Employees' Brand Knowledge for Heightening Brand Endorsement in the Service Industry

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Abstract: *The study envisages outlining determinants that heighten brand knowledge and endorsement among the employees of service-oriented organizations in Bangladesh. The study incorporated a structured and self-administered questionnaire, including items compiled from prior research, to record responses from 112 employees chosen from conveniently selected eleven service-oriented companies in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the responses were analyzed using a standard SEM simulator named SAMRT PLS 3.3.2. The study confirmed the positive impact of the variables: internal communication, management support, and teamwork on the formation of 'Brand Knowledge'; furthermore, the variable, namely 'Brand Knowledge,' had been confirmed as the predictor of 'Brand Endorsement'. The study can function as the leaders' primordial guidelines in accelerating the formation of Brand Knowledge and Brand Endorsement within the organization. Future research can be undertaken to gauge the impact of 'income' and 'experience' in intensifying the association relating to 'Brand Knowledge' and 'Brand Endorsement' within the organizational setting.*

Keywords: Brand Knowledge, Brand Endorsement, Internal Branding, Management Support

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Introduction

Internal branding has become essential for companies to strengthen their brand identities and improve employee engagement in the fiercely competitive global services sector. Internal branding is based on the notion that workers should represent and convey the brand's values and commitments to external stakeholders as the main brand ambassadors. To link employees with the corporate brand, which in turn affects customer view and loyalty, internal branding goes beyond typical branding initiatives. As companies try to differentiate themselves in competitive markets, successful internal branding has emerged as a crucial element for organizational success as well as a strategic instrument for stability.

Internal branding is significant because it can influence staff attitudes and actions in a way that advances the company's brand vision. Customers are more likely to receive consistent and genuine brand experiences from staff members who are knowledgeable about the company and have a strong emotional bond. The main elements that affect employees' brand knowledge development are examined in this article, with an emphasis on teamwork, management support, and internal communication. These components give staff members the resources, knowledge, and inspiration they need to support the brand both internally and externally, making them the cornerstones of successful internal branding strategies.

Although the importance of internal branding in the performance of organizations is becoming more widely acknowledged, little is known about how certain internal branding strategies affect workers' brand awareness and endorsement practices. Few studies have empirically investigated the elements that lead to the successful spread of brand awareness within businesses, even though several have addressed the overall effects of internal branding. By identifying the essential internal branding strategies that raise brand understanding and, eventually, strengthen employee brand support, this study seeks to close this gap.

Internal branding strategies and employee brand awareness have a complex relationship. To guarantee that the staff members are aware of the company's brand values and goals, internal communication is essential. Employee engagement and knowledge of the brand's development are guaranteed by consistent, open lines of communication. Additionally, management support has a significant impact on how well internal branding works. The brand's visibility within the company is increased when management actively supports internal branding activities and gives staff members the tools and freedom to spread the word about the brand. Finally, collaboration is a crucial component of brand knowledge development. A cooperative workplace where staff members exchange ideas and experiences helps to build a shared understanding of the brand, which can improve the entire experience that consumers have with the brand.

The relationship between internal branding practices, brand knowledge, and brand endorsement is examined using the conceptual framework proposed in this study.

Employee brand knowledge is developed through the interaction of internal communication, managerial support, and teamwork, as the framework illustrates. Additionally, the study investigates how this knowledge, once developed, transforms into brand endorsement practices that support the goals of the business and enhance its standing.

To accomplish these goals, this research focuses on Bangladeshi companies in a range of service industries, such as banking, telecommunications, healthcare, and tourism. To give a thorough grasp of the procedures that result in efficient brand knowledge distribution, the research investigated the functions of internal branding in these various situations. Both academic researchers and practitioners aspiring to enhance employees' engagement and internal branding strategies may reap benefits from it and will find immense value in the findings.

This study also attempts to present empirical data regarding the elements that impact internal branding practices and the growth of brand knowledge. Through its emphasis on teamwork, managerial support, and internal communication, this study seeks to enhance the corpus of research on