Brand-Centered Human Resource Practices and Brand Citizenship Behavior: The Notion to Develop Competitive Advantage

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History *Revised format: May 2019* *Available Online: June 2019*	The Brand citizenship behavior (BCB) is relatively a new aspect in marketing literature. Researchers have given a label of BCB to the discretionary behavior that employees' exhibit for the successful delivery of brand promise. In internal branding, the role of an employee is recognized as critical in delivering the service as promised by the brand. As practitioners and academicians argue that, an employee's brand-aligned behavior that goes above and beyond the job responsibility can be an asset for the company and is difficult for competitors to imitate. Drawing on employees' brand- aligned behavior to build the strong organization brand this study conceptualized that, the successful implementation of internal branding doctrine could be strengthened by brand-centered human resource practices and develop a new route for companies to build the competitive advantage. Thus, the study found that the human resource practices such as fair recruitment process, training programs, and socialization practice could enhance the employees' brand citizenship behavior.
Keywords *Brand Citizenship Behavior, Brand-Centered Human Resource Practices, Employee Branding, Internal Branding*	
JEL Classification: C91, E24, M10	

1. Introduction

The role of brand-centered human resource (HR) practices especially in service-based organizations continues to grow in importance. As the practitioners and academicians recognized that the fairly recruited, well trained, and motivated employees are vital for organizations to create competitive advantage (Saifalislam, Osman, & AlQudah, 2014; Guest, 2017). Literature suggests that organizations can be developed a competitive edge through brand-centered HR practices (Chang, Chiang, & Han, 2012; King, So, & Grace, 2013).Nevertheless, brand-centered HR practices seems to be significant to become employees as brand champions (i.e. deliver successful brand promise).

The HR practices provide a foundation to align an employees' behavior to build the successful organizational brand (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2017). However, earlier researchers do not address the issue of how brand-centered HR practices may influence on employees' brand building behavior and market performance (Bravo, Buil, de Chernatony, & Martínez, 2017; Rehman, Salleh, & Ahmad, 2017). Moreover, relatively little studies were emphasized on the impact of HR practices __ specifically to shape up employees' behavior in the perspective of

inside-out to develop the organization brand identity. Therefore, it seems important to probe brand-centered HR practices in the perspective of employees' behavior to create the strong organizational brand.

Scholar documented that employees' brand behaviors (i.e. in role and extra-role) considered as significant to build a strong brand(King & Grace, 2010). Employee's in role brand behaviors is related to prescribed rules and regulation by the company based on their role as a brand representative. On the other side extra role behavior has focused on an employee's willingness to exert extra effort that goes beyond the prescribed brand roles and enhances the company's brand image(Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak, 2009). The employee's extra role behavior contributes to customers' loyalty and enhances company's brand performance(Porricelli, Yurova, Abratt, & Bendixen, 2014). According to Shaari, Salleh, and Hussin (2012) employee's willingness to put forth extra role behavior is seen as vital for the successful delivery of brand promise. Thus, employees' extra role brand behavior is also known as brand citizenship behavior (BCB) (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). The notion of BCB is referred as "the employees' voluntary basis to project a number of generic employee behaviors that enhance the corporate brand identity" (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005, p. 282).

Brand citizenship behavior was originally derived from the theory of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The OCB stresses towards employees' discretionary and extra role behaviors that goes beyond their prescribed job requirements (Bolino, Hsiung, Harvey, & LePine, 2015). The notion was coined by Organ (1988) based on ideas of "willingness to cooperate" and "innovative and spontaneous behaviors". By acquiring OCB, employees possibly displayed positive attitudes and behaviors towards the organization. They would help the organization to grow and build the organization success. Hence, OCB perceived to be more intra-organization oriented. More recently, these concepts have been borrowed by researchers in the discipline of marketing, particularly in the study of brand management. Thus, OCB becomes BCB. According to Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley (2009), BCB is an extension of OCB that is not only intra-organizational focus yet also emphasize on the quality of brand-customer relationship (such as brand affinity, non-substitutability, and trust). Hence, based on this perspective, BCB not only limited to work-related issues but also includes the brand performance issues mainly to achieve some sort of "brand champions" level(Lin, Lin, & Chou, 2016).

