Employer Brandıng on Brand Citizenship Behavior: Explorıng the Mediatıon of Brand-Person Fıt and Brand Commıtment

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Abstract

In the service industry, customer perception of the corporate brand is often based on the employee they interact with. Employer branding can be beneficial to attract and retain employees, as doing so can distinguish the company from competitors. Employer branding may also make the employee live with the brand, called brand citizenship behavior. Using data collected from employees of the largest telecommunication company in Indonesia, the present study explores the relationship between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior, with brand-person fit and brand commitment as possible mediators. Data was collected by online questionnaire and processed using Amos. Results show employer branding influences brand citizenship behavior either directly or indirectly through brand commitment, but not through the brand-person fit.

Keywords

Introduction

Employees can help build strong brands and positive images for various stakeholders, such as staff, customers, distributors, shareholders, etc. (Maroko & Uncle, 2008; Miles & Mangold, 2005). The employer expects good service from employees to show empathy for their clients not to act as sales robots (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Human resource professionals can adopt marketing concept of brand management by using employer branding, a positioning means that will clarify the manner in which the company motivates employees to internalize and deliver the desired brand image (Miles & Mangold, 2005).

Employer branding can be beneficial to attract and retain employees, as doing

so can distinguish the company from competitors. The goal of employer branding is to maintain employee commitment to the organization through a sense of oneness with the brand (Backhause, 2016). Brand commitment is the linking of the organizational member to his/her self-concept by feeling as part of the organization and be proud of in such membership (Davies, 2008). The benefit of employer branding is to increase employee satisfaction and reduce staff turnover (Miles & Mangold, 2005). The same logic applies to personnel management: It is cheaper to keep an employee than to replace one (Dabirian, 2016). Even so, limited research interest has focused on understanding how employees form their relation with the company brand and become committed to the brand (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015).

Generally speaking, employer branding utilizes the process of internal branding and perceived by employees to extend to brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior (Burmann et al., 2009). Brand citizenship behavior refers to employee behaviors that enhance the delivery of brand promise by including external behaviors as well as intra organizational behaviors (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Employees' brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior are pivotal constituents for successful internal brand management (Burmann et al., 2009).

Among various industries in Indonesia, telecommunication is among the important ones. Because the telecommunication has the multiplier effect as the driving infrastructure for all sectors, starting from the telecommunication industry itself. The company where the study was conducted is one of the largest in Indonesia, with its consistent performance assessed that is marked by net income growth and the "12 Years of Achievement". Additionally, the company has won several awards in recent years, such as excellent grade based on the three main pillars of assessment: customer sense experience, customer emotional experience, and customer problem solving experience. The achievement is closely connected with the employee's role. The aim of this research is to consider the effect of employer branding on brand citizenship behavior, as well as whether brand-person fit and brand commitment may mediate such relationship. By using survey of job incumbents, a parsimonious model of structural equations was developed, and interpretation of the results was suggested for managerial implication.

Literature Review

Brand Citizenship Behavior

Brand Citizenship Behavior (BCB) is based largely on the theory of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) as behavior beyond formal job requirements (Porricelli et al., 2014). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that brand citizenship behavior is also known as prosocial behavior that an individual voluntary do outside of the role expectations that are not directly or explicitly to be recognized by the formal reward system and brings out word of mouth (Erkmen & Hancer 2015). Brand citizenship behavior is part of organizational citizenship behavior not only focusing on the extra-role of the brand but also including externally

targeted behavior and is considered to be intra organizational (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005).

Brand citizenship behavior could be operationalized in seven dimensions: helping behavior, brand consideration, brand enthusiasm, sportsmanship, brand endorsement, self-development, and brand advancement (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Later, the result of the confirmatory factor analysis by Burmann et al. (2009) reduced the factor number to three. Based on Nyadzayo et al. (2016) and Burmann (2009), the first factor is helping behavior that refers to taking responsibility beyond the contract to promote positive perceptions. Helping behavior entails positive attitudes, friendliness, helpfulness, and empathy toward the internal and external customer. Secondly, the brand endorsement that involves recommending the brand to others, such as customers, friends, and families. Thirdly, the brand enthusiasm that involves taking extra initiatives, for instance, local marketing through charity events and sponsorships.

