pro-brand behaviors, but rather the factor of affective commitment would be the determinant with most importance in employee loyalty behaviors (Bloemer & Odekerken-Schröder, 2006, in King and Grace, 2009, p. 947). Therefore, motivators such as fear of financial loss or disability to find another job are not measured in the research, but rather brand commitment is defined as "the psychological attachment or the feeling of belonging an employee has towards an organization" (King & Grace, 2009, p- 947).

Based on previous research, brand commitment has been studied to be a precursor to brand citizenship behavior (Piehler et al., 2016; Burmann et al., 2009; Punjaisri et al., 2009). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Employee brand commitment has a positive impact on employee brand citizenship behavior

2.2.5 Employee brand citizenship

Brand citizenship behavior can be explained to be emerging as employees voluntarily feel the need to exceed the expectations of their role in the organization, or going beyond described roles, and show extra effort to reach the company goals. Brand compliance, brand development, and brand endorsement are aspects of employee brand citizenship. Brand endorsement stands for conscious brand advocacy, whereas brand development covers the actions aiding the development of the brand experience of customers. Brand compliance refers to the obedience of the employer to follow brand rules and instructions. (Piehler et al., 2016.)

Brand citizenship behavior is a subject that has been studied considerably. Arguably, achieving such a status where a company can generate and promote citizenship behavior in its employees can be considered desirable and beneficial to the company. In order to encourage this behavior, companies should be aware what elements have effect on it. For example, Burmann and Zeplin (2005), and

King and Grace (2012) have stated brand commitment as a precursor to citizenship behavior. Employees identifying with the brand is another aspect is considered another precursor to it in internal brand management studies, as feelings of belonging and not only agreeing with but identifying oneself with the values of the brand can arguably be seen as elements promoting brand endorsement behavior. (Piehler et al., 2016.)

Brand citizenship behavior is often the preferred outcome of internal brand management efforts. It is an asset that cannot be bought externally, but rather nurtured through internal marketing. Employees exceeding the expectations laid for them and expressing conscious brand advocacy can have significant direct benefits on curating the perceptions external stakeholders, such as customers, have of the organization, thus positively affecting the image of the organization and potentially leading to the outcome of competitive advantage. In this research, brand citizenship and brand endorsement behavior are portrayed as the sort of goal in the model, with brand commitment and employee perceived brand value having positive effect in generating this proactive behavior.

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the case company will be briefly introduced before focusing on the aspects of the research more thoroughly. Research questions, the formulated research model, and the proposed hypotheses will be presented in this chapter. The aspects of this research are based on the theoretical framework.

The research method will also be examined. The choosing of a quantitative research method will be justified, and the survey used to collect the data presented. The data collecting procedure used in this research will be examined. Lastly, the measurement items will be discussed.

3.1 Research model

Following the previously introduced theoretical framework and the research questions on which this study was based on, the following research model pictured in figure 6 below was proposed. The development of a research model based on and adapted from earlier research and findings is a typical approach for quantitative research. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2008.)

The model defines employee citizenship behavior as the preferred outcome for antecedents born from successful internal branding efforts. Other latent constructs include employee brand commitment, employee perceived brand value, and employee identification with corporate identity. In the model, internal brand communication has positive impact on employee identification, which in turn impacts brand commitment and perceived brand value in a positive manner. These two constructs are then suggested to promote brand citizenship behavior. Perceived brand value is also deemed to have direct positive effect on brand commitment.

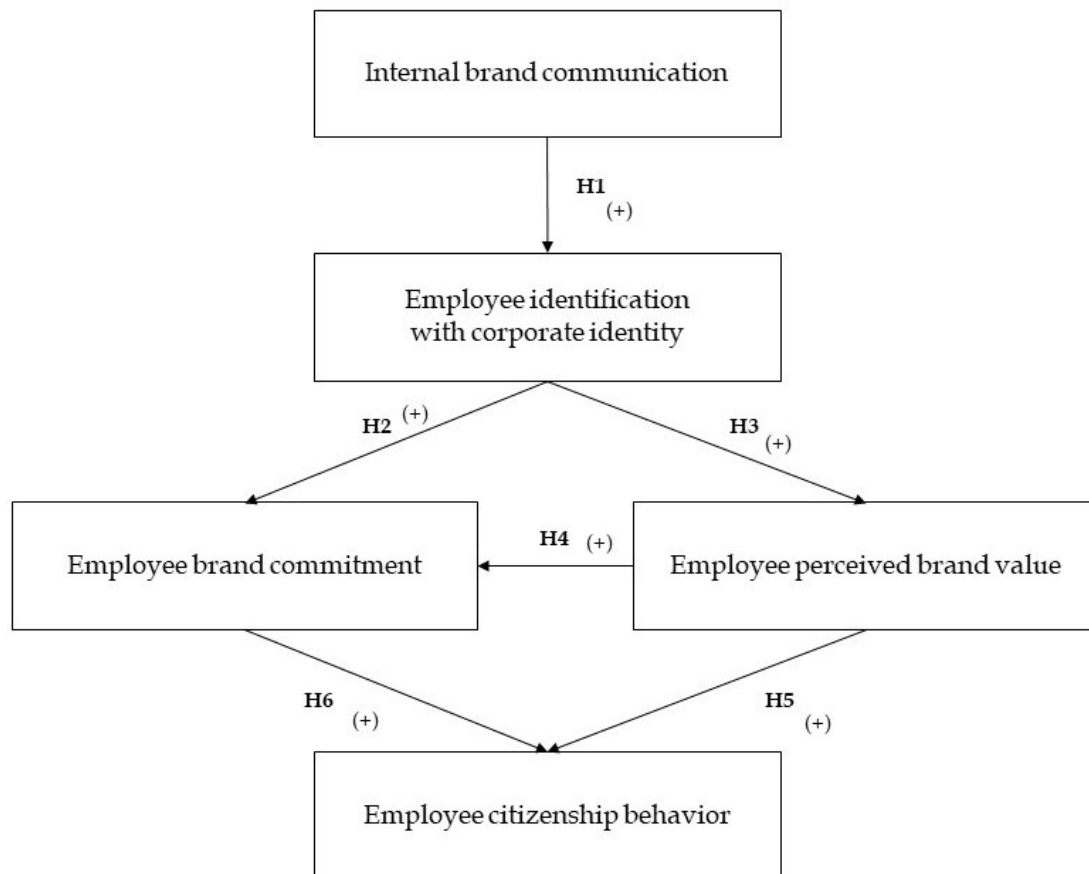


FIGURE 6 Research model

The hypotheses for this research were following:

H1. Internal brand communication has a positive impact on employee identification with corporate identity

H2. Employee identification with corporate identity has a positive impact on employee brand commitment

H3. Employee identification with corporate identity has a positive impact on employee perceived brand value

H4. Employee perceived brand value has a positive impact on employee brand commitment

H5. Employee perceived brand value has a positive impact on employee brand citizenship behavior

H6. Employee brand commitment has a positive impact on employee brand citizenship behavior

3.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative research methods were chosen for this study to better gain a more comprehensive picture of the entity of culture and elements crucial to internal brand management in the case company by systematically attaining information of the perceptions the employees of the case organization have on internal branding, to meet the research questions. Quantitative research can be described as deductive by its nature, with the logic of specified causes leading to specified effects (Metsämuuronen, 2005).

The base of this study lies in previous research and literature concerning the research topic. The intention of this case study was to select constructs that have presented being in relation to one another and observe the relationships between them within the case company to form a better understanding of how they interact with one another. Quantitative methods were chosen to meet the research objectives, as the approach suits research influenced by previous theory and the testing of it (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

This study is based on hypothesis-testing research, testing proposed hypotheses of causal relationships between the presented variables. Quantitative methods are ideal for observing and measuring causalities and relationships between constructs (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008). This further supported utilizing quantitative research methods, as they provide general view of the relationships and outcomes between variables. Statistical analysis and numerical measures help analyze the data so that is possible to gather evidence to support the theories this research is based on and test the proposed hypotheses. (Vilkka, 2007.)

As this research is a case study, the recipients were all current employees of the case company. The tool selected to carry out the research was an online survey. The research aims to study a particular group as they are, and quantitative research aims to describe the reality as external and objective (Bryman & Bell, 2007). To avoid the results being too saturated with the personal experiences of single individuals, a method that would offer the chance for as many employees from different offices as possible was a better fit for this research, compared to in depth interviews of only a handful of selected people. In order to try and capture the essence of a complex concept such as culture, it was crucial to try and attain as many replies from as broad of a spectrum as possible. This is why the recipient list was not moderated or restricted in any way, but the survey was sent to all current employees excluding only the top management.

3.2.1 The survey

To help gain as comprehensive picture of the perceptions of a large number of employees of the case organization, an online survey was selected as the data collection tool for this research. The survey delivers quantitative, numerical data suitable for analyzing the relationships between the proposed variables. Survey

results can also offer easy comparison for possible future research for the case company. Since this research is a case study concerned with the perceptions of the current employees of the case company, collecting primary data was the only relevant option for conducting the research, as readily available secondary data was not available (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel & Page, 2015).

The survey was built using Webropol survey and reporting tool, which has been used by the case company for internal surveys before. All questions were set to be mandatory to minimize the risk of missing value problems later in analyzing the data, and this was clearly marked in the survey. The survey utilized five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating complete disagreement with the proposed claim, and 5 indicating complete agreement. A printout of the actual survey can be seen in appendix 1.

