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## The effects of brand leadership styles on employees - based brand citizenship behavior

**Gholamreza Jandaghi\*, Fariba Bahamin, Masoumeh Abaei**

Faculty of Management and Accounting, Farabi College, University of Tehran, Iran

\*E-mail address: [jandaghi@ut.ac.ir](mailto:jandaghi@ut.ac.ir)

### ABSTRACT

Aimed at achieving employee – based brand equity, internal branding is a new strategy to assure that employees act in accordance with brand commitment. Since in service organizations, employees are able to influence over customers' purchase decisions and conceptions, they play a critical role in organizational success. Enhancing employee – based brand citizenship behavior by managers can create a competitive advantage for organization. The purpose of present study is to investigate the effects of brand leadership styles on employee – based brand citizenship behavior. This is an applied study and its needed data are gathered by a questionnaire distributed among employees of banks in Ajabshir City. Among 95 employees, 76 subjects were selected as research sample by random sampling method in Morgan Table. Pearson correlation coefficient and step-by-step regression were used to analyze data. Research findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between brand leadership styles and employee – based brand citizenship behavior.

**Keywords:** internal brand, brand citizenship behavior, brand leadership, achieving employee

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Competition is increasingly improving in many service industries such as banks and financial service markets (Mackay, 2001). Due to prevalence and complexity of service branding, it has become more dynamic in recent decades. A radical challenge in service

marketing is that services are intangible compared to other goods and it is more likely that their quality changes by considering the features of person(s) who provide such services. To the same reason, branding is too important for service companies and it is a method which can target the problems on service quality intangibility and changeability and can find a way for that (Keller, 2010). Nowadays, many organizations have achieved this belief that their product/service brands are one of their most valuable assets. Many authors have pointed out that creating a strong brand is a critical factor to achieve competitive advantage and long term survival in the market (Santos et al, 2013).

Having a strong brand is a priority for many organizations. Hence, authors have studied it in different aspects. Branding can be conducted in two internal and external aspects. External branding approach has been focused by countless authors which targets customers. Hence, it selects methods which relate to customers directly; on the other hand, employees are a very effective factor in shaping organizational brands in the minds of product/service customers and consumers. In this case, internal branding is expressed to promote brand inside organization namely among employees (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Employees' undeniable role has caused that manpower is highly respected by scientific researches on branding in recent years. In service sector, internal branding is particularly important. All employees give life to brand and strong brand would cause their concentration, motivations and guidance. Since brand success is not just owed to the technical performance of products, the feelings seen in services as well as employees' behaviors are too effective in attracting customer's trust and company's reputation. Jacobs (2003) confirms this and asserts that employees are the main defenders of the company. Punjaisri et al (2009) found that internal branding coordinates marketing with human resource management (HRM) and highly impacts on employees' attitudes and behavior in doing brand's promise. After conducted studies, they stated that internal branding aids management in improving employees' brand feeling of attachment, commitment and loyalty.

## **2. THEORETICAL BASICS**

### **Service brand**

There is a fundamental difference between brand and product. "Products are what made by companies while what customer purchases is trademark." It is also true for services. Buyers pay very higher prices for companies with reputable brands and what they buy is in turn a situation exists in potential consumers' minds (Kapferer, 2010: 20). For instance the rate of using the service of very famous restaurant in London or a barber institute with global reputation is not comparable to real rate of such services (Woodruf, 2006: 47).

Although it is for a long time that service strong brands are operating, it has greatly improved in recent decades because of prevalence and complexity of service branding issue (Keller, 2010: 26). While globalization has influenced on product – oriented business, now some service companies are also highly impacted (Kotler and Forch, 2010: 41). As the report by Interbrand shows, in past 30 years, some the most successful brands are built in service sector (Keller, 2010: 26). In our country, there are banks, insurance companies, schools and universities that are serving over 70 years.

According to Kotler, there are two ways to achieve reputation in service providing: one is being better in services and the other one is being the worst (Kotler, 2013: 214).