Mostly the studies in relation to employees' brand citizenship behavior have discussed the role of leadership style, empowerments of employees, markets manipulation, and the organizations' brand identities(Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann, & Herrmann, 2007). However, Chang, Chiang, and Han (2012) argued that human resource management is an important predictor of brand citizenship behavior. However, limited studies have addressed the human resource practices such as brand-centered recruitment, brand-centered training, and brand-centered socialization. It seems atruism that the key process of talent recruiting, well-organized training and socialization practices of a company, could enhance the employees' brand citizenship behavior. It is found that quite little studies, such as Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Burmann, Zeplin and Riley (2009), has discussed the significant influence of brand-centered HR practices on employees'BCB.

In addition, the results of researchers have shown that brand-centered human resource practices can create a primary base for companies to develop the competitive advantages (Al-Shuaibi, Shamsudin, & Aziz, 2016). Nevertheless, previous scholars did not confer in detail how brand-centered human resource practices such as recruitment, training and socialization practice might increase the employees' behavior or describing the expected brand related performance from employee. Thus, this study proposes an attempts to find the effect of brand-centered human resource practices on the employee's brand citizenship behavior.

2. Literature Review
2.1   Brand Citizenship Behavior
Brand citizenship behavior (BCB) is a measure of the employees' willingness to perform extra role behavior that goes beyond its basic role requirement i.e. prompted the brand-supporting behavior(Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2008).Thus, BCB is referred to as all employees' behaviors that are consistent with brand identity and brand promise and in sum strengthen the brand (Piehler, Hanisch, & Burmann, 2015).

Academicians and practitioners asserted that BCB is a key ingredient of internal branding, which encourages employees to align their behavior with organizational brand to create and maintain the consistent brand identity (Henkel et al., 2007; Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010,Burmann & Konig, 2011). However, as exhibited by the research, the employees' behavior is crucial in the internal branding process because all activities related to brand

identity are based on the decisions and actions of employees particularly in service sector (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Wilson, 2009). This is because, in service-based organization, employees have direct contact with customers and other external stakeholders are the epitome of the brand in their eyes (Du Preez, Bendixen, & Abratt, 2017). Therefore, an employees' brand related behaviors can consistently transmit the positive brand image and create competitive edge for an organization..

Moreover, employees' behavior indirectly influences customer brand experience because they are responsible for the successful delivery of company's products and services (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Similarly, Burmann et al. (2009) revealed that individual volunteer behaviors or extra efforts without any expectations of reward may contribute in the delivery of brand promise as expected by the customers. Nevertheless, previous studies documented that relatively limited work is done __ how to turn the employees' behaviors consistent with the organizational brand promise (Lohndrof & Diamantopoulos; 2014; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2017). Hence, based on the dearth of literature, the present study is attempted to fill the gap by investigating __ how BCB embolden employees to project the appropriate brand promise.

2.2   Brand-Centered Human Resource Practices
2.2.1   Brand-Centered Recruitment
Recruitment is considered as one of the most important human resource practice which has influenced the behaviors of employees' to do best performance for the fulfillment of brand promise. In essence, recruitment is a planned effort to appeal individuals whose values are consistent with the company's brand (Punjaisri et al., 2008). It is assumed that when such individuals are trained, they could successfully deliver the desired brand value (Mangold & Miles, 2007).Previous research expose how recruitment practice influences employees' behavior with respect to the job and organizational performance (Saifalislam et al., 2014; Zhang, Di Fan, & Zhu, 2014). Literature on branding has shown that, relatively limited work is addressed to show that how recruitment practices increase employee's brand citizenship behavior.For instance, scholars (Aurand, Gorchels, and Bishop, 2005; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; King and So, 2013; MacLaverty, McQuillan, and Oddie, 2007) have asserted the brand-centered recruitment as an important predictor of employees' brand citizenship behavior.

Jiang and Iles (2011), stated that during the recruitment process firm communicate to the potential candidate about the organization's intents and nevertheless, what behavior is expected to be delivered by the company's brand. Evidently, King and So (2013), claimed that brand-centered recruitment has instigated an employees' behavior according to organization's brand values to build-up strong brand. Therefore, brand-centered recruitment practice encourages employees to align their behavior with respect to pro-brand manner.