The survey was anonymous, with no personal data collected. Since the survey served two purposes; offering data for this study, and insight for the marketing and communications departments of the case company to help develop and target their internal operations, six demographic questions were included to make the sorting of the data easier for the case company. The internal-use demographic questions included the recipient's age, working years, geographic location, division, role, and whether they are in manager position or not. These factors are excluded from this research due to the anonymity of the case company, only the distribution of age and the duration of the employment are presented in the descriptive statistics.

The demographic questions offer the case company the chance to internally compare the possible differences in experiences of employees of different age groups, career lengths, and positions, or those of two different locations as groups. The dual nature of the utilization of the results was explained in the cover letter sent with the survey link and at the foreword of the survey.

In order to maximize the response rate, the survey was designed to be as user-friendly as possible, and quick and easy to answer. The questions were listed into separate pages, allowing only four questions per page, as not to overwhelm the respondent, but to allow them to see the full extent of one page at the first glance. A progress bar was set to be visible on all five pages, further encouraging submitting the answer.

3.2.2 Data collection

The data utilized in this research was collected during March 2023. The survey was sent to 1024 employees of the case company, excluding only the top management. This exclusion was made to keep the focus of the research on the employees (Culture) who do not necessarily actively participate in planning of the desired vision of the company, and thus might experience the culture differently in daily life and minimize the effect senior management in charge of strategic decisions (Vision) might have, whether conscious or unconscious.

The survey was first piloted with two current employees, who were briefly interviewed on their experience in submitting their answers. As the submitting

experience was satisfactory in terms of user-friendliness, the survey was accepted with only slight wording alterations to ensure that the questions would be understood correctly by the recipients. The alterations concerned replacing the term “organization I work for” with the case company’s exact name, to further promote the factor that the survey considered the case company specifically, and not the concern including the parent company. The pre-piloting wording is used in this research to preserve the anonymity of the case company. After this, the link to answer was sent together with a short cover letter via email. After one week, a reminder email was sent to the same receiver list.

The survey was active for two weeks and 274 answers were given, resulting in response rate of 26.76 %, covering roughly a quarter of the population of current employees. According to Karjaluoto (2007, p. 10), a sample size of <50 replies could be considered small and not entirely adequate for conducting more complex statistical analysis, but a larger sample (e.g., 100 replies) is more suitable for parametric statistical tests, like factor analysis. Based on this, the collected data set is suitable in size to be further analyzed. Since the survey was anonymous, there is no way of examining which of the recipients submitted the answers. This means also that there was a risk of someone submitting multiple answers, even if it was prohibited in the cover letter and in the survey foreword.

When preparing the data for analysis, five responses were excluded from the data set. The responses were not deemed reliable, because the answers were all of the same value. This means that the data set analyzed for results in this research ultimately consists of 269 reliable responses.

3.2.3 Measurement

The measurement items utilized in this survey were derived and adapted from previous research and literature presented in the theoretical framework of this study. The studies from which these items are adapted from are all based in previous literature and research concerning the topic. This allows the measurement items to be measured through validated scales.

The approach was chosen to provide the case company with current information on their internal branding aspects, as the aim of this study is not to generalize the results but rather support existing academic research. The theoretical framework offering the foundation for this study has been extensively studied before in existing studies, enabling the adapting of the measurement constructs on previous literature.

The online Webropol survey utilized to collect the data for this research used a five-point Likert scale. The range used was from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Total of 20 items were chosen to represent the constructs of internal brand management, brand identification, perceived value, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior, all assessed equally with four items. The measurement items used in this research are presented in table 1 shown below (see also appendix 1).

TABLE 1 Measurement items (adapted from King & Grace (2010), Piehler et al. (2016), Garas et al. (2018), Yue et al. (2020), and Leijerholt et al. (2020))

| <i>Internal Brand Communication (adapted from King & Grace, 2010; Piehler et al., 2016; Garas et al., 2018)</i> | |
|--|--|
| IC1 | Brand of the organization I work for is communicated well to employees through internal communications. |
| IC2 | The brand's vision and values are constantly reinforced through internal communication. |
| IC3 | Internal communication I receive helps me perform according to my employer's brand. |
| IC4 | The organization I work for communicates the importance of my role in delivering the brand in day-to-day life. |
| <i>Brand Identification (adapted from Piehler et al., 2016; Leijerholt et al., 2020; Yue et al., 2020)</i> | |
| BI1 | I care what others think about the organization I work for. |
| BI2 | The success of the organization I work for feels like my success. |
| BI3 | When I talk about the organization I work for, I usually say "we" rather than "they". |
| BI4 | I know how to implement our brand into my daily work. |
| <i>Perceived Value (adapted from King & Grace, 2010; Piehler et al., 2016; Leijerholt et al., 2020)</i> | |
| PV1 | I feel motivated to work for this organization. |
| PV2 | I am proud of how this organization is perceived by the public. |
| PV3 | I see value in working for this organization. |
| PV4 | I am proud to be a part of the organization I work for. |
| <i>Brand Commitment (adapted from King & Grace, 2010; Piehler et al., 2016; Garas et al., 2018; Leijerholt et al., 2020; Yue et al., 2020)</i> | |
| BC1 | I feel I belong here in this organization I work for. |
| BC2 | I am invested in building my career in this organization I work for. |
| BC3 | I care about the fate and success of the organization I work for. |
| BC4 | My employer's values reflect those of my own. |
| <i>Brand Citizenship Behavior (adapted from King & Grace, 2010; Garas et al., 2018)</i> | |
| CB1 | I like talking about the organization I work for |
| CB2 | I say positive things about the organization I work for to others |
| CB3 | If given the opportunity, I like to pass on my knowledge about this organization's brand to new employees. |
| CB4 | I would recommend the organization I work for to others. |

Many of the items have been derived from more than one previous study. The items assessing internal brand communication IC1 and IC4 were adapted from King & Grace (2010), item IC4 adapted from Piehler et al. (2016) and items IC1, IC2, IC3 and IC4 adapted from Garas et al. (2018). Employees identifying with the corporate identity was assessed with item BI4 adapted from Piehler et al. (2016), items BI1 and BI2 adapted from Leijerholt et al. (2020) and items BI1, BI2 and BI3 adapted from Yue et al. (2020). Perceived brand value was measured with items PV1 and PV4 adapted from King & Grace (2010), item PV3 adapted from Piehler et al. (2016) and item PV2 adapted from Leijerholt et al. (2020). The items BC1, BC2, BC3 and BC4 assessing brand commitment were adapted from King & Grace (2010), item BC1 was adapted from Piehler et al. (2016), items BC1 and BC2 were adapted from Garas et al. (2018), items BC3 and BC4 were adapted from Leijerholt et al. (2020) and item BC3 adapted from Yue et al. (2020). The items CB1, CB2, CB3 and CB4 assessing brand citizenship behavior were adapted from King & Grace (2010) and item CB4 was adapted from Garas et al. (2018).

The viewpoint was selected so that it could also offer some insight into how the culture of the company is being precepted by the employees, which is why the willingness to recommend, the value reflection, feeling of belonging, pride of belonging, motivation, and care for the company were important aspects of the survey.

3.2.4 Reliability

This form of data collection was chosen as it was considered to be likely to succeed in collecting data suitable for quantitative processes. Survey offers a pre-structured data collecting method and can be labeled as both efficient and economical way of collecting data, with the online aspect making it easier to include respondents from different locations. The method also makes it possible to reach a larger number of respondents with somewhat lesser efforts. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2008.)

Even though a small-scale pilot was executed before launching the survey to minimize the possibility, the risk of the respondents precepting some terms included in them in a different way than was originally intended still exists to some extent. This is a risk principally with questions concerning more abstract themes, or concepts more specific to a certain study, that might mean different things to different people, especially when the survey includes recipients from multiple different divisions and roles.

Another example of aspects that cannot be controlled with this kind of research are the opinions and even the moods of the respondents. An online survey can be completed with low effort and no surveillance. According to Alkula, Pöntinen and Ylöstalo (1994), questions considering attitudes or opinions, such as some of the items presented in table 1, can more likely be affected by the mood of the respondent. In addition, it is impossible to estimate whether the respondents have truly completed and submitted the survey carefully and honestly (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008).

To try and both minimize these abovementioned errors and gain as many responses as possible, the survey was designed to be as clear in appearance and reasonable in length, to make it as user-friendly as possible, as described in the previous chapters. These actions were taken to increase the willingness to answer and also successfully submit the answers. (Metsämuuronen, 2005.)

Sampling methods can be divided into random and non-probability sampling categories. Random sampling methods have been stated to generally increase the reliability and also enable the generalization, to some extent (Metsämuuronen, 2005).

Like justified before, the research was done as a case study for a company. As the aim was to gather as many replies as possible from the whole group of the case company's current employees, convenience sampling was chosen as the sampling method utilized in this research. As a non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling is a method where the researcher has easy access to the sample. The choice of sampling means the findings of the study cannot be truly generalized, but the results can still provide support to previous studies on the subject. (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4 RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the chapter that follows, the data results of this study are analyzed. First, the descriptive statistics are briefly addressed which the frequencies of the variables will be analyzed. Next, the frequencies are presented, before factor analysis and measurement model are examined. Lastly, structural model assessment is presented with the results.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The survey began with a set of demographic questions aimed to later help the case company with more accurate implementation of internal marketing by allowing better comparison of the results between different groups. These demographic questions included the age, workplace location, employment duration, division, role, and supervisor status of the recipient. Further general factors such as gender were left out to help retain the anonymity of the respondents. The results of these demographic questions are for the internal use of the case company only, so they are not factored in this research. However, the age distribution and employment duration can be presented in the table 2 below, to offer some insight into the profile of the respondents.