Nowadays, there are many reputable brands in such service firms as Hertz, McDonald and Holiday Inns (Woodruff, 2006: 46). Brand of a company is a very important factor in buyers' decision making process. In fact, brand power would impact on purchase risk perception, buyers' trust and their final decision. Concerning services to which intangibility is a characteristic and seller cannot supply an objective phenomenon or a certain quality, it is the brand of the company which impacts on customer's mind, perception and final purchase decision making. Therefore, when a service company has found reputation and desired status in consumers' minds, it can sell its varied services not already supplied more easily with higher prices and can find a better competitive situation in market (Kotler and Forch, 2010: 4). Service branding can provide consumers with service option through a special manner (Keller, 2010: 27).

When consumer faces with lack of information, brand importance would be increased since information will be replaced by information and since service purchase is usually accompanied with lack of information, brand is considered as information important resource. Turely and Moor (1995, cited Mackay, 2001) believe that considering the problem of evaluating service evaluation by customers, brand acts as an important resource of information for consumer. In many service industries, competition is increasing (Mackay, 2001: 215) and brand can be response to this challenge and can distinguish us. The most important service marketing challenge is intangibility of services compared to physical goods which is more likely to be changed by considering the features of those people who provide services. To the same reason, branding is too important for service firms and it is a way by which one can target problems on service quality intangibility and changeability and find solutions for them (Keller, 2010: 26). To assure a fixed perception on brand, one should use a comprehensive branding approach in all contact points of the company, that is, all these points should be identified and it should be find importance in service sector in which companies have more contacts with their customers; thousands of employees should act compatible to brand and brand commitment (Kotler and Forch, 2010: 69).

In your opinion, in addition to customers and employees, what does a service institute (i.e. a bank or insurance company) have to show? Structurally, service brands fail in building their image and to the same reason they use mottos (Kapferer, 2010: 47) (e.g. Iranian Bank Melli as the bank of all Iranians; or Iranian Insurance as the symbol of oldness and symbol of service). Using brand symbol is too important in service sector since it changes service virtual nature and is raised as more real and tangible nature (Keller, 2010: 26).

In service sector, internal branding is particularly important; all employees give life to a brand and a strong brand would cause their focus, motivation and guidance. Since brand success is not just owed to the technical performance of products, the feelings seen in services as well as employees' behaviors are too effective in attracting customer's trust and company's reputation. On this basis, employees' behaviors and feelings should be particularly paid attention on service brand. In today world, branding is seen as a competitive weapon for service companies and only those companies are successful which can use this weapon (Keller, 2010: 27).

### **Brand citizenship behavior**

Before 1990s, authors paid more attention to employees' inter – role performance to study the relationship between job behavior and organizational effectiveness. Inter – role performance refers to those employees' job behaviors expressed in organizational terms of

reference. Today, authors distinguish inter – role and cross – role performance. Cross – role performance involved those job behaviors that are beyond employees’ formal role, are voluntarily and do not have usually official awards (Gholipour et al, 2010).

For the first time, based on Ketz’ cross – role behavior, Organ (1988) defined organizational citizenship behavior as “a set of profitable, voluntarily and cross – role behaviors depicted by employees and are not clearly and directly recognizable by official award system while they have a positive impact on organizational activities.” Likewise, he asserts: “these behaviors cannot be progressed by employment contracts” (Zeinabadi, 2010). OCB involves voluntarily behaviors which influence on organizational overall effectiveness and does not yield into official award for those ones who perform such behaviors. They are recognized as activities lower or beyond job normative requirements (Mayfield, 2008). Inspired by OCB concept, one can express brand citizenship behavior with a structural aggregation and expresses employees’ general behaviors which improve brand identity (Burmman et al, 2009). Therefore, brand citizenship behavior involves each employee’s intention to conduct some general behaviors (independent from division and brand) voluntarily out of the system of expecting their role which would foster brand identity. In their broad studies and interviews, Burmann and Zeplin (2009) concluded that brand citizenship behavior can be operationalized in seven aspects: tendency to help, brand awareness, brand enthusiasm, tendency to philanthropy, campaigning approach for brand and attempts to develop and improve brand.

