

**THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE'S BRAND UNDERSTANDING, BRAND
IDENTIFICATION, AND BRAND COMMITMENT ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF BRAND CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR**

(Case Study: Employees on Education Institutions)

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The Role of Employee's Brand Understanding, Brand Identification, and Brand Commitment on the Establishment of Brand Citizenship Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The internal brand management (IBM) is strategic efforts of business organization to lead the employees to be aligned with cognitive, affective, and behavioral values of the brand. This research aims to solidify the role of cognitive variable of IBM, which is brand understanding as the antecedent of brand identification, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior. The data were collected via both online and offline of 183 employees who worked in service industry, particularly education institutions in Indonesia. This research found that the ability of employees to understand the brand has significant-positive impact on their ability to identify and commit with the brand, which eventually to behave in a supporting-brand behavior. Since this research only took place in service industry of education, future research should elaborate more in other service and manufacturing industry. In addition, future research should propose and test relevant antecedents and moderators other than the antecedents and moderators of IBM proposed in this research. This research did not only solidify the role of cognitive variable of IBM, but also validated empirically that employees' ability to understand the brand is the foundation for ability to identify and commit also to behave in a supporting-brand behavior. Therefore, managers in service industry are recommended to provide adequate IBM programs to comprehend employees' ability to understand the brand.

Keyword: *Internal Brand Management, Brand Understanding, Brand Identification, Brand Commitment, Brand Citizenship Behavior, Employees*

Peran Pemahaman Merek, Identifikasi Merek, dan Komitmen Merek pada Karyawan pada Pembentukan Perilaku Kewargaan Merek

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ABSTRAK

Pengelolaan merek secara internal atau *internal brand management* (IBM) adalah usaha strategis oleh organisasi bisnis untuk membimbing para karyawannya agar secara kognitif, afektif, dan perilaku dapat searah dengan nilai-nilai merek organisasi bisnis tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguatkan peran dari variabel kognitif IBM yaitu pemahaman merek sebagai asal mula identifikasi merek, komitmen merek, dan perilaku kewargaan merek. Data yang diteliti dikumpulkan secara *online* dan *offline* dari 183 karyawan yang bekerja di industri jasa, yaitu institusi pendidikan di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kemampuan karyawan untuk memahami merek berpengaruh secara positif terhadap kemampuan mereka untuk mengidentifikasi dan berkomitmen terhadap merek, serta berperilaku mendukung merek tersebut. Penelitian ini hanya dilakukan di industri jasa pendidikan, oleh karena itu penelitian mendatang sebaiknya dilakukan di bidang jasa atau manufaktur lainnya. Selain itu, penelitian mendatang sebaiknya meneliti variabel asal mula selain variabel asal mula yang digunakan di penelitian ini. Penelitian ini tidak hanya menguatkan peran dari variabel kognitif IBM, namun juga memvalidasi secara empirik bahwa kemampuan karyawan untuk memahami merek adalah dasar untuk dapat mengidentifikasi dan berkomitmen terhadap merek, juga untuk dapat berperilaku yang mendukung merek. Oleh karena itu, manajer di industri jasa disarankan untuk menyediakan program IBM untuk menguatkan pemahaman karyawan terhadap merek.

Kata kunci: *Internal Brand Management, Pemahaman Merek, Identifikasi Merek, Komitmen Merek, Perilaku Kewargaan Merek, Karyawan*

INTRODUCTION

Along with the evolving dynamic of entrepreneurship, competitiveness of business needs to be engaged in a sustain manner. Particularly in service business, the superior resources of competencies rely on its people as the employees. On top of that, the business must be able to deliver its brand promises to the external stakeholders such as its customers. This ability is linked to employees' ability to represent a desired perception as the efforts of brand management. In such condition, employees take essential role in building and maintaining brand-customer relationship. In other words, managing employees' behavior is the key to successful brand management.

The internal brand management (IBM) involves the employees as the primary target to be developed. The primary expected outcome of IBM is employees' brand citizenship behavior (BCB). According to the previous studies, antecedent of BCB is commonly seen from affective perspective in which are brand commitment and brand identification. Yet, the investigation from cognitive perspective, such as brand understanding is often neglected. This fact is surprising due to the important role of brand understanding in allowing the employees to deliver the brand promises. Hence, this research aims to strengthen the conceptualization of IBM outcomes as well as to combine a cognitive IBM outcome altogether, which is brand understanding. On top of that, prior studies mostly discussed the external perspective of brand management. Which only focus on the image perceived by external stakeholders.

In regard to the matter above, external perspective branding refers to the identity of business including its services or products that differentiate to the competitors' (Keller, 2013). The differentiation informs the benefits to customers in form of brand promises. The employees take role to understand the meaning of the brand; how it serves values to the customers, thus its tangible and intangible benefits can be delivered and developed to the customers (King and Grace, 2008).

Important to be noted that brand promises are delivered by employees to customers in the moment-of-truth interactions. Brands often fail to deliver what they promises when they are not properly communicated to customers. Because of this lack of internal focus, an inconsistent impressions of brands are created (Simi, 2014). As Deloitte Consulting, 2008 emphasized (cited in Hussin, Salleh, and Shaari, M., 2012) that 41% brand loyalty of customers are enhanced by the good employees' attitude and experiences given by employees define 70% of customers' brand perception. In addition, Gapp and Merrilees (2006) found that the failures of employees to deliver its brand values caused the lost of 40% of marketing investment money. Therefore, the ability of employees to exhibit brand-supporting behavior to please customers is important.

Brand understanding enables organizations to translate its intention such as brand promises into employees' attitude and behaviors (Xiong, 2013). Previous researches (Burmam and Zeplin, 2005; Wentzel *et al.*, 2012; Xiong, 2013) conclude that if the employees fail to acquire brand understanding, they will not develop positive sense of belonging toward the brand.

Further, Kahn *et al.*, (1964) validated that brand understanding takes role in developing emotional attachment of employees toward the brand. In such condition, brand understanding creates brand knowledge that upholds positive

impacts on brand commitment (King and Grace, 2008, 2010). Brand understanding should affect BCB directly. As argued within organizational theory of Kahn *et al.* (1964), when employees are faced with unclear work roles because of lack of brand understanding, they are not able to behave in brand-supporting manner. Therefore, the ability of employees to have proper brand understanding affects on the way they behave to be aligned with brand identity and brand promise. In such positive condition of brand understanding, employees will strengthen the brand.

Brand Understanding on Brand Identification

Brand understanding is cognitive image of the brand in employees' perspective (Burmam *et al.*, 2016). On top of that, previous researchers (Burmam and Zeplin, 2005; Wentzel *et al.*, 2012; Xiong *et al.*, 2013) defined brand understanding as the integration of four dimensions, which are brand relevance, behavior relevance, brand knowledge, and brand confidence. Firstly, brand relevance is employees' perception of the importance of brand to organization's success (Xiong *et al.*, 2013). Secondly, they also defined behavior relevance as employees' perception of the importance of their role toward organization's success. Thirdly, Burmam and Zeplin (2005) defined brand knowledge as employees' understanding of the identity of the brand as well as its promises. Finally, according to Wentzel *et al.* (2012), brand confidence is employees' understanding of brand-supporting behaviors that they need to perform in their work. de Chernatony and Cottam (2006) stated that employees' ability to acquire a clear understanding of the brand takes role as the foundation of a successful service brand performance.

Punjaistri *et al.* (2009) suggested that internal branding management has positive impact on brand identification. Burmam *et al.*, (2016) found that brand understanding has a significant positive effect on brand identification. Based on social identity theory proposed by Tajfel (1979), in order to identify the brand, employees must gain proper understanding related to the brand. Consequently, employees will be able to distinct their brand with others, to the extent they will build sense of belonging.

H1. Brand understanding has a significant positive effect on brand identification.

Brand Understanding on Brand Commitment

Kimpkorn and Tocquer (2009) failed to prove a strong relationship between employees' brand commitment and employees' brand knowledge. Contrary, King and Grace (2008) argued that the efforts to increase brand knowledge take role to enhance employee brand understanding that increase brand commitment. Further, Hussin *et al.*, (2012) revealed that brand understanding can be indicated through brand knowledge of employees that has significant positive effect on brand commitment. Other researchers also found that without such knowledge role ambiguity will happen (King, 2010; King and Grace, 2010) that eventually obstruct the brand commitment establishment (Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

H2. Brand understanding has a significant positive effect on brand commitment.

Brand Understanding on Brand Citizenship Behavior

Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) argued that employees' brand knowledge does not have significant influence toward employees' brand-supporting behavior. Consequently, brand understanding affect insignificantly employees' BCB. On the other hand, Mitchell (2002) found that when employees have appropriate brand understanding toward organization's brand, they are actually at the best quality to deliver the brand values for customers. Further, group of authors found that brand understanding positively affect BCB (Kahn *et al.*, 1964; Miles, 2005; Burmann *et al.*, 2016). Intuitively, how employees can behave in a brand-aligned manner if they are lack of understanding about the brand.

H3. Brand understanding has a significant positive effect on BCB.

Brand Identification on Brand Commitment

In general definition, identification is the sense of belonging to the group and a belief of being one with the group's fate. (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). For instance, when employees identify themselves with the brand, they believe that brand's success or failures as theirs (James *et al.*, 1977).

Benkhoff, 1997; Peccei and Guest, 1993 (cited in Evanschitzky, H., Punjaistri, K., and Wilson, A., 2009) stated that identification is the parts of commitment that is considered as separate concepts. In other hand, another group of authors argued that brand identification is an antecedent of employees' brand commitment (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Punjaistri *et al.*, 2009 Burmann *et al.*, 2016). In related to IBM, Punjaistri *et al.* (2009) found that internal branding affect positively brand identification.

H4. Brand identification has a significant positive effect on brand commitment.

Brand Identification on Brand Citizenship Behavior

Hughes and Ahearne, 2010 (Cited in Helm, S. V., Mishra, S., and Renk, U., 2016). argued that there is a direct impact of organizational identification on employees' citizenship behaviors. When organizational identities and self-identities are aligned, employees' willingness to support the organization is built. Further, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), Punjaisri and Wilson (2011), Chang *et al.* (2012) found that employees who display strong organizational identity demonstrate organization-supporting behavior and also brand-supporting behavior (Donavan *et al.*, 2006 (cited in Polyorat, K. (2011); Helm *et al.*, 2016).

H5. Brand identification has a significant positive effect on BCB.

Brand Commitment on Brand Citizenship Behavior

Burman *et al.*, (2009) defined brand commitment as psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to create extra effort towards reaching the brand's goals, to the extent that employees are willing and proud to share their brand knowledge with others. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) argued that lack of employee commitment toward the brand is prone to result in negative word of mouth about the business organization or failure in customer experience delivery. When the employees are

properly educated about the brand ideology, desired attitudes and behavior can be built. (Miles and Mangold, 2005; Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). On top of that, King and Grace (2010, 2012) also found that brand commitment has an effect on BCB. Thus, employees who attached themselves psychologically to the brand are more likely to enhance the brand through their behavior.

H6. Brand commitment has a significant positive effect on BCB.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research is conducted based on the research that had been done by Burmann, King, Piehler, and Xiong (2016).

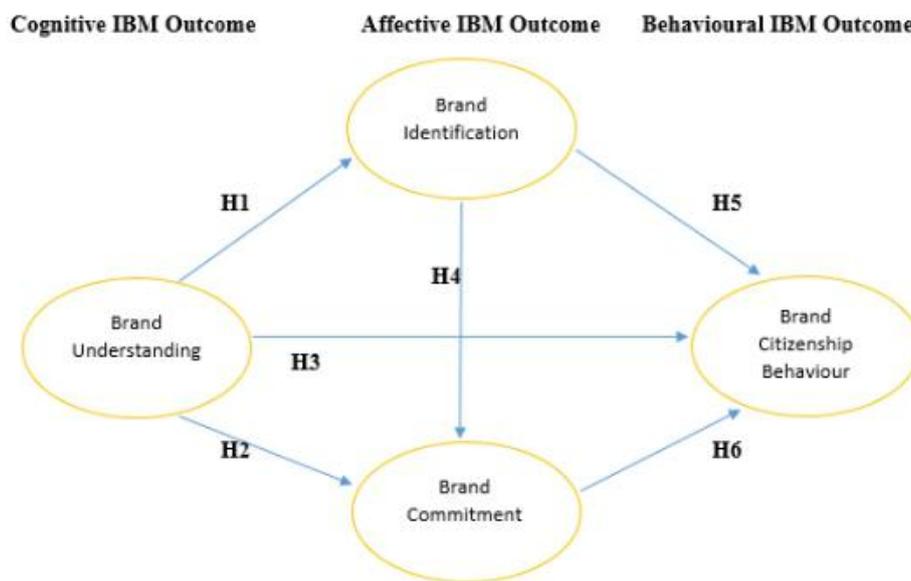


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework

Research Method

This research method uses quantitative approach by using questionnaire as the research instrument and also itemized rating to assess data that were collected via both online and offline of 183 employees who worked in service industry, particularly education institutions in Indonesia.

Population and Sample

Populations have been selected for their diversity and very dynamic, responsive and sensitive to changes. The sample in this research were 183 employees particularly the lectures or teachers and officers of three education institutions in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Data Collection Method

Since this research used quantitative type of research, the list of questions and statements to measure the value of each variables were made. In order to measure the value of each statement and question, this research is using Six-Points Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

Data Analysis Technique

This research consisted of two steps of data analysis. The first step of analysis was conducting the pilot test. Pilot test was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the indicators used in the questionnaire. Pilot test was conducted by spreading questionnaire on 30 respondents and the results was analyzed by using SPSS. Once the pilot test completed, the next step was to test research hypotheses and model fitness, researcher used SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis in AMOS application.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Respondent's Characteristic

Demographic characteristics of the respondents who are employees, consisted of the education institutions as their place of work. There were 183 respondents that were consisted of lectures, teachers, and officers/ administrators of three educational institutions in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The respondents were consisted of 49.1% from Universitas Islam Indonesia, 24.6% from Universitas Cokroaminoto Yogyakarta, and 26.3% from Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Yogyakarta.

Validity and Reliability Test

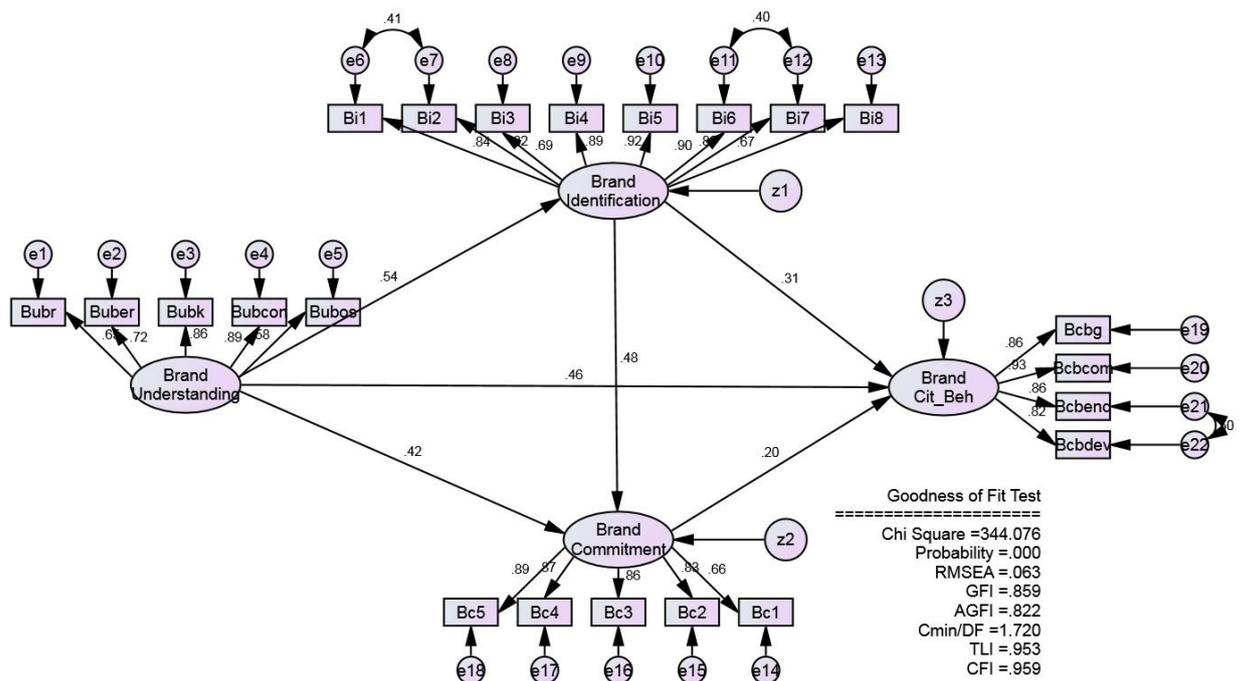
The small sample had been tested by SPSS, nevertheless AMOS measurement model was required to retest the data. In this test, the sample was 183 responses. This test was used to establish whether the data were reliable and valid or not. This test used software of AMOS version 22.0. The evaluation of measurement model was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) or known as factor analysis, to find out whether the item of construct is good or not. The purpose of the CFA measurement model is to illustrate how good the variable can be used to measure the construct. If the value of loading factor from each construct was more than 0.5 ($\lambda > 0.5$), it was considered as valid. Furthermore, if the value of construct reliability from each construct is more than 0.7, it can be stated as reliable.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test (AMOS)

Variable	Indicator	Loading (λ)	$\Sigma(\lambda)$	Error (ϵ)	$\Sigma(\epsilon)$	Construct Reliability	Label
Brand Understanding						0.9143	Reliable
	BU_BR	0.639	3.686	0.368	1.273		Valid
	BU_BER	0.711		0.296			Valid
	BU_BK	0.860		0.167			Valid
	BU_BCON	0.897		0.117			Valid
	BU_BOS	0.579		0.325			Valid
Brand Identification						0.9522	Reliable
	BI1	0.850	6.630	0.179	2.205		Valid
	BI2	0.838		0.212			Valid
	BI3	0.680		0.587			Valid
	BI4	0.881		0.166			Valid

	BI5	0.920		0.100			Valid
	BI6	0.915		0.116			Valid
	BI7	0.882		0.192			Valid
	BI8	0.664		0.653			Valid
Brand Commitment						0.940	Reliable
	BC1	0.672	4.122	0.405	1.093		Valid
	BC2	0.820		0.206			Valid
	BC3	0.855		0.203			Valid
	BC4	0.877		0.149			Valid
	BC5	0.898		0.130			Valid
Brand Citizenship Behavior						0.948	Reliable
	BCB_G	0.812	3.516	0.293	0.674		Valid
	BCB_COM	0.892		0.121			Valid
	BCB_END	0.926		0.109			Valid
	BCB_DEV	0.886		0.151			Valid

Hypothesis Testing Model



Discussion

According to the result, the hypothesized structural relationships were accepted ($\chi^2/df = 1.720$; CFI = 0.959; TLI = 0.953; RMSEA = 0.063) by satisfying acceptable thresholds. *H1* indicated that brand understanding has a significant positive impact on brand identification (Estimate = 0.540; p-value = 0.000), *H2* indicated that brand understanding has a significant positive impact

on brand commitment (Estimate = 0.423; p-value = 0.000), and *H3* indicated that brand understanding has a significant positive impact on BCB (Estimate = 0.464; p-value = 0.000). Thus, employees perceived the importance of their ability to understand the brand in order to build brand identification, brand commitment, and eventually BCB. *H4* indicated that brand identification has a significant positive impact on brand commitment (Estimate = 0.476; p-value = 0.000), indicating that employees' brand identification enhanced their brand commitment. Further, *H5* indicated that brand identification has a significant positive impact on BCB (Estimate = 0.308; p-value = 0.000). Lastly, *H6* indicated that brand commitment has a significant positive impact on BCB (Estimate = 0.196; p-value = 0.027). Taken as a whole, six of the hypotheses were supported.

CONCLUSION

This research provided empiric evidences for service industry particularly in education institutions that internal brand management (IBM) through brand understanding can be used to increase employees' brand-supporting behavior. Firstly, this research examined whether brand understanding has a significant positive impact on brand identification, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior. Secondly, this research examined whether brand identification has a significant positive impact on brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior. Thirdly, this research examined whether brand commitment has a significant positive impact on brand citizenship behavior. Based on the data analysis results, from the six hypotheses proposed, all of them were accepted hypotheses. It is concluded that employees' understanding of the brand takes role as fundamental component affective IBM outcomes, which are brand commitment and brand identification and behavioral IBM outcome, which is brand citizenship behavior.

Taken as a whole, the ability to understand the value of the brand is needed by employees in service industry to strengthen brand performance that belongs to the company or business. Consequently, if the employees are able to understand the brand, they will be able to identify and commit with the brand and eventually behave in brand-supporting manners. In other words, brand understanding was found to be the antecedent of brand identification, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior.

RECOMMENDATION

In term of theoretical implication, this research helped to enrich previous research by Burmann, King, Piehler, and Xiong (2016) with different type of respondents; Burmann, King, Piehler, and Xiong (2016) investigated employees of hotels in Australia and this research investigated employees of education institutions in Indonesia. Firstly, this research helps academics to comprehend the conceptualization and measurement of four internal brand management (IBM) outcomes, which are brand understanding, brand identification, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior. Secondly, this research helps to describe the construct of IBM's four outcomes that are investigated simultaneously. Thirdly, it helps to solidify the conceptualization of brand understanding as a cognitive IBM outcome. In addition, the researcher suggested that future research should examine IBM in industry beside service industry, such as manufacturing industry.

Further, in term of managerial implication, this research helped managers to have better understanding about what it means for employees to understand the brand. As this research revealed that the ability of employees to understand the brand had significant-positive impact on their ability to identify, commit, and behave in supporting manners to the brand they work for. This research suggests that managers of business, organization or institution in service industry, particularly education institutions should build IBM (Internal Brand Management) program to comprehensively educate their employees about the values of their brand. The IBM programs can be conducted through brand-orientation recruitment, training, and mentoring that enhance the brand values from employees' perspective. Sustained managerial efforts also can be conducted through the development of appreciation programs on how employees deliver the brand, in the form of rewards or recognition.

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