TABLE 2 Demographic statistics

| Age | N | % |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|
| Under 20 | 0 | 0 |
| 20-30 | 38 | 14 |
| 31-40 | 88 | 33 |
| 41-50 | 59 | 22 |
| 51-60 | 54 | 20 |
| Over 60 | 30 | 11 |
| Total | 269 | |
| Employment duration | N | % |
| Under 1 year | 13 | 5 |
| 1-5 years | 108 | 40 |
| 6-10 years | 36 | 13 |
| 11-15 years | 37 | 14 |
| 16-20 years | 31 | 12 |
| Over 20 years | 44 | 16 |
| Total | 269 | |

As can be seen from the table 2 above, the age distribution of the respondents was quite even, with the exception of there having been no respondents under the age of 20. Largest age group were 31–40-year-olds with 33 % of the respondents fitting that group. The second largest group were 41–50-year-olds, with 51–60-year-olds close behind, with 22 % and 20 %, respectively. What can be considered interesting, is that the oldest age group of those over 60-year-olds included 11 % of the respondents, making it only slightly smaller group than those of 20–30-year-old (14 %).

Employment duration had slightly more contrast in the form of answers. The clearly largest group represented were those employees who had worked for the case company for 1–5 years (40 %). What should be taken into consideration is that employees with longer careers have transferred to the case company from its parent company at some time after the subsidiary was formed.

4.2 Frequencies

As this research is done as a case study, frequencies such as mean values among the variables will be presented in tables in the following chapters for each factor, to benefit the case company. Producing a frequency distribution offers information on how the variables are distributed amongst the participants, when variables have limited categories.

Average responses amongst the employees of the case company can provide insight of the employees' perceptions on and experiences with the internal communication of their employer, how well they feel they know their employers brand and can relate and identify with it, if they feel pride and experience value in working for their employer and whether they feel committed to it (Longest, 2012).

The measures of general tendencies amongst variables that are examined on this research are the median, mode, and mean. The average of the variable's value is examined with the mean, the mode represents the most common value submitted and the middle value of a sorted list of values is examined with median (Longest, 2012).

Additionally, the standard deviation, describing the variability of given values from the mean, is utilized to examine the variability of the distribution, or how unanimous the result was. Also, skewness and kurtosis are examined, to see whether the distribution of the values is skewed, peaked or flat (Hair et al., 2015). The minimum represents the smallest and maximum the biggest value, and as this research utilized the 5-point Likert scale, the minimum value is 1, indicating total disagreement, and the maximum value is 5, indicating total agreement.

4.2.1 Internal brand communication

When observing internal brand communication, the mean for variables ranges between 3.09 and 3.58, indicating that there is only little variance between responses. The median for all but one variable is 4, with IC3 *Internal communication I receive helps me perform according to my employer's brand* being 3. The mode follows the same pattern as median.

Standard deviation and variance are both under 1 in IC1 *Brand of the organization I work for is communicated well to employees through internal communications* and IC2 *The brand's vision and values are constantly reinforced through internal communication*, and little over 1 in IC3 and more so in IC4 *The organization I work for communicates the importance of my role in delivering the brand in day-to-day life*. This shows that there is no significant variance between responses, but slightly more in the last two variables.

The measures of skewness and kurtosis, measuring the shape of the distribution, are both within the range of larger than -1 and smaller than +1, indicating that the distribution is not skewed, peaked, or flat. The results can be seen in the table 3 below.

TABLE 3 Internal brand communication, central tendency, and variability

| | | IC1 | IC2 | IC3 | IC4 |
|------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| N | Valid | 269 | 269 | 269 | 269 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.39 | 3.58 | 3.09 | 3.53 |
| Median | | 4.00 | 4.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 |
| Mode | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Std. Deviation | | .974 | .988 | 1.046 | 1.118 |
| Variance | | .948 | .976 | 1.093 | 1.250 |
| Skewness | | -.385 | -.552 | -.152 | -.451 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .149 | .149 | .149 | .149 |
| Kurtosis | | -.281 | .003 | -.512 | -.548 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .296 | .296 | .296 | .296 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

Based on the statistics above, it can be deduced that the employees of the case company feel quite unanimously that the general level of internal

communication is at a satisfactory or good level. The items IC1 *Brand of the organization I work for is communicated well to employees through internal communications*, IC2 *The brand's vision and values are constantly reinforced through internal communication*, IC3 *Internal communication I receive helps me perform according to my employer's brand*, and IC4 *The organization I work for communicates the importance of my role in delivering the brand in day-to-day life*, all had a median of 4, with the highest mean of 3.58 being with IC2, with IC4 coming in second with a mean of 3.55. This indicates that when examining the case company's internal branding, the employees are most satisfied with how the brand of the employer and the importance of their own role in delivering it in the day-to-day life is communicated to them. However, the lowest mean of 3.09 and median of 3 was with item IC3, indicating that there could be some room for improvement on how internal communication could guide employers on how to better implement the company brand into their daily performance.

4.2.2 Brand identification

The mean values of brand identification variables are distributed between 3.14 and 3.67, with the highest-ranking average of means in this research. The variables scored with a median of 4 on all variables except BI2 *The success of the organization I work for feels like my success*, which had a median of 3.

Standard deviation and variance exceed 1 with all the variables, indicating that there was variance in the responses. However, the mode was 4 on all variables except BI3 *When I talk about the organization I work for, I usually say "we" rather than "they"*, which had a mode of 5, indicating that employees refer to their place of work and colleagues as "we".

Skewness values are all within the range of larger than -1 and smaller than +1, indicating that the distribution is not skewed. However, the Kurtosis measure of BI2 is slightly under the optimal minimum of -1 (-1.005), indicating a slightly too flat distribution. All the values can be seen in the table 4 below.

TABLE 4 Brand identification, central tendency, and variability

| | | BI1 | BI2 | BI3 | BI4 |
|------------------------|---------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| N | Valid | 269 | 269 | 269 | 269 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.55 | 3.14 | 3.59 | 3.67 |
| Median | | 4.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Mode | | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.216 | 1.248 | 1.271 | 1.103 |
| Variance | | 1.480 | 1.557 | 1.616 | 1.216 |
| Skewness | | -.625 | -.184 | -.568 | -.636 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .149 | .149 | .149 | .149 |
| Kurtosis | | -.469 | -1.005 | -.724 | -.221 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .296 | .296 | .296 | .296 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

The highest mean was found with BI4 *I know how to implement our brand into my daily work*. Even though BI3 had the highest mode, the variance and standard deviation were also highest on this variable, explaining the slightly lower mean compared to BI4. The lowest mean and median were with variable BI2 *The success of the organization I work for feels like my success*, indicating that even though the employers do seem to identify with the brand of their employer in terms of referring to “we” rather than “they”, knowing how to implement the brand in their daily work, and caring about what other people think of the organization, there could still be some room to improve especially on the matter of making the employees feel more like the success of the organization is also their own success.

4.2.3 Perceived value

Variables measuring employee perceived brand value is ranged in mean from 3.09 to 3.52. The median is 4 on all variables but PV2 *I am proud of how this organization is perceived by the public*, which has a median of 3.

The modes vary between 5 and 3, with the standard deviation and variance values exceeding 1, indicating that there is some variance in the answers given. The measures of skewness and kurtosis are both within the range of larger than -1 and smaller than +1, indicating that the distribution is not skewed, peaked, or flat. The numbers can be seen in the table 5 below.

TABLE 5 Perceived value, central tendency, and variability

| | | PV1 | PV2 | PV3 | PV4 |
|------------------------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|
| N | Valid | 269 | 269 | 269 | 269 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.52 | 3.09 | 3.51 | 3.43 |
| Median | | 4.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| Mode | | 5 | 3 ^a | 4 | 4 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.262 | 1.160 | 1.128 | 1.234 |
| Variance | | 1.594 | 1.346 | 1.273 | 1.522 |
| Skewness | | -.416 | -.211 | -.414 | -.483 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .149 | .149 | .149 | .149 |
| Kurtosis | | -.946 | -.773 | -.640 | -.699 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .296 | .296 | .296 | .296 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

a. Multiple modes exist, the smallest value is shown

The highest mean, mode, and variance is with variable PV1 *I feel motivated to work for this organization*, indicating that the employees in average do feel motivated to work specifically for this organization, but that there is some variance. PV3 *I see value in working for this organization* reaches almost the same mean, but with a median and mode of 4 and lower variance rate. This shows that the employees feel relatively motivated to work for, and see value in working for, their current employer. However, they are not as proud with how their employer is seen by the public.

4.2.4 Brand commitment

The mean values for variables measuring brand commitment are distributed between 3.31 and 3.78, which is the highest mean value of all the variables in this research. The variable with 3.78 mean is BC3 *I care about the fate and success of the organization I work for*.

The median values are evenly split with two variables scoring 3 and two scoring 4. Modes are 4 on all other variables except BC4 *My employer's values reflect those of my own*, which has a mode of 3. Standard deviation and variance are again over 1 on all the variables, indicating variation in the answers given.