### **Brand leadership**

Organization’s brand leadership is to achieve reputation through grooming managers and leaders with special capabilities and talents which can be exclusively used to meet customers’ demands and investors’ expectations. Those companies who pay attention to the importance of brand leadership would create morale of belief among their managers/employees which enable them to supply the market with a product adapted to company’s promises. Product brand is a bridge which link organizational output and reputation to customers’ demands and investors’ expectations while brand leadership is shaped by market expectation on the behavior of organization’s representatives. Stronger brand leaders will be shaped if the behavior of organization’s representatives is based on stakeholders’ principles and demands (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007).

Concerning organizational behavior, leadership is seen as an important affecting factor on the behavior of organizational members especially employees. Brand leadership concept was coined by Morhart et al (2009). They suggested that brand leadership style can be divided into two parts:

- Brand-specific Transactional Leadership (BTSL): transactional leadership is defined as an approach of a leader to motivate its employees as the agents of company’s band and emphasizes on employees’ mindset.
- Brand-specific Transformational Leadership (BTFL): transformational leadership is defined as an approach of a leader to motivate its employees as the agents of company’s band and emphasizes on employees’ personal values and beliefs.

Similar to traditional leadership, both brand leadership styles impact on organizational performance.

According to Burns, transactional leadership needs the relationship between leader and followers by which followers receive awards of their performance commensurate to announced expectations by leader (Robins, 2014). The interactions of leaders are through contingent awards and management based on exclusions to followers. Contingent award means that leader purviews different awards on realization of agreed targets; on this basis, contingent award is the most active behavior of transactional leader. In exclusion – based management (active and passive), active leader monitors and looks for deviations from targets while passive leader waits to see what happens (Bass, 1985). On this basis, transactional leader is based on the functions of two components: contingent awards and exclusion – based management (Bass et al, 1990).

Transformation leadership is one the newest leadership style highly paid attention. Many advantages are recognized for this leadership style such as job satisfaction, improving organizational productivity and mitigating stress among subordinates (Barling et al, 2000).

Transformational leadership is a part of new leadership paradigm which expresses a process which transforms individuals and relates to long term values, ethical features and goals (Doherty & Danylchuk, 1996). Evaluating affecting stimulants on followers, satisfying their needs and behaving them as complete persons are, *inter alia*, the functions of this leadership style (Northouse, 2015). Transformational leaders inspire followers with an insight which motivates them to achieve something extraordinary or far from expectation and, more importantly, accept and conceive it as their own insight (Avolio, 1999).

Transformational leadership needs four factors recognized as building blocks of this theory (Goleman, 2004). They include:

1. Respecting the people: leader behaves followers as a coach and instructor, develop them, authorizes them and treat them in terms of their competencies.
2. Persuasion to think: leader encourages thinking ambience and persuades people to think before any action.
3. Inspiring motivation: leader creates hope in his subordinates, introduces a clear and achievable future perspective and encourages people to raise their expectations
4. Ideal penetration: leader shows his philanthropy, accepts the responsibility of his own practices, shares people in enjoyments and show practically that he plays a determining role.

Empirical evidences show higher impact of transformational leadership than transactional one (Kirby et al, 1992). Likewise, other researches indicate that transactional leadership does not necessarily make followers inefficient or dissatisfaction; rather, it is less efficient and satisfactory than transformational leadership (Kessler, 1993). Other features of transformational leaders include self – esteem, positivism, decisive belief, high expectations and trust building among subordinates to achieve their goals which would aid them to achieve organizational mission and stimulates and promotes followers awareness on problems and resolving them (Bass, 1994).

### Feedback review

- ✓ In their study, Bergstrom, Blamental and Craders (2002) concluded that internal branding can cause brand attachment among employees which shows their similarity and the reason is relations to employees (Bergstrom et al, 2002).