Employer Branding

Fundamentally, employer branding research explores the ability of a company to achieve and maintain the competitive advantage based on its ability to amass valuable, rare sources, difficult to imitate and to substitute for a different resource (Backhause, 2016). The term of employer brand and employer branding has already been used in human resource practice (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Therefore, to understand and distinguish both of the terms clearly is essential. According to the definition by Theurer et al., (2016) the employer brand is the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that are identified with the employing company. Meanwhile, employer branding is the internal process to deliver the consistent brand image to the minds of customers and employees alike (Miles & Mangold, 2005). Employer branding includes both internal and external employer branding (Backhause, 2016). Finally, employer branding can be implemented through employer brand to build the internal image or external image.

According to Lievens (2016), Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), and Burmann et al. (2009), employer branding is a three-step process. The first step is brand-centered HR that upper management needs to build the value concept of the company and then ensure that applicant or current employees have high person-brand fit. The second step, value proposition, is to communicate the brand identity as the foundation in employer branding that is needed to be understood and imbued to the members of the company. The third step of employer branding is to control the perception of the brand identity in the hands of a single person through leadership.

The messages of employer branding are sent through those steps. The employer brand messages should imbue the mission, values, and the desired brand so that employees can behave in accordance with the brand identity. However that is not enough, the messages should be designed proactively and delivered frequently and consistently through all message channels (Miles & Mangold, 2005). Messages are delivered continuously to remain to the employee so messages are

remembered and completely understood. Consistent messages will give clarity with regards to what they have to do. Finally, the effective employer branding will encourage the employee to live with the brand that is called brand citizenship behavior (Burmann et al., 2009; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Porricelli et al., 2014). Therefore, it is proposed that:

H1: Employer branding is positively related to brand citizenship behavior.

Brand-Person Fit

Brand-person fit or brand-self congruence is the way an individual forms personal relationships that the center is to understand the fit between the employee and the brand (Helm et al., 2014). Self-image congruence, self-congruence, self-congruity, and image congruence are often used interchangeably. Brand-personality is defined as the set of human personality traits that are associated with the brand (Aaker, 1997). Self-brand-personality fit may thus be an important determinant of evaluative judgments of brands and their extensions. People tend to use and appreciate brands they perceive as having a personality that is similar to their own.

Referring to the employer branding steps, high quality and timely internal communication in the employer branding efforts should enhance the perceived congruency between the service employee's values and the brand's values (Baker et al., 2014). As the leader is responsible for maintaining the communication about the employer brand messages (Burmann et al., 2009), brainwash about the brand identity can change the opinion of the employer

brand and make the promise of corporate vision are fit with the personal benefit (Maroko & Uncle, 2008). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Employer branding is positively related brand-person fit

Employees who do not live up the brand may just do what the job description says and not really enthusiastic about the brand. The finding of Helm et al. (2014) stated that actual brand self-congruity is more effective to trigger brand citizenship behavior than ideal brand self-congruency. Actual self-congruity with the brand reflects the employee's perception of the fit between the employee's actual self and the brand, while ideal self-congruity is the fit of the brand with the employee's ideal self. Actual self is more probable and psychologically closer than the ideal self. The effect is, the employee will promote the brand, give the suggestion for the brand, and go beyond the job description that is called brand citizenship behavior. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Brand-person fit is positively related to brand citizenship behavior

Brand Commitment

Brand commitment is the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand to maintain the relationship, similar to the condition in which consumers are firmly enchanted with the brand (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015; Burmann & Zeplin 2005; Chang & Wu, 2013). Therefore, brand commitment influences the willingness to spend extra effort to reach the brand's goals through brand citizenship behavior (Burmann et al., 2009).