The measures of skewness and kurtosis are within the range of larger than -1 and smaller than +1 on all variables, indicating that the distribution is not skewed, peaked, or flat. The numbers can be examined in the table 6 below.

TABLE 6 Brand commitment, central tendency, and variability

| | | BC1 | BC2 | BC3 | BC4 |
|------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| N | Valid | 269 | 269 | 269 | 269 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.46 | 3.31 | 3.78 | 3.36 |
| Median | | 4.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 3.00 |
| Mode | | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.180 | 1.263 | 1.150 | 1.136 |
| Variance | | 1.391 | 1.595 | 1.323 | 1.291 |
| Skewness | | -.375 | -.329 | -.800 | -.328 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .149 | .149 | .149 | .149 |
| Kurtosis | | -.740 | -.885 | -.112 | -.582 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .296 | .296 | .296 | .296 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

The high mean of BC3 indicates that the employees feel committed enough to care about the fate and success of the organization they work for. However, compared to that, BC2 *I am invested in building my career in this organization I work for* and BC4 did not score as well. These results indicate that the employees do not feel equally committed to building their career in that organization or feel that the values of their employer reflect those of their own.

4.2.5 Brand citizenship

Brand citizenship variables are divided between 3.17 and 3.47 in mean values, making the average value of the means lowest in this research. The median and mode values are 3 on all other variables except CB2 *I say positive things about the organization I work for to others*, making the average of means and medians also the lowest scoring in this research.

Standard deviation and variance are above 1 on all variables, indicating once again variation between the answers given. Skewness values are within the range of larger than -1 and smaller than +1 on all the variables, indicating that the distribution is not skewed. However, the Kurtosis measure of CB2 is slightly

under the optimal minimum of -1 (-1.022), indicating a slightly too flat distribution. The results are displayed in the table 7 below.

TABLE 7 Brand citizenship, central tendency, and variability

| | | CB1 | CB2 | CB3 | CB4 |
|------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| N | Valid | 269 | 269 | 269 | 269 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.19 | 3.47 | 3.17 | 3.23 |
| Median | | 3.00 | 4.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| Mode | | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.157 | 1.074 | 1.186 | 1.330 |
| Variance | | 1.338 | 1.153 | 1.406 | 1.768 |
| Skewness | | -.252 | -.400 | -.234 | -.276 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .149 | .149 | .149 | .149 |
| Kurtosis | | -.660 | -.337 | -.709 | -1.022 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .296 | .296 | .296 | .296 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

The highest scoring variable is CB2. The lowest scoring is CB3 *If given the opportunity, I like to pass on my knowledge about this organization's brand to new employees* with 3.17, with CB1 *I like talking about the organization I work for* scoring only slightly better with 3.19. This indicates that the employees do feel like they speak rather positively about the organization they work for, but do not like talking about it quite as much, and do not feel like passing on their knowledge on their employers' brand to new colleagues as much. An important variable CB4 *I would recommend the organization I work for to others* scored a mean of 3.23 with a median and mode of 3, which is below average when looking at all 20 variables in this research.

4.3 Factor analysis

Factor analysis was used to compress the research data. In order to find and identify items that would potentially be problematic, a pre-analysis method was used. As the number of observations for this research was 296, the size of the data

was suitable, as it surpassed the requirement of 100 observations for successfully run factor analysis. (Karjaluo, 2007.)

Firstly, exploratory factor analysis was conducted by using IBM SPSS Statistics 28. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to examine the preconditions for the factor analysis and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to compare the correlation matrix to the identity matrix, with the results listed in the table 8 below. KMO test value 0.962 not only exceeded the suggested threshold value of 0.5, indicating that the data is very well suitable for factor analysis, but also surpassed the limiting value for excellent preconditions of 0.90 (Karjaluo, 2007).

Results of Bartlett's Test also indicates that the prerequisites for performing factor analysis are good, with the approximate Chi-Square of 4798.646 ($p < 0.00$), with the Sig. value of 0.000 fulfilling the preconditions of $<0.1 - 0.5$ and thus being statistically significant. This indicates that the research data possesses all the conditions needed for factor analysis and is therefore suitable for it (Karjaluo, 2007).

TABLE 8 KMO and Bartlett's Test

| | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .962 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 4798.646 |
| | df | 190 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Secondly, the variables' suitability for the factor analysis was determined by examining the communalities, as showcased in table 9 below. The communality value of a variable signals the portion of its variety is explainable by the factor.

In order to be suitable for the factor analysis, the communality value should be greater than 0.3, indicating that in the case of each variable, the factor solutions explain over 30 % of its variants. If the communality value of a variable is <0.3 , it should be removed from the factor analysis, unless it is crucial to include it in the research in the light of the theoretical framework or hypotheses. The closer the value is to 1.00, the more due to the factor the variable variances are. (Karjaluo, 2007.)

TABLE 9 Communalities

| | Initial | Extraction |
|------------|---------|------------|
| IC1 | .505 | .493 |
| IC2 | .576 | .611 |
| IC3 | .655 | .727 |
| IC4 | .647 | .611 |
| BI1 | .641 | .556 |
| BI2 | .685 | .618 |
| BI3 | .628 | .585 |
| BI4 | .617 | .589 |
| PV1 | .796 | .775 |
| PV2 | .667 | .622 |
| PV3 | .803 | .766 |
| PV4 | .854 | .831 |
| BC1 | .651 | .627 |
| BC2 | .599 | .556 |
| BC3 | .772 | .767 |
| BC4 | .709 | .677 |
| CB1 | .703 | .650 |
| CB2 | .716 | .689 |
| CB3 | .606 | .562 |
| CB4 | .783 | .756 |

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood

As can be seen in table 9 above, all communalities exceeded 0.3, indicating that all items are well suited for running the factor analysis. This allowed moving on to evaluating the results further.

4.4 Measurement model

For the next part, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to implement confirmatory factor analysis in SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM is a method in analyzing the causal relationships between the latent variables, that is considered a standard in marketing and management research (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011). Use of structural equation modeling program allows the

relationships between the selected constructs (see table 1 Measurement items) to be observed with more detail (Bagozzi & Yi, 2021).

Evaluating the results of PLS-SEM can be divided into two stages. The reliability and validity of the constructs is examined in the first stage, and the stage 2 examines the structural models, including evaluating the meaningfulness and the significance of the structural relationships and hypotheses testing (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2022). The first stage is presented in this chapter and the second in the following one. The measurement model of this research was built and assessed in SmartPLS, with five factors created in accordance with the proposed research model introduced in figure 6 and table 1. The model with factor loadings can be seen in figure 7 below.

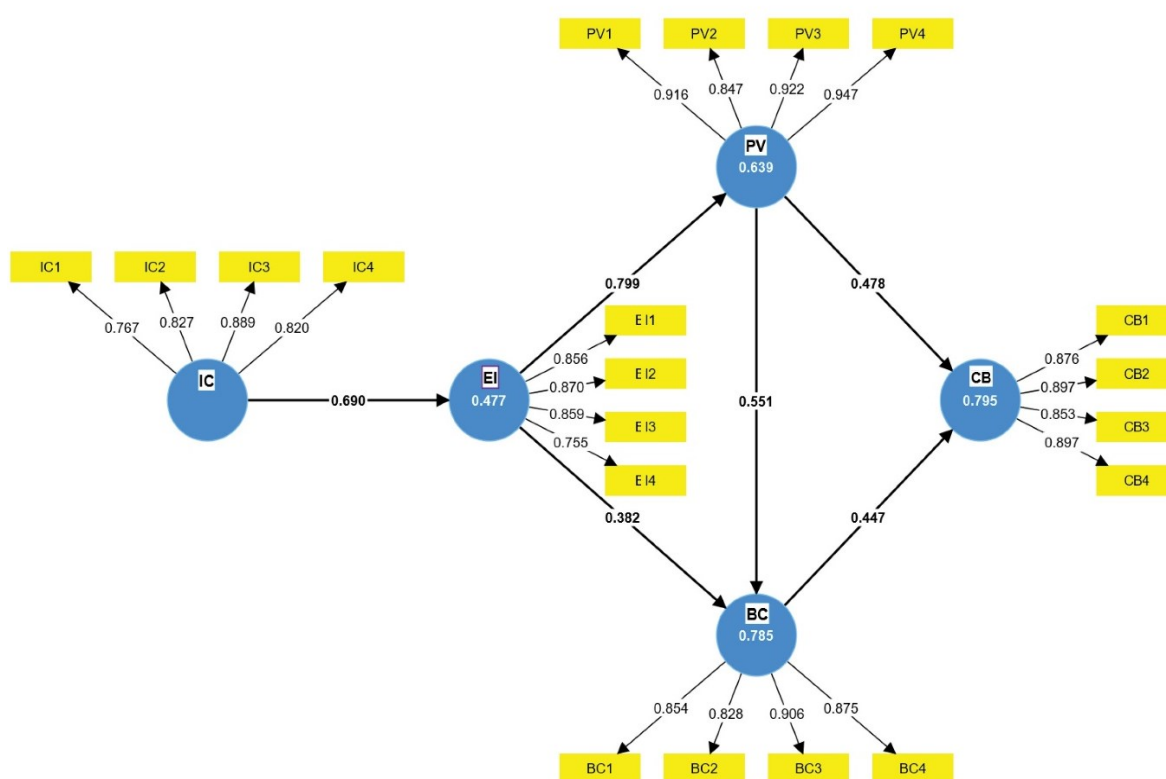


FIGURE 7 Measurement model with factor loadings in SmartPLS 4

All items were included in testing the reliability and validity of the model and the constructs, as the indicator reliability loadings were all over the recommended value of 0.70. The model was assessed with the examination of the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency reliability), composite reliability and T values. (Hair et al., 2011). The figures are displayed in table 10 below.