- ✓ Berman et al (2009) conducted the first comprehensive research on in-house branding and its impact on employees’ attitude and behavior and, finally, on the quality of relationship between customers and organizational brand. They studied 14 different brands and concluded that an effective and efficient in-house branding process which includes brand internal relations, HRM with focus on brand and brand – based leadership can improve employees’ commitment to brand (changing the attitude) and then brand citizenship behaviors (changing the behavior) which would ultimately foster the relations between customers and organizational brand.
- ✓ Panjiarsi et al (2009) believe that in-house branding would impact on employees’ attitude/behavior toward brand and, ultimately, on their efficiency in delivering brand commitments. Brand commitments are those ones transferred by company to customers’ minds through marketing and advertisements in mass media so that company’s brand is associated in customers’ minds by such commitments. In provided conceptual model by authors, employees’ engagement and loyalty to brand are, *inter alia*, affecting factors on employees’ efficiency in delivering brand commitments. These authors believe that training the employees, collective forums and debriefing meetings indicate an effective in-house branding which would improve employees’ efficiency in delivering brand commitments.
- ✓ King and Grace (2010) studied brand equity based on employees. They measured brand equity through measuring employees’ satisfaction, loyalty to brand, brand citizenship behaviors and word-of-mouth. In the provided model in present study, such factors as knowledge dissemination, employees’ feedback, and role clarity and brand commitment influence on employee – based brand equity.
- ✓ Kimpacorn and Tucor (2010) believe that one of the main sources of creating brand equity for a service brand is service experience by customer in which employees play a critical role. In their study, they concluded that employees’ commitment to organizational brand has a positive relationship with customer – based brand equity.

A summary of abovementioned researches on internal branding and brand equity based on employees are shown in below table.

**Table 1.** A summary of past researches.

A summary of results	Population	Authors
Commitment to brand → brand knowledge Commitment to brand → employers’ brand advantages	Employees of luxury hotels	Kimpacorn & ) (Tocquer, 2009
Brand citizenship behavior → brand commitment The quality of customer’s relation to brand → Brand citizenship behavior → brand commitment → brand internal communications brand commitment → brand – based HRM	Employees and customers of different brands	Burmann & ) (Zeplin, 2005 Burmann et ) (al., 2009
Brand loyalty → brand commitment Brand commitment → brand engagement Brand efficiency → brand loyalty, commitment & engagement	Employees of hotels	Punjaisri et al., ) (2009 Punjaisri & ) (Wilson, 2011

brand loyalty, commitment & engagement → internal branding		
Employee based brand equity = brand citizenship behaviors + employees' satisfaction + brand loyalty + word-of-mouth Brand internal communications → employees' feedback Internal brand equity → brand internal communications	Employees of service organizations	King & Grace, ) (2009) King & Grace, ) (2010)
In-house brand equity = brand loyalty + brand inter – role behavior + brand cross – role play Employee – based equity → brand commitment Employee – based equity → brand engagement Employee – based equity → brand knowledge Employee – based equity → brand orientation Customer – based equity → in-house brand equity	Employees and managers of industrial organizations	Baumgarth & ) (Schmidt, 2010)
Customer – based equity → employees' brand commitment	Employees and customers of hotels	Kimpakorn & ) (Tocquer, 2010)

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In present study which addresses the impact of brand leadership styles on employee – based brand citizenship behavior, relevant methodology is descriptive correlation – type. Research population consists of all employees (95) in Ajabshir's bank branches of whom 76 ones were selected by Morgan Table randomly. To collected data, multi-factor leadership questionnaire by Bernard Bass (1985) is used.

The questionnaire in five – score scale has 32 items: 20 items for transformational leadership (ideal traits, ideal behaviors, inspiring motivation, mental persuasion and personal considerations (4 items for each one)) and 12 items on transactional leadership (conditioned award (4 items) and exception – based management (8 items)). To measure employee – based brand citizenship behavior, a questionnaire by King and Grace (2008) is used with 7 items for citizenship behavior scale.