The qualitative and quantitative study of MacLaverty, McQuillan, and Oddie (2007), however, revealed that in corporate business the executives were responsible for internal branding within their organizations, they shown the importance of recruitment practices in internal brand building. According to these researchers, brand-centered recruitment found to be the good practice to constantly build the skill(s) among employees to deliver the brand promise. Similarly, the findings of Chang et al. (2012) advocate that, companies at large give attention to recruit those talented individuals who have positive attitude toward the brand citizenship behavior. However, these researchers did not discuss the employees' perspective related to the recruitment that may affect behaviors but most of studies focused on the recruitment practices in a management perspective as a part of internalization.

Previous literature documents that via certain human resource practice, such as recruitment process can motivate employees to affirm the brand-centered behavior(Aurand, Gorchels, & Bishop, 2005).Similarly, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that brand-centered recruitment may commit employee behavior towards brand identity that is the strength of internal branding. Thus, brand-centered recruitment enables employees to perform the pro-brand behavior, which might enrich overall brand performance of the company.

2.2.2   Brand-Centered Training
Training communicates organization's brand values among employees and trained them how to perform their job to deliver an appropriate brand promise (Alshuaibia & Shamsudinb, 2016). Especially, training programs help newcomers young employees to learn the company values and standards that exists prior to joining (King & So, 2013). Hence, brand-centered training practice enable employee to better apprehend the organizational brand values and spectacle brand-building behavior.

Researchers proclaimed that training programs are backed an employee(s)towards' brand performance (Du Preez et al., 2017). By commending a good job performance in a routine situations – brand-centered training encourage personnel to deliver an effective brand promises (King & So, 2013). Previous Study shows that training stimulate skills among employees and transfers brand value(s) or procedures in a way to prompt good performance and fulfill their job responsibilities successfully(Chong, 2007).

The well-coordinated training program aimed to help employees on how to incorporate brand values in their work, which provides base to make a tremendous impact on the branding success of organization(Chang et al., 2012). While – the role of brand-centered training practices in influencing branding (both externally and internally) has been recognized as relatively limited in the perspective of employees brand building behavior (King & So, 2013).Thus, it needs to create more comprehensive training programs that support an employees' branding efforts.

2.2.3   Brand-Centered Socialization

Scholars claims that organizational brand is strengthened by communicating brand values among employees through socialization practice(Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). The brand-centered socialization helps employee(s) by giving orientation, involved in training or social activities and communicate them informal brand values(Erkmen & Hancer, 2014; Du Preez et al., 2017). In addition, socialization process have reduce employees' role ambiguity, role conflict, and improve in role job behavior to deliver the successful organizational brand (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Hurrell & Scholarios, 2014).

Brand-centered socialization is an ongoing practice that stimulate employees to successfully handle the work routine and help to learn an organization's pattern of activities(King & Grace 2012). In addition, it also builds employee well-being and sets the foundation to provide an appropriate service to customers. In essence, socialization on workplace influence on employee(s) behavior because positive support of experienced colleagues backed to understand the organizational norms(Kasemsap, 2015). Thus, employee(s) tension or stress could be reduced by socialization practice and encourage them a sense of information sharing and developing association with their colleagues(Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007).

Researcher asserts that due to socialization process employee(s) develop a good relation with their colleagues. On the base of working relations they create a peer networks among departments and participate in social activities. The social activities remove the confusion and ambiguity among colleagues and increase their cooperation with other to do their job in comfort zone (Ge, Su, & Zhou, 2010). Therefore, it is expected the positive link of socialization practice proactively engage employees towards brand building behavior.

In consideration of internal brand management literature King and Grace (2012) suggest that brand-centered socialization is considered as an important antecedent of employee brand related behaviors such as BCB. Because socialization process help employees' to learn and identify the expected brand values and beliefs. Without social understanding, good brand performance is a hard task for employee(s) and significant to diminish the expected brand promises (Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013). Hence, band-centered socialization practice encourage employee(s) to adopt an organizational values and beliefs for an appropriate fulfillment of brand promise (Du Preez et al., 2017).