The factor loadings for all variables scored above 0.70, and thus were acceptable, indicating that there were no problematic indicator loadings, and that all variables explain over 50 % of the indicator's variance (Hair et al., 2022).

Internal consistency reliability was inspected with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, which both exceeded the threshold value of 0.70 in all cases, so the result can be considered good as there was no problems with internal consistency. The value for reliability being limited to values greater than 0.70 is presented by for example Bagozzi and Yi (2012).

Whether or not the relationship between the indicators and the latent factor is significant is examined by looking at the T values. If $t > 1.96$ at the 5 percent level ($p = 0.05$), the T value can be considered significant. As seen from the table 10 below, all values were greater than 1.96, exceeding it considerably, and thus the relationships can be considered significant. In the light of these results, the measurement model has met the sufficient level of acceptability.

TABLE 10 Cronbach's alphas, Composite reliabilities, Factor loadings, T values

| Factor | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability | Item | Standardized loadings | T value |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|---------|
| Internal Brand Communication | 0.847 | 0.896 | IC1 | 0.767 | 22.317 |
| | | | IC2 | 0.827 | 33.276 |
| | | | IC3 | 0.889 | 60.362 |
| | | | IC4 | 0.820 | 38.925 |
| Employee Identification | 0.856 | 0.903 | EI1 | 0.856 | 47.172 |
| | | | EI2 | 0.870 | 65.273 |
| | | | EI3 | 0.859 | 42.742 |
| | | | EI4 | 0.755 | 20.764 |
| Employee Perceived Brand Value | 0.929 | 0.950 | PV1 | 0.916 | 81.733 |
| | | | PV2 | 0.847 | 37.909 |
| | | | PV3 | 0.922 | 71.254 |
| | | | PV4 | 0.947 | 140.076 |
| Employee Brand Commitment | 0.889 | 0.923 | BC1 | 0.854 | 46.207 |
| | | | BC2 | 0.828 | 24.117 |
| | | | BC3 | 0.906 | 77.402 |
| | | | BC4 | 0.875 | 52.955 |
| Brand Citizenship Behavior | 0.904 | 0.933 | CB1 | 0.876 | 42.410 |
| | | | CB2 | 0.897 | 77.358 |
| | | | CB3 | 0.853 | 31.786 |
| | | | CB4 | 0.897 | 75.316 |

To measure the convergent validity of the research model, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used. To explain in average over 50 % of the variance of the construct's items, the threshold value for AVE would be >0.5. This ensures that the possible measurement errors are lower than actual variance due to construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The AVE values presented in the table 11 below are all over 0.5, indicating that latent constructs explain sufficiently the variants of its indicator variants, so the measurement model can be considered valid. The discriminant validity was addressed with Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings, comparing the AVE value of each construct with the squared interconstruct correlation with the other constructs of the model. The square roots of the average variant's extracted values exceeded the AVE values and are over construct correlations between other constructs, indicating discriminant validity. This confirms the discriminant value of the measurement model. (Hair et al., 2022.)

TABLE 11 AVE and Fornell-Larcker

| | AVE | BC | CB | BI | IC | PV |
|----|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| BC | 0.750 | 0.866 | | | | |
| CB | 0.776 | 0.857 | 0.881 | | | |
| BI | 0.700 | 0.822 | 0.804 | 0.837 | | |
| IC | 0.683 | 0.641 | 0.645 | 0.690 | 0.827 | |
| PV | 0.826 | 0.856 | 0.861 | 0.799 | 0.638 | 0.909 |

Furthermore, the cross loadings of the variables were inspected, examining whether a variable has more than one loading that is significant. The guiding principle here being that all indicator variables should in each case load higher on their own construct, compared to other constructs included in the research model (Hair et al., 2022).

Based on the results illustrated in table 12 below, all of the indicator loadings in this research loaded higher with their own parent constructs, but some items cross loaded onto other constructs with a difference of less than 0.10.

TABLE 12 Cross loadings

| | BC | CB | BI | IC | PV |
|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| BC1 | 0.854 | 0.726 | 0.705 | 0.596 | 0.735 |
| BC2 | 0.828 | 0.691 | 0.608 | 0.426 | 0.676 |
| BC3 | 0.906 | 0.788 | 0.779 | 0.540 | 0.809 |
| BC4 | 0.875 | 0.758 | 0.743 | 0.650 | 0.738 |
| CB1 | 0.773 | 0.876 | 0.692 | 0.555 | 0.747 |
| CB2 | 0.773 | 0.897 | 0.742 | 0.545 | 0.754 |
| CB3 | 0.674 | 0.853 | 0.650 | 0.566 | 0.684 |
| CB4 | 0.792 | 0.897 | 0.744 | 0.608 | 0.840 |
| BI1 | 0.715 | 0.664 | 0.856 | 0.511 | 0.670 |
| BI2 | 0.732 | 0.706 | 0.870 | 0.533 | 0.734 |
| BI3 | 0.684 | 0.712 | 0.859 | 0.546 | 0.710 |
| BI4 | 0.614 | 0.603 | 0.755 | 0.726 | 0.553 |
| IC1 | 0.422 | 0.470 | 0.476 | 0.767 | 0.423 |
| IC2 | 0.436 | 0.443 | 0.487 | 0.827 | 0.454 |
| IC3 | 0.541 | 0.544 | 0.578 | 0.889 | 0.557 |
| IC4 | 0.663 | 0.635 | 0.691 | 0.820 | 0.628 |
| PV1 | 0.815 | 0.798 | 0.735 | 0.565 | 0.916 |
| PV2 | 0.675 | 0.731 | 0.688 | 0.620 | 0.847 |
| PV3 | 0.795 | 0.767 | 0.725 | 0.553 | 0.922 |
| PV4 | 0.818 | 0.831 | 0.755 | 0.586 | 0.947 |

The results of the first stage examining the reliability and validity of the constructs suggest, that the measurement model is valid. Therefore, the structural model can be assessed.

4.5 Structural model assessment

Since the quality of the measurement model was found to be satisfactory, the second stage of the PLS-SEM presented in this chapter to evaluate the results was conducted. In assessing the structural model and observe the relationships between the constructs, the key evaluation criteria are both the path coefficients (β), and the coefficients of determination (R^2), a measure used to assess the accuracy of the research model.

In addition, T values are examined through running bootstrapping algorithm to observe the significance levels of the relationships. The bootstrapping in was calculated in SmartPLS 4 two-tailed, with 2000 subsamples and a significance level of 5 %. (Hair et al., 2022; Hair et al., 2011; Bagozzi & Yi, 2012.)

For the path coefficient values (β), the correlation guide by Evans (1995) was used. According to it, the correlation can vary between -1 and +1, indicating either positive or negative correlation. Positive correlation values between 0.00-0.19 can be described as very weak, 0.20-0.39 as weak, 0.40-0.59 as moderate, 0.60-0.79 as strong, and 0.80-1.00 as very strong with the same logic applying to the negative correlation values, representing either strong or negative levels of correlation. The path coefficients in this research were all above 0.00, ranging from strong positive (0.799) to weak positive (0.382). The effect size (f^2) is used to assess how an independent construct actually does contribute to explaining a specific dependent construct on R^2 value. Based on this value, the result can be transcribed as small (0.02), moderate (0.15), or strong (0.35). All values were well above the moderate limit, with three of them exceeding the strong limit.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to analyze how the linked independent variables can explain the differences in dependent variable. The value describes the percentage with which the factors can be explained by the variables. Higher R^2 values indicate higher accuracy, with the range of substantial (0.75), moderate (0.50), and weak (0.25). (Metsämuuronen 2005; Hair et al., 2022). The R^2 value for Brand Identification was just slightly below the moderate limit (0.477) and the R^2 value for Brand Commitment was just above the substantial limit (0.78), with the remaining scoring halfway between moderate and substantial. These results indicate that the factors can be explained by their variables relatively well.

The T statistics were all well over 1.96, indicating confidence in the coefficient as a predictor, with P values (0.00) indicating that they are significant. All the results can be seen in the table 13 below.