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) proposed three drivers of brand commitment: compliance, identification, and internalization that are not separate from each other. Compliance with the brand identity is consistent behavior with the aspired brand identity in order to achieve reward or to avoid punishment driven by organizational structure. Identification with the brand refers to the sense of belonging to the group determining the brand experience, Identification can be advanced through leadership and individual mentorship. Finally, internalization of the brand identity that delineates the appropriation of core brand values into one's self-concept as the guideline of principle. Internalization is developed through organizational socialization to increase the congruence between the individual values with the brand value. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) stated that internalization has the largest influence on brand commitment, and compliance has the weakest influence. In line with Burmann et al. (2009) and Porricelli et al. (2014), it is hypothesized that:

H4: Employer branding is positively related to brand commitment

Chang and Wu (2013) revealed that if an information receiver has a high level of commitment to the brand, they will tend to keep a relationship with the brand. When the receiver's brand commitment level is high, they tend to counter negative messages and do not believe the content. The finding of Porricelli et al. (2014), Burmann et al. (2009), and Burmann and Zeplin (2005) suggest that brand commitment is an antecedent of brand citizenship behavior and there is

the relation between brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H5: Brand commitment is positively related to brand citizenship behavior.

Brand Commitment and Brand-Person Fit as Mediator Variable.

Firstly, previous research supports the influence of employer branding on brand-person fit (Baker et al., 2014), and brand-person fit act as an antecedent of brand citizenship behavior (Backhause, 2016; Helm et al., 2014). Effective employer branding will encourage the employee to live up with the brand that is called brand citizenship behavior (Burmann et al., 2009; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Porricelli et al., 2014). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H6: Brand-person fit mediates between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior.

Secondly, prior research supports brand commitment as an antecedent of brand citizenship behavior (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al..2009; Porricelli, 2014) and employer branding has the influence on brand commitment (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al..2009; Porricelli, 2014). While the direct effect of employer branding toward brand citizenship behavior is supported by Burmann et al., (2009), Burmann & Zeplin (2005), Porricelli et al., (2014), the possible indirect effect is rarely explored. Therefore, it is proposed that:
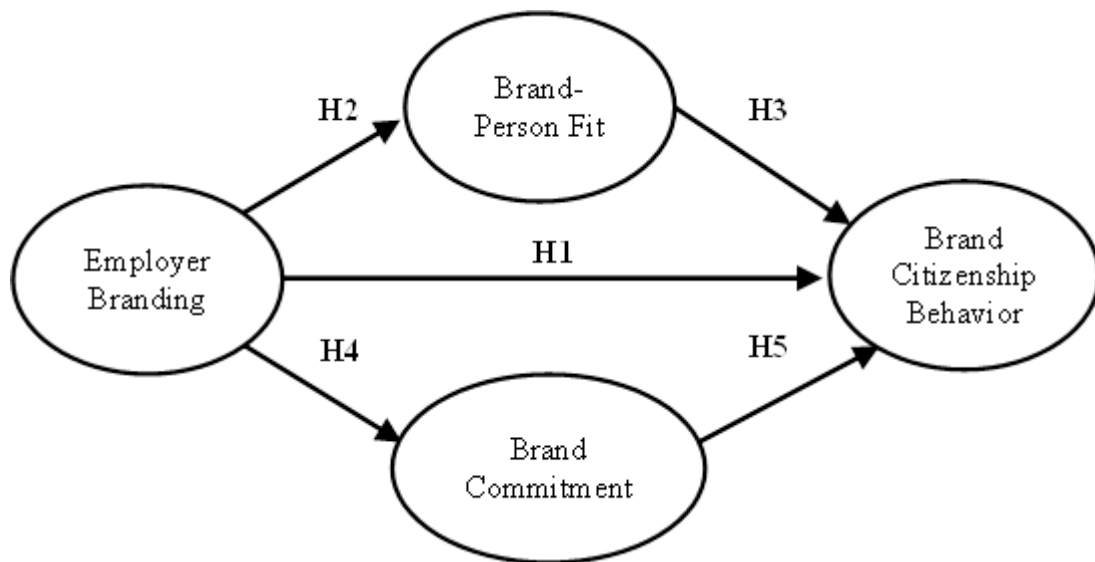
H7: Brand commitment mediates between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior.

Research Framework

The present study aims to explore the effect of employer branding toward brand citizenship behavior, either directly or indirectly through brand-person fit and brand commitment. The research framework is presented in Figure 1.