The relationship between Brand-Centered Human Resource Practices and Brand Citizenship Behavior
The prior studies in internal branding endeavor to probe the influence of human resource practices to stimulate employees' brand-citizenship behavior. It is assumed that human resource practice such as recruitment, training and socialization are likely to communicate an accurate, convincing, and significant brand message towards the target individuals. For instance the finding of Bolino et al. (2015) reveals that firstly, companies may attempt to elicit more citizenship behavior among their employees by selecting those individuals who are generally predisposed to be engaged in citizenship. Secondly, the individuals who have exhibited high levels of involvement on extracurricular activities in addition to their core obligations might also be inclined to prompt extra role behavior as future employees.

Furthermore, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that brand-centered human resource practices proposes that how an individual can be fitted with company's brand to deliver the appropriate brand promise. As Hurrell and Scholarios (2014) stated that recruitment and training is a part of corporate brand management which helps managers to select those employees who are best fit with company brand. However, it is seen that in many companies during the recruitment process, the alignment of individual values with the company brand values is

often neglected. This might be due to the fact that individual evaluation process to fit with company brand may not be that easy to be managed as is thought of. This is because in recruitment process the adoption of appropriate screening techniques maybe critical. However, the use of socialization tactics may encourage individuals to initially attach with experienced employees to learn from them how to create an appropriate behavior afore joining the company __ help to better internalize the brand values.

The study of Gotsi and Wilson (2001) investigated that what factors are important for companies to fulfill their promise and how employees perform their duties to satisfy the target customers. The finding of the study revealed that human resource practices should be aligned with company's brand values to elude any conflict promise. Similarly, Turek and Wojtczuk-Turek (2015) stated that a well-defined human resource practices creates a positive perception among employees to prompt their willingness to undertake extra-role behavior. Hence, scholars suggested that brand-centered human resource practices (namely brand-centered recruitment, brand-centered training and brand-centered socialization) are critically important to build a successful organizational brand (Du Preez et al., 2017).

In addition, researchers recognized that human resource practices may influence employees towards the development of BCB (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al., 2009; Sepahvand & Sepahvand, 2013; Ravens, 2014). For instance, as Cropanzana, Bowen, and Gilliland (2007), suggested that the individual who are selected through the fair recruitment process might realize the positive attitude about the company and thus spread good word of mouth with friends and family, opposite to those individuals who faced unfair recruitment. Furthermore, when an individuals' has joined company on the base of a fair recruitment method, they are more willing to perform responsibilities honestly and create trustful relations with colleagues. In addition, academicians and practitioners asserts that the inducement of well-organized training programs and best practices of socialization might encourage employees to exhibit altruistic behavior such as BCB(King & Grace 2012; Hurrell & Scholarios, 2014; Porricelli et al., 2014).

Based on above discussion, the study thereby develops a proposition to examine, in specified array of approach, the fact of how do the brand-centered human resource practices (namely brand-centered recruitment, brand-centered training and bran-centered socialization) may strengthen the employees' brand citizenship behavior. Proposition: The likelihood of employee brand citizenship behavior will be increased based on the brand-centered human resource practices.

3. Conceptual Model

Based on the review of literature this study develops the conceptual model that exhibits, brand-centered HR practices have strengthen the employees' brand citizenship behavior. This notion is supported by the Social Exchange Theory (SET) presented by Blau (1964). The SET assumption reveal the importance of the relationship among employee(s) and organization (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). For instance, organizational goals can be achieved by motivating the employees (Xiong, King, & Du, 2016). In the line of this argument, high value social exchanges are developed that create the mutual trust among employees and loyal to the firm (Chen & Klimoski, 2003). Similarly, previous study contend that by practicing of reciprocal exchanges with colleagues affirm to create valued benefits (Molm & Cook, 1995). Such scenario, established the long-term and interactive relationship among organization and its employees that facilitate to build organizational brand performance.