TABLE 13 Patch coefficients, effect sizes, T statistics, P values, hypotheses acceptance

| Hypothesis | β | f^2 | T statistics | P values | Supported |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------|--------------|----------|-----------|
| H1 IC → BI | 0.690 | 0.910 | 18.959 | 0.000 | Yes |
| H2 BI → BC | 0.382 | 0.245 | 6.396 | 0.000 | Yes |
| H3 BI → PV | 0.799 | 1.768 | 30.939 | 0.000 | Yes |
| H4 PV → BC | 0.551 | 0.509 | 9.301 | 0.000 | Yes |
| H5 PV → CB | 0.478 | 0.299 | 9.990 | 0.000 | Yes |
| H6 BC → CB | 0.447 | 0.262 | 9.015 | 0.000 | Yes |
| | R² | | | | |
| Brand Identification | 0.477 | | | | |
| Brand Commitment | 0.785 | | | | |
| Perceived Value | 0.639 | | | | |
| Citizenship Behavior | 0.639 | | | | |

When examining the total results of the hypotheses testing, all the proposed hypotheses did have sufficient significance. The strongest path coefficient value in this research was found with Brand Identification → Perceived value ($\beta = 0.799$, $p < 0.05$, T statistics 30.939)., thus H3 *Employee identification with corporate identity has a positive impact on employee perceived brand value* is supported. Second was Internal Communication → Brand Identification ($\beta = 0.690$, $p < 0.05$, T statistics 18.959), meaning that H1. *Internal brand communication has a positive impact on employee identification with corporate identity* is supported. Third strongest was Perceived Value → Brand Commitment ($\beta = 0.551$, $p < 0.05$, T statistics 9.301), supporting H4. *Employee perceived brand value has a positive impact on employee brand commitment*. Fourth was Perceived Value → Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.478$, $p < 0.05$, T statistics 9.990), consequently H5. *Employee perceived brand value has a positive impact on employee brand citizenship behavior* is supported. Fifth was Brand Commitment → Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.447$, $p < 0.05$, T statistics 9.015), supporting H6. *Employee brand commitment has a positive impact on employee brand citizenship behavior*. Lastly, Brand Identification → Brand Commitment ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < 0.05$, T statistics 6.396), H2. *Employee identification with corporate identity has a positive impact on employee brand commitment* is also supported.

Based on these results on assessing the structural model, employees identifying with their employers' identity has a very strong, significant positive effect on employers perceiving value of their employers' brand. Internal brand communication also has strong positive, significant effect on employees identifying with their employers' identity.

Employees perceiving value of their employers' brand has a slightly lesser but still positive effect on encouraging brand commitment. Employees perceiving value of their employers' brand and experiencing brand commitment

both have very similar, a bit lower-level positive effect and significance on encouraging brand citizenship behavior.

Lastly, employees identifying with their employers' identity has some positive effect and significance, though not very strong, on employees experiencing commitment to their employers' brand. The results of the coefficients of determination indicate that employees identifying with their employers' identity explains brand commitment substantially. Same can be said with brand commitment and employee perceived brand value explaining brand citizenship. Employees identifying with their employers' identity also explains employee perceived brand value above than what is considered moderate, whereas internal communication alone does not explain employees identifying with their employers' identity quite so well but still adequately, scoring just below moderate.

5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter introduces the conclusions of this research through findings and both theoretical and managerial implications. The intention of this research was to measure the levels of brand identification, brand commitment, perceived brand value, and employee brand citizenship within the current employees and whether they had a positive perception of the internal brand communication they received, and also to explore the relationships between these concepts.

The intention was to offer the case company insight onto the current status of employee satisfaction with internal brand management aspects and help plan possible future actions in developing and targeting their internal brand management actions.

5.1 Main findings

The research questions formed to offer basis for this research were focused on examining the relationships between internal brand communication, brand identification, perceived brand value, brand commitment, and brand citizenship, or brand endorsement, behavior. The research was conducted successfully, and the results of the research provided support for all the proposed hypotheses. Based on the results, the research questions were evaluated. The research questions introduced in the earlier chapters were following:

RQ1. Do perceptions of internal brand communication have positive effect on employees identifying with their employer's identity?

RQ2. Does employee identification with their employers' identity have positive effect on employees perceiving value with their employers' brand, and committing to the brand?

RQ3. Does employee perceived brand value have positive effect on employees experiencing brand commitment?

RQ4. Do employee perceived brand value and committing to the brand have positive effect on brand citizenship behavior?

Since the path coefficient value between Internal Brand Communication → Brand Identification was found to be significant ($\beta = 0.690$, $p < 0.05$), employees' perceptions of internal brand communication can be said to have a positive effect on employees identifying with their employer's identity. This means that the empirical research model results support RQ1. The results also support RQ2, as the path coefficient values between Brand Identification → Perceived Value ($\beta = 0.799$, $p < 0.05$) and Brand Identification → Brand Commitment ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < 0.05$), respectively, were found to be significant. This means that employee

identification has positive effect on both employees perceiving value with their employer's brand and brand commitment. However, the results showcase employees' identification with their employer's brand having a much bigger effect on them experiencing perceived brand value as compared to its effect on brand commitment. The results of this research support RQ3, as Perceived Value \rightarrow Brand Commitment ($\beta = 0.551, p < 0.05$) was found to be significant, indicating that employee perceived brand value has positive effect on brand commitment. Lastly, RQ4 was also supported by the results of this research, as Perceived Value \rightarrow Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.478, p < 0.05$) and Brand Commitment \rightarrow Citizenship Behavior ($\beta = 0.447, p < 0.05$) were also both found to be significant. This means that both employee perceived brand value and brand commitment have very similar positive effect on brand citizenship behavior, with perceived value being slightly more impactful. These findings are in line with previous research on the topic.

Based on these observations, the results of this study support all the abovementioned research questions. This indicates that in order to encourage brand citizenship behavior, nurturing employee brand commitment and perceived brand value are important factors, which in turn are positively affected by the level with which the organization can promote employee identification with their identity. The results indicated that especially the positive effect brand identification has on perceived brand value, and internal brand communication has on brand identification are significant. According to the results of this research, one foundation of facilitating employee identification is successful internal brand communication.

5.2 Theoretical implications

As all the proposed hypotheses were supported, the results of this study support the previous research presented in the earlier theoretical framework. The findings of this study contribute to the literature concerning internal branding by providing evidence that positive perceptions of brand identification amongst the employees of the case company have significant positive impact on employees experiencing perceived brand value, and that positive perceptions of internal brand communication in turn have significant positive impact on that brand identification. Somewhat lesser, but still significant, relationships recognized include the similar positive effect perceived brand value has on brand commitment and citizenship behavior, and the still slightly lesser positive effect brand commitment has on citizenship behavior. The clearly smallest impact, though still sufficiently positive, was the effect the employees identifying with the brand has on the brand commitment they experience. This was rather interesting, since previous research (e.g., Piehler et al. 2016) would suggest that identification with the brand would promote the tendency to develop stronger commitment to that brand.

Earlier research also shows that the constructs used in this research have relationships outside the proposed empirical research model as well. Examples would include brand commitment having positive effect on brand identification, and brand commitment to acting as brand advocates (Burmam et al., 2009). This aspect can be seen also in this research, reflected in the cross loadings table, where several items loaded well onto other constructs as well.

As opposed to Internal Brand Management Model proposed by Burmann et al. (2009), the results of this research indicate that internal brand communication has a significant positive effect on employees identifying with their employer's brand, which then has a positive effect on brand commitment, as well as them experiencing perceived brand value. This would put brand identification in as a mediating factor that in turn has positive impact on brand commitment.

Piehler et al. (2016) have likewise examined the concept of internal brand management and antecedents to brand citizenship behavior. Their study also showed positive effects of both brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior, and brand identification and brand commitment. However, the proposed positive effect between brand identification and citizenship behavior was not found to be significant in that research, suggesting a possibility of mediation through brand commitment or brand identification, which is supported also by the results of this research.

5.3 Managerial implications

The overall results of this research based on employee satisfaction were relatively good. The item mean values were between 3.78–3.09, and even with the standard deviation and variance values exceeding 1 on several accounts, indicating variation in the answers given, the median and mode values also reflected rather good results. The differences between constructs were not remarkable, meaning that no one construct scored significantly higher or lower than others. The findings suggest a good base for building more defined internal branding processes, as the level of satisfaction was at an acceptable level. The mean values of all the measurement items combined into one table can be examined in appendix 2.

Internal brand communication items scored the third highest total average of 3.40. The responses indicate that the employees agree mostly with the vision and values being sufficiently reinforced through internal communication and that the importance of their individual roles in delivering the brand in day-to-day life. In comparison, the level with which the brand of the organization is conveyed through internal communication is not quite as high. The statement that internal communication employees receive helps them perform according to their employer's brand had the shared lowest mean of 3.09 in this research, indicating lower success rate within the case company. This means that the general opinion is that the brand, vision, values, and the importance of the role

of the employee in delivering the brand are communicated well, but it does not help the employees to perform according to the brand. This creates a slight confrontation, as the importance of their role in delivering the brand is communicated to the employees better than how the communication actually helps the employees to perform accordingly. In practice, this is something the management should pay attention to. The benefits of successful internal brand communication include affecting how the employees perceive the brand, promoting employee identification with the brand and impacting employee's knowledge of the brand and thus help them deliver the brand experience up to its standards (Miles & Mangold, 2004; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Looking at the bigger picture of internal communication, aiming to develop strictly informative one-way communication more towards empowering two-way communication, promoting engagement, could encourage stronger commitment to organizational values (Figure 5, Bellucci et al., 2018). In this stage, the actions of supervisors and the relationships between team leaders and their team become more highlighted and should be studied as an important aspect of internal communication.

Brand identification measurement items scored the highest total average of 3.49. The responses indicate that the employees feel they know how to implement their employers' brand into their daily work very well, that they usually refer to the organization they work for as "we" instead of "they" and that they care what other people think about their employer. In comparison, they do not feel as strongly that the success of the organization is also their success. Making the employees feel better gratified for and more involved with the big and small successes the company faces might be something the management should consider acting on to make employees feel like the success of the organization is also theirs. Employees agreeing that they know how to implement the brand of their employer in their daily work can be seen as a good result, however, considering the beforementioned results, it could be concluded that the knowledge might come primarily from some other source than internal brand communication. The benefits of employee identification include increasing the likelihood of employees showcasing supportive attitude towards the organization and making decisions consistent with organizational objectives. Based on the results of this research, the employees of the case company seem to care what others think of their employer and they also prefer to talk about "us" rather than "them" when referring to the organization they work for, which are both indicators of good base for brand identification. As this identification can promote a sense of belonging and bond-building, leading to employee's stronger commitment to the brand, this sense of "us" is something that should most definitely be nurtured for healthier organizational culture, more satisfied employees, and better performance.