In this research, management group instructors' opinions are used to determine facial and content validity of the questionnaire so that they can express their ideas on appropriateness of items on provided definitions and features for brand leadership styles and employees' citizenship behavior.

The results indicate that the questionnaire enjoys needed validity. Its reliability was computed by SPSS software package. Cronbach's alpha was 0.884 for brand leadership styles and 0.814 for employees' citizenship behavior which indicates high reliability of the question. Descriptive statistics (frequency) and inductive statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and step-by-step regression) methods are used to analyze research data.

**4. FINDINGS**

Present research aims at acquiring needed information on the impact of brand leadership styles on employee - based citizenship behavior. To achieve this aim, we response questions by gathering information from research sample (n = 76). Findings from data analysis for each question are explained as below.

- **Sample’s demographic analysis**

Sample’s demography is shown in table 2 in terms of frequency:

**Table 2.** Sample’s demography.

Educations		Job record in bank		Age (years old)		Gender	
81.6	Bachelors	1.3	Under 1 year	1.3	Under 25	88.2	Male
18.4	Masters	10.5	1 – 4	19.7	26 – 30	11.8	Female
-	Doctoral	25	5 – 9	38.2	31 – 35	<b>Position</b>	
		63.2	Over 10 years	21.1	36 – 40	9.2	Manager
				19.7	Over 41	90.8	Employee

As seen in table 2, most respondents aged 31 – 35 year – old. People with high job record constitute most respondents. Most respondents have bachelors and most of respondents were bank employees.

- **Inductive results**

*Question 1:* is there any significant relationship between managers’ transformational leadership and employee - based citizenship behavior?

According to achieved correlation coefficient, there is a significant and positive relationship between transformational leadership style and employee - based citizenship behavior.

In other words, transformational leadership style plays a vital role in employee - based citizenship behavior. Therefore, more traits of transformational leadership by managers of banks would cause that employees utilize brand citizenship behavior in their relation to organization.



**Table 3.** Transformational leadership and employee - based citizenship behavior correlation coefficient.

		Transformati onal leadership style	employee - based citizenship behavior
Transformational leadership style	Pearson Correlation	<i>1</i>	<i>.630**</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<i>.000</i>
	N	<i>76</i>	<i>76</i>
employee - based citizenship behavior	Pearson Correlation	<i>.630**</i>	<i>1</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<i>.000</i>	
	N	<i>76</i>	<i>76</i>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Question 2:* is there any significant relationship between managers’ transactional leadership and employee - based citizenship behavior?

Correlation between managers’ transactional leadership and employee - based citizenship behavior is statistically positive and significant ( $r = .434$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). In other words, transactional leadership style plays a role in clarifying employee - based citizenship behavior.

**Table 4.** Transactional leadership and employee - based citizenship behavior correlation coefficient.

		employee - based citizenship behavior	Transactional leadership style
employee - based citizenship behavior	Pearson Correlation	<i>1</i>	<i>.434**</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<i>.000</i>
	N	<i>76</i>	<i>76</i>
Transactional leadership style	Pearson Correlation	<i>.434**</i>	<i>1</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<i>.000</i>	
	N	<i>76</i>	<i>76</i>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Question 3:* is there a significant relationship between managers’ transformational and transactional leadership and employee - based citizenship behavior?

To measure interaction between brand leadership styles ad employee - based citizenship behavior, a new variable namely interaction is used. Correlation coefficient between interaction and employee - based citizenship behavior is statistically positive and significant ( $r = / .641$  ,  $p < / .0001$ ).

In other word, interaction of brand leadership styles and employee - based citizenship behavior is significant.

**Table 5.** Interaction and employee - based citizenship behavior correlation coefficient.

		interacti on	employee - based citizenship behavior
interaction	Pearson Correlation	<i>1</i>	<i>.641**</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<i>.000</i>
	N	<i>76</i>	<i>76</i>
employee - based citizenship behavior	Pearson Correlation	<i>.641**</i>	<i>1</i>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<i>.000</i>	
	N	<i>76</i>	<i>76</i>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Questions 4:* how is the order to transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles in terms of impact on employee – based brand citizenship behavior?