Figure 1: Brand-Centered HR Practices Relation with Employees' BCB
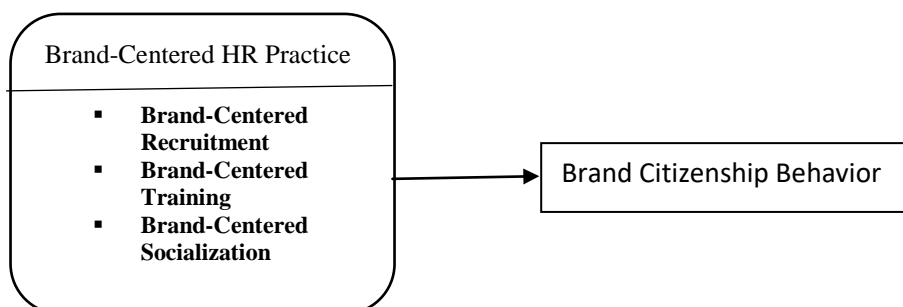
In the setting of present study conceptual model SET is viewed as a best platform to explain the volunteer behavior or extra-role behavior such as brand citizenship behavior (Chang et al., 2012; Hasnizam, Salleh, & Hussin, 2012). Blau (1964) postulated that the perspective of social exchange is based on the perception of reciprocal relationship between certain actors such as individual actions depend on rewarding responses from others. This phenomena is representing the exchange relationship. However, the present study assume that the employees' positive perception related to the brand-centered human resource practices (namely brand-centered recruitment, brand-centered training, and brand-centered socialization) that are received from the organization encourage them towards better performance as an exchange process. Hence, to exhibit the reciprocal behavior, employees contribute to deliver an appropriate brand promise by articulating positive brand citizenship behavior.

Nevertheless, supported by the SET (Kehoe & Wright, 2013), an employees' perception related to organization ability to reciprocate with desirable benefits is directly linked with extra role behavior performed by the employees on behalf of organization e.g. BCB (King & Grace 2012). Therefore, SET is considered appropriate to test that how the relationship among 'brand-centered HR Practices' effect on the 'Employees' BCB'. Researchers affirmed that organizational brand could be strengthened by the fulfillment of the promises and by developing the brand identity (Burmann et al., 2009; Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2009; Altaf, Mokhtar, & Ghani, 2017). Thus, employee(s) who play the role of customer-contact act can develop brand identity by offer to best brand value(s) to target customers. However, on the light of this argument, the effective implications of brand-centered HR Practices might boost up the mutual trust among organization and its employees (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Davies & Gould-Williams, 2005; Chang et al., 2012; King & So, 2013). It is seems truism that when an employees' are satisfied by an exchange relationship, they may reciprocate the organization by prompting the extra role behavior such as BCB.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The study important contribution is a postulation of how 'brand-centered HR practices' as an antecedent effect on 'employees' BCB'. Which portrays that HR practices encourage employee(s) to do the extraordinary performance to deliver the strong "brand promises" (Al-Shuaibi et al., 2016), there by contributing to employees' brand citizenship behavior. As for the effect human resource practices on employees' brand behavior, clearly demarcates the dimensions of brand-centered HR practices (namely brand-centered recruitment, brand-centered training, and brand-centered socialization) and posit their influence on employees' BCBs. These practices stimulates employees to engage in extra role brand behavior, thereby improving customer perceptions toward an organizational brand. As practitioners and academics alike advocate that the human resource practices can strengthen employees' behavior towards the brand-related support mechanisms and engage them in both altruistic or extra role brand behavior(Chang et al., 2012; Piehler et al., 2015).

Previous studies has documents the effects of internal branding through the marketing control theory, brand identity theory, employee empowerment, and leadership theories (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006; Henkel et al., 2007; Terglav, Ruzzier, & Kaše, 2016). However, present study discuss the social exchange theory to clearly understand that how internal branding activities such as human resource practices encourage employees towards the brand building behavior. Internal branding is regarded as the process of aligning employees' behavior, thus, it is seems truism, the high quality of social exchanges stimulate employees towards the reciprocal exchange of valued-benefits, which might leads their behavior to deliver the successful brand promise (Chang, Chiang, & Han, 2015). To sum it up, brand citizenship behavior seems to be positively enhanced by the brand-centered HR practices, thus in conclusion brand-centered HR practices are conspicuous approach which enables company to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

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