Employee perceived brand value scored the second lowest total average of 3.39. Out of these statements, the respondents agreed most with feeling motivated to work for the case company and seeing value in working for it. However, the results indicated they felt slightly less pride in working for it, and the statement indicating that they were proud of how their employer was perceived by the public scored the shared lowest mean of 3.09 in this research.

The results indicate that the employees do have a positive response on feeling motivated to work for their employer, and they see value in working for that particular organization. They can also be said to be rather proud to be a part of that organization. However, they are not as proud of how the organization is viewed by the public. This is something to be noted, as it previously was clarified that the employees do indeed care what others think of their employer. This might indicate that they feel the organization is not viewed as positively by the public as they would hope, and that they care about this. This aspect should be investigated more thoroughly within the case company, to get clarity whether the image and reputation of the much more prominent parent company affects the perception the employees have of, or they think the stakeholders have of, the case company's external image.

The concept mentioned above is further supported by the fact that under brand commitment, the highest mean value of the entire research is with employees caring about the fate and success of the organization, indicating that they experience a positive emotional bond towards their employer. Brand commitment scored the second highest total average of 3.48. It also included the single highest item mean value of 3.78, indicating that the current employees of the case company care about the fate and success of the organization they work for. Also, the feeling of belonging was relatively high. Slightly below the total average scored both the respondents' level of investment in building their career in the case company and the statement that the values of the case company reflect those of their own. The answers indicate that the employees do sense a feeling of belonging in the organization they work for but are quite not so deeply invested in building their career there or feel that their employer's values reflect those of their own. This might indicate that the employees do not necessarily feel like they have the suitable opportunities to move on with and build their careers at their current employer. As mentioned before, the company has just gone through a massive value workshop operation, redefining their values, so this change might have some effect in the employees' perception of the values, as they are newly instated and need to be broken in in the day-to-day life. Managing to create affective commitment towards the brand is very valuable for the employer. The attachment helps generate brand citizenship behavior and have employees perform better, exceeding expectations more likely if needed, but it can also directly help save costs, as the need for substitute recruitments and unprofitable induction periods are reduced, as the accumulated know-how and experience is kept in the organization.

Brand citizenship scored the lowest total average of 3.27. The single highest item mean value was with the statement that the employees say positive things about the organization they work for to others. This was the only item mean that surpassed the total combined average of the items of this construct. The second highest mean was with the employees feeling they would be likely to recommend the organization they work for to others. The lowest mean values were with items stating that employees like talking about the organization they work for and that given the opportunity, they like to pass on their knowledge of the organization's brand to new employees. Even if brand citizenship items did not score high in

comparison, the results can be considered mainly positive. The respondents agreed mostly with saying positive things about the organization they work for to others and this statement in itself is a good indicator of some brand endorsement behavior. However, in comparison, they do not feel as positively about talking about the organization they work for, or feeling like they want to recommend the organization they work for to others. Also, an aspect that could benefit from improvement is the statement that the employees would like to pass on their knowledge of their employer's brand to new employees. The reason behind the respondents not agreeing with the statement as strongly is something to consider, as it would be beneficial to the company to have their employees engaging in brand endorsement behavior and sharing their knowledge internally. The feeling of not necessarily wanting to pass on one's knowledge of the brand might suggest that the employer feels like it is not their part or duty, but rather that of someone in another position, e.g., top management or marketing executive. The outcome of promoting brand citizenship behavior is valuable to any organization, helping achieve competitive advantage through the greatest single asset a company can have: its employees. Since the results of this research have shown that the introduced constructs have positive effect on generating brand advocacy, it can be suggested that they should be nurtured and explored more in depth within the organization, to achieve even better results in the future.

Overall, the current employees of the case company seem to have mostly favorable opinions of their employer. When examining the means of the variables (3.09–3.78) and the averages of each construct (3.27–3.49) visualized in appendix 2, we can deduct that the variation on the results was not very significant. However, the standard deviations exceeded 1 in most of the cases, indicating that there was some variance in the answers. This suggests that there is some dispersion in the responses, so even though the results can be seen as generally favorable to the case company, it could be suggested that the results would be analyzed in context with the demographic questions to find out if a certain group of more dissatisfied employees could be identified to further help develop the internal brand management in a more targeted way. Successful internal branding is undoubtedly beneficial throughout the organization, but the importance of it is highlighted especially among the employees who work in the customer interface, as their performance and ability to deliver the brand promise can have direct influence on the perception the customers have of the case company. Building credibility with customers through successful internal branding can include gaining competitive advantage, internal stakeholders delivering and managing the perceptions of external stakeholders. Other benefits of successful and strong employee branding include not only attracting the best new talent, but retaining the best employees, and thus minimizing replacement-based recruitment costs, by promoting brand commitment, all culminating in generating brand advocacy, or brand citizenship behavior.

To conclude, the earlier research on the subject and the results of this study indicate that internal brand management efforts based on generating good internal brand communication, supporting employee identification, brand

commitment and employees perceiving value of their employer's brand are beneficial in further promoting employee citizenship behavior, which can be seen as an objective for internal brand management. Committed and devoted employees willing to show effort and perform according to the brand, delivering the brand promise to the customer are one of the best assets a company can have. Brand citizenship behavior cannot be bought or otherwise obtained externally, but rather it is something that must be achieved through systematic internal marketing efforts, consistent employee branding, nurturing the organizational culture, supporting two-way communication, and regular examination the identity of the organization. Therefore, developing internal brand management processes and implementing them would be recommendable.

5.4 Evaluation and limitations of the research

Methods to evaluate research include measuring both the reliability and the validity of it. Hair et al. (2015) state that reliability refers to the measure's consistency, which assesses how well the study can be repeated with the results staying consistent, whereas validity describes the precision of the study, assessing how well the construct actually measures the aspect that it is supposed to measure.

To ensure sufficient validity to best benefit the case company and this research, the research questions were based on previous research and the hypotheses were derived from previous theories in order to increase validity. The measurement items were adapted from previous studies, without excess alteration, to increase validity but to not completely reiterate a previous study.

The internal consistency reliability of this research was ensured with the examination of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. These values were significantly over the suggested value of 0.70, ranging between 0.929–0.847 and 0.950–0.896, and thus indicating no problems with internal consistency. When inspecting the measurement items, all the factor loadings were over the suggested value of 0.70, ranging between 0.947–0.767, indicating no problems with internal consistency.

As construct validity is used to examine what the construct is measuring, convergent validity, examining how well the measures of constructs are relating to one another, and discriminant validity, testing whether the measures of constructs do not correlate with other measures, have been performed to assess the construct validity (Hair et al., 2015). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to measure the convergent validity. An AVE value >0.50 specifies that a construct explains more than 50 % of the variance of its items. The AVE values of this research varied between 0.826–0.683, indicating that all the AVE values in this research were found to be acceptable. Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings were used to measure the discriminant validity of the research. The method compares the AVE value of each construct with the squared interconstruct correlation with the model's other constructs and in cross-loadings

it is inspected whether a variable has additional significant loadings. (Hair et al., 2022.) The Fornell-Larcker criterion was found valid, but the cross-loadings indicated some the variables had other significant loadings, though none of them loaded higher on other constructs than their own.

The study aimed to measure the characteristics of a refined group as they existed during the research, the group being the current employees of the case company, excluding the top management to better highlight the aspect of organizational culture instead of top management's strategic vision, in accordance with the VCI alignment model (Hatch & Schultz, 2001). However, the survey was conducted anonymously, meaning that anyone with the answering link could submit a reply, and there was no real way of controlling the number of submitted replies per individual. These basics were underlined in both the email containing the link and the foreword of the survey, but due to the anonymity, this could not be monitored. This means that there is a possibility of someone having submitted multiple answers. As there were 274 submitted answers, the total number of the recipients represents roughly 25 % of employees of the case company. A higher percentage would represent the total staff better.

The sample size ($n = 269$) was adequate, as both Karjaluoto (2007) and Hair et al. (2022) define a sample size of 100 or less to be small. The often cited 10 times rule (Barclay, Higgins & Thompson, 1999) suggests that the sample size should be 10 times the number of independent variables anywhere in the PLS path model. As the sample size of this research is over 10 times bigger than the total number of independent variables, this would fill the rule. However, the fact that the research was conducted within, and data collected solely from one company with convenience sampling means that the results might not be repeatable or consistent with other companies. This is a factor that must be noted, even if the objective of this study was not to generalize the results but rather support existing academic research and provide the case company with current information on their internal branding aspects.