To determine the share of each indicator of brand leadership styles (transformational leadership and transactional leadership) in explaining the variance of employee – based brand citizenship behavior, the aspects of transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles as the predicting variable and employee – based brand citizenship behavior as the criterion variable are analyzed in step-by-step regression equation.

In table 4, model 1 shows the entrance of the first group of indicators for brand leadership styles namely transformation al leadership style aspects while model 2 shows the entrance of the second group of indicators for transactional leadership style aspects.

The results who that model 1 (transformational leadership style indicators) explain 0.46% of variance in employee – based brand citizenship behavior.

The entrance of the second group of indicators namely transactional leadership style indicators would change  $R^2$  to 0.62. It means that the entrance of transactional leadership style leadership indicators would increase explained variance in dependent variable namely employee – based brand citizenship behavior between 0.061 and 0.531.

Such indicators as personal considerations and conditioned rewards are the only ones that have a significant relationship with employee – based brand citizenship behavior ( $P < 0.0001$ ) and other indicators cannot be significant due to their intensive correlation ( $P > 0.0001$ ).

Therefore, one can conclude that personal considerations and conditioned rewards explain 0.46 and 0.062 of employee – based brand citizenship behavior respectively. In terms of impact in employee – based brand citizenship behavior, personal consideration is in priority.

**Table 6.** Regression ratios.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig
1	.685 <sup>a</sup>	.469	.462	2.94991	65/454	./000 <sup>a</sup>
2	.729 <sup>b</sup>	.531	.518	2.79252	41/38	./000 <sup>b</sup>

a. Predictors: (Constant), personal considerations

b. Predictors: (Constant), personal considerations, conditioned rewards

In the final step, step-by-step regression was conducted between interacting variables, transformation al leadership and transactional leadership with employee – based brand citizenship behavior. Results in table 7 indicate that interaction and transactional leadership variables have a significant relationship ( $P < 0.0001$ ) with employee – based brand citizenship behavior and explain 41% of variance in employee – based brand citizenship behavior. Model 2 shows that transactional leadership explains only 3% of employee – based brand citizenship behavior.

**Table 7.** Regression ratios.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig
1	.641 <sup>a</sup>	.410	.402	3.10988	51/476	.000 <sup>a</sup>
2	.664 <sup>b</sup>	.441	.426	3.04820	28/803	.000 <sup>b</sup>

a. Predictors: (Constant), interaction (new variable)

b. Predictors: (Constant), interaction (new variable), transactional leadership

Overall, research findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between leadership styles and based brand citizenship behavior.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Since internal branding would lead into a joint understanding of brand in organization, it enables employees to recall brand covenant in the time of facing with services. In this case one can briefly assert that internal branding causes employees' understanding on brand value and by combining them, it would have useful impacts on employees' attitudes toward brand and forming their behaviors for being integrated with brand (Hasizadeh Moghadam, Jamali Kapak and Rezaei, 2012).

Since brand success depends on internal and external factors, one should focus on employees' behavior and customers' experiences in brand plans (Erkman, 2014) in which manager's role is too important. Since present paper aims studying the impact of brand leadership styles on based brand citizenship behavior among bank employees in Ajabshir, the findings indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between brand leadership styles and based brand citizenship behavior. Also, the interaction between brand leadership styles (transactional and transformational leadership) and employees - based brand citizenship behavior is significant.

These findings are consistent with a research conducted by Shaari et al (2015) on studying the impacts by brand leadership styles on based brand citizenship behavior which indicated that there is a positive and significant association between brand leadership styles and employees - based brand citizenship behavior. Among transactional leadership variables, personal considerations and among transactional leadership style aspects, conditioned rewards are significant predictors for employees - based brand citizenship behavior among bank employees in Ajabshir. To this end and to improve their brand, banks' managers should focus on their employees as their most important organizational capital. In other words, showing transactional and transformational leadership traits by managers further would yield that bank employees use more citizenship behavior on organizational brand.

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