Mediation Effect:

H6: Employer Branding→Brand-Person Fit→Brand Citizenship Behavior

H7: Employer Branding→Brand Commitment→Brand Citizenship Behavior

Figure 1. Research Framework

Method

Participants in the study are employees in the largest telecommunication company in Indonesia. Leary (2004) revealed that non-probability sampling is acceptable to research because capable to test the hypothesis which relates to behavior. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling also called as accidental sampling because elements may be selected in the sample simply as just happen to be situated. The data was collected online during March 2017. The link to the questionnaire was spread to employees of the telecommunication company around Indonesia. A total of 290 questionnaires were obtained. After excluding 125 questionnaires because of incompleteness or missing data, double respondent, or outlier data, 165 questionnaires were retained for further analysis. The sample consists of 165 respondents with 89 males (53.9%) and 76 females (46.1%). The largest group falls between the age of 20 to 25 years old, with 110 respondents (66.7%) and 26.1% of respondent are at the age of 26-31 years old. Most of them hold bachelor degrees, with 128 respondents (71.5%). Based on the characteristic of the job status, the respondents having non-organic job number about 90 (54.5%) and the organic job is owned

by 75 respondents (45.5%). Based on the length of work, the highest number is less than 1 year with 96 respondents (58.2%), and the second highest number is 2-5 years of work experience with 58 respondents (35.2%).

Result

Prior to doing SEM analysis, a multivariate assumption test was conducted. This test serving as the foundation of SEM model was done with skewness and kurtosis method and supported by the calculation of AMOS. Aside from normal multivariate assumption, another assumption test was conducted as the basis in SEM model, namely the outlier assumption.

The theoretical model in research's framework is considered fit if it is supported by empirical data. The result of the goodness of fit overall model is in-line with the result of SEM analysis presented in the following.

Table 1. Goodness of Fit Model

Criteria	Cut-off value	Model Result	Information
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.00	1.787	Acceptable
Probability	$\geq .05$	.000	Acceptable
GFI	$\geq .90$	.762	Not Acceptable
AGFI	$\geq .90$	.722	Not Acceptable
CFI	$\geq .90$	.916	Acceptable
TLI	$\geq .90$	.908	Acceptable
RMSEA	$\leq .08$	.069	Acceptable

If one of the results fulfills cut-off value, that model is considered fit enough to use (Hair et al., 2013). The testing result of goodness of fit model on table 4 shows that most criteria, such as CMIN/DF, Probability, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA have fulfilled cut off score, which means SEM model in this research is fit and proper to be used and thus can be interpreted for further discussion.
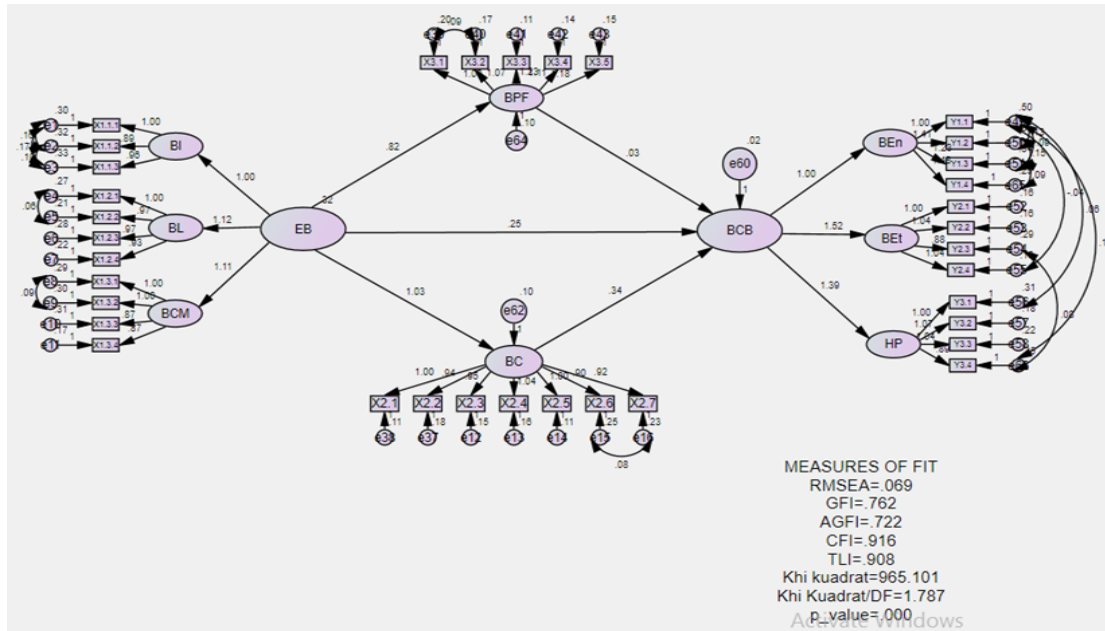
Figure 2. The Result of SEM

Table 2. Coefficient of the Correlation

Statement	Result	Remark
H1: Employer branding has a direct positive effect on brand citizenship behavior	.358	Supported
H2: Employer branding has a direct positive effect on brand-personfit	.823	Supported
H3: Brand-person fit has a direct positive effect on brand citizenship behavior	.044	Not Supported
H4: Employer branding has a direct positive effect on brand commitment	.879	Supported
H5: Brand commitment has a direct positive effect on brand citizenship behavior	.562	Supported
H6: Brand commitment as mediation variable between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior.	.493	Supported
H7: Brand-person fit as mediation variable between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior.	.036	Not Supported

The result also showed that employer branding consistent with the findings from Baker et al. (2014) that employer branding significantly affects brand-person fit. However, the finding of brand-person fit toward brand citizenship behavior is not significant with the previous result of Helm et al. (2014), where brand-person fit would trigger brand citizenship behavior. The possible reason may due to the lack of innovation of the telecommunication company, with little interest to promote the brand. As the sample in this research is mostly non-organic or outsourcing employees, that may explain why even

though the employee feel fit with the brand but they do not live with the brand because the salary of the non-organic employee is different from the organic employee. Another possible reason is most of the participants in this study has less than the 1-year length of work. In other words, they may still try to adapt to the employer brand.

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The next result, employer branding has positive significant effect to the brand citizenship behavior, and this is consistent with prior research that brand commitment as an antecedent of brand citizenship behavior (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann et al..2009; Porricelli, 2014), where brand commitment has positive significant effect on brand citizenship behavior.

Finally, the result of the indirect hypothesis of brand-person fit as mediation variable between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior is not significant. However, the employer branding still has the direct influence on the employer branding, like the previous explanation. While the indirect effect of brand commitment as mediation variable between employer branding and brand citizenship behavior is significant. Therefore if the employee commits with the brand this will make an impulse to perform brand citizenship behavior.

Discussion

Employee is a key in the service company because customers will have direct contact with the employee. The company must have ability to control brand image. The vital point is the brand identity, that employees have to fully understand it. Through employer branding, the brand identity of the company is emphasized to the employee. Company has to ensure that employer branding is effective. Effective employer branding can be known when continously send the brand identity with the same message and imbued with the mission and vission. So that employee do something in line with the foundation or identity of the company, and that will effect the image perceived by the customer and further influence the decision of the customer. Indirectly, company can build the brand image through internal organization.

Based on the finding, company may utilize employer branding as a strategy to make the company to be unique, not easy to imitate, and competitive in the market to possess good skills to attract talent applicants, and consequently

influence the employee to promote the brand and care about the brand.

This study is not without limitations. First, this study is conducted in a telecommunication company in Indonesia. Therefore, the result cannot be generalized because there are different situations and cultures. Future studies are needed to examine the generalizability of the results in other industry or countries in order to generalize to a larger population. Second, convenience sampling used in this study might affect the representativeness of the sample (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015).

Subsequent research may also be needed to separate the younger from the older employees, as younger people may prefer to stay a shorter length of time with the organization (Ito et al., 2013) that will influence the result more specific and accurate. Furthermore, dividing outsourcing and current employees may be beneficial based on the result of Porricelli et al. (2014), that full-time associates and managers tend to have higher levels of brand commitment, brand communication, and brand citizenship behavior than part-timers and non-managers.

Finally, the employee is not a project management, therefore needs a continuous effort in order to create and maintain a high level and long-term brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior (Burmann et al., 2009). Brand commitment targeted at the corporate or the product brand should be at the center of internal brand management effort in the service industry (Burmann et al., 2009). Hopefully, this research will encourage other researchers to advance the understanding of what employees care about to make the brand live and will inspire fellow researchers and practitioners to pay more attention to employer branding.

Notes on Contributors

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