The abovementioned reasoning should be considered also when looking at the results of this case study, namely the hypothesis testing and the result of this research proving all of them supported. The concept of perceived brand value as it is introduced and examined in this research is slightly more novel, but the identified underlying causes of it, such as sense of brand pride, satisfaction, meaningfulness, have been previously studied to link strongly with brand commitment (Helm et al., 2016; Kapferer, 2004; Urde, 2003). Other constructs implemented in this research, similar constructs sharing same principal characteristics, and their immediate causal connections have been studied and verified with similar concepts as they have been presented in this research. For example, Leijerholt et al. (2020, p. 455) concluded that brand identification positively affects brand pride, which in turn affects brand commitment, and value congruence positively affects brand pride, whereas Piehler et al. (2016, p. 1587) confirmed brand commitment and brand understanding having significant and positive direct effects on brand citizenship behavior, and especially brand identification having strong positive effect on brand commitment. Piehler et al. (2016) also concluded that as brand understanding had no significant direct

relationship with brand commitment, but as the total effects were significant, full mediation through brand identification was suggested and proved, with similar results showing that even if brand identification had no direct influence on brand citizenship behavior, there was mediation through brand commitment. Given that the research model and the proposed hypotheses were adapted from previous studies that have confirmed similar causal relationships between related constructs, the result of the proposed hypotheses being supported is in line with previous academic research.

Another hypothesis-based detail that should be noted is that there was variance amongst the path coefficient values, which were found ranging from 0.799 to 0.382. This means that even though all six proposed hypotheses exceeded the limit of being supported, the significance levels of causal relations varied rather greatly. This means that the proposed and accepted hypotheses were not all unanimously strong, but rather the lowest scoring H2 was found to be only weakly positive and H6 was found to be just barely in the moderately positive category, whereas the highest scoring H3 was only 0.001 away from being considered very strong.

5.5 Future research

This research could offer a base for following up on how the perceptions of the employees change and evolve after internal brand management efforts. Future studies on the subject can help build a better understanding of how these efforts are being viewed by the employees of the case company. The results could also be re-analyzed by sorting them on the basis of the demographic factors. Use of demographic elements in additional moderating roles could show whether the experiences differ between locations or different career lengths of the employees. A study by Dechawatanapaisal (2019) indicated that the effect internal branding has on brand identification would be stronger for Gen Xers than it is for Millennials. These aspects could bring more depth into the research and help better targeting of the brand management efforts.

Since the results indicated that the employees cared rather deeply how their employer was seen by the public, and also that they were at the moment feeling as much pride on that perception, future studies could include elements of brand image to the research that now only featured internal aspects. This research indicated that employees perceiving value and feeling pride of their employer's brand has significant positive effect on promoting brand citizenship behavior, and that the perception of the external stakeholders and organization's reputation amongst the public are factors the employers seem to care about.

Future research on this subject could include new constructs, such as brand knowledge or understanding, as a factor of its own, positioned between internal communication and brand identification (Burmam et al., 2009), or managerial relations and supervisor behavior as an element that could potentially influence brand citizenship behavior.

As the relationships between people were not highlighted in this research, but the role of the manager can be seen as a factor that affects at least the way employees perceive internal communication, the relationships between supervisors and their team members could also be included in future research. (Garas et al., 2018). In future studies, additional focus should also be given to researching the effect of more two-way focused communication as an enabler and generator for more empowered and thus perhaps more committed employees (Bellucci, et al., 2018).

Lastly, optional relationships between the constructs of the research model could be analyzed, to see whether even more meaningful connections could be found, as the cross loadings of this research could suggest. Examples within this sampling could include testing whether the previously proposed causality of internal brand communication having positive effect on building brand commitment can be demonstrated (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Porricelli, Yurova, Abratt, & Bendixen, 2014). Other relationships that could be studied include brand commitment having positive effect on brand identification, and brand commitment to acting as brand advocates as proposed by Burmann et al. (2009) and Dechawatanapaisal (2019).

6 CONCLUSIONS

Despite the previous research and the valuable, employee-related benefits and competitive necessities internal brand management can result in, many organizations have yet to adopt these specific practices (Burmam and Zeplin, 2005). Seeing employees as internal customers and actively encouraging them to live the organizational brand has been seen to have positive effects on the internal brand of the organization.

Even if employee commitment and employee citizenship behavior can be seen as a great advantage to any organization, these traits can often be considered to be intrinsic and dependent on the employee's character, instead of an asset to be nurtured by marketing efforts and initiatives steered inwards, instead of focusing solely on managing the external image. Internal brand equity and healthy organizational culture encouraging commitment and endorsement behavior can be fostered with internal brand management efforts, including but not limited to communicating the brand internally. (King & Grace, 2010.)

The purpose of this research was to build and test a research model based on previous literature and research, to answer the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses, and thus offer the case company some insight into their current situation and also help plan future internal brand management processes based on both the hypothesis testing and the results of the survey. The data that was collected to perform this research exceeded expectations in quantity and proved satisfactory for conducting the analysis needed to assess the research model. Within two weeks, the survey generated almost 300 replies, indicating that the survey was successfully designed to be as user-friendly as possible. The analysis of the data proved it to be suitable in required ways to provide valid results.

The results of this research clearly indicated that internal brand communication has a positive impact on employees identifying with their employer's identity, that employees feeling like they identify with the identity of their employer affects positively on employees experiencing perceived value of their employer's brand and also on them committing to the brand, that this perceived value effects positively on employees experiencing commitment to their employer's brand and that this perceived brand value and brand commitment both have positive effect on brand citizenship behavior. These results indicate that employees seeing their employer's brand as valuable to them personally and feeling committed to that brand are key factors in generating brand citizenship behavior, which is a strong asset for an organization. The results also are in line with the previous research on these topics. Therefore, positive notions and perceptions of internal communication in all its forms are a good base for venturing into more refined internal brand management efforts to try and encourage citizenship behavior amongst employees. Ensuring that the vision of the top management and the organizational culture are aligned is a step

the organization can take internally towards creating a stronger organizational identity.

The results also provided insight into the satisfaction levels the current employers of the case company are experiencing considering internal brand management efforts. The results were mostly positive, with the mean value exceeding 3 on the 5-point Likert scale on every item. Even though some items had more variation in the responses, all of the mean values were over 3, some just shy of 4. These results combined with the demographic questions can offer valuable information and practical level ideas for the case company on how to raise the level of satisfaction experienced by the employees.

Lastly, the participation of case company in benefit for this research needs to be noted. The opportunity to perform this case study, the support and resources given, the openness with which this process was conducted, and the freedom to execute this research with a flexible schedule, ensuring a smooth project, deserve a thank you.

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APPENDIX 1

Printout of the Webropol survey, excluding demographic questions

Internal brand communication

Answering options:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

■■■■■'s brand is communicated well to employees through internal communications. *

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The brand's vision and values are constantly reinforced through internal communication. *

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Internal communication I receive helps me perform according to ■■■■■'s brand. *

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

■■■■■ communicates the importance of my role in delivering the brand in day-to-day life. *

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Edellinen

Seuraava

33% Valmis

Corporate identity

Answering options:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

I care what others think about [REDACTED]. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

The success of [REDACTED] feels like my success. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

When I talk about [REDACTED], I usually say "we" rather than "they". *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I know how to implement [REDACTED]'s brand into my daily work. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Edellinen

Seuraava

50% valmis

Perceived value

Answering options:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

I feel motivated to work for [redacted]. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I am proud of how [redacted] is perceived by the public. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I see value in working for [redacted]. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I am proud to be a part of [redacted]. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Edellinen

Seuraava

67% Valmis

Brand commitment

Answering options:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

I feel I belong here at [redacted]. *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I am invested in building my career here at [redacted]. *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I care about the fate and success of [redacted]. *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

[redacted]'s values reflect those of my own. *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Edellinen

Seuraava

83% Valmis

Brand citizenship

Answering options:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

I like talking about [redacted]. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I say positive things about [redacted] to others. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

If given the opportunity, I like to pass on my knowledge about [redacted]'s brand to new employees. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I would recommend [redacted] as an employer to others. *

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Edellinen

Lähetä

100% Valmis

APPENDIX 2

The survey items and mean values

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Internal brand communication | | 3.40 |
| IC1 | Brand of the organization I work for is communicated well to employees through internal communications. | 3.39 |
| IC2 | The brand's vision and values are constantly reinforced through internal communication. | 3.58 |
| IC3 | Internal communication I receive helps me perform according to my employer's brand. | 3.09 |
| IC4 | The organization I work for communicates the importance of my role in delivering the brand in day-to-day life. | 3.53 |
| Brand identification | | 3.49 |
| BI1 | I care what others think about the organization I work for. | 3.55 |
| BI2 | The success of the organization I work for feels like my success. | 3.14 |
| BI3 | When I talk about the organization I work for, I usually say "we" rather than "they". | 3.59 |
| BI4 | I know how to implement our brand into my daily work. | 3.67 |
| Perceived value | | 3.39 |
| PV1 | I feel motivated to work for this organization. | 3.52 |
| PV2 | I am proud of how this organization is perceived by the public. | 3.09 |
| PV3 | I see value in working for this organization. | 3.51 |
| PV4 | I am proud to be a part of the organization I work for. | 3.43 |
| Brand commitment | | 3.48 |
| BC1 | I feel I belong here in this organization I work for. | 3.46 |
| BC2 | I am invested in building my career in this organization I work for. | 3.31 |
| BC3 | I care about the fate and success of the organization I work for. | 3.78 |
| BC4 | My employer's values reflect those of my own. | 3.36 |
| Citizenship behavior | | 3.27 |
| CB1 | I like talking about the organization I work for | 3.19 |
| CB2 | I say positive things about the organization I work for to others | 3.47 |
| CB3 | If given the opportunity, I like to pass on my knowledge about this organization's brand to new employees. | 3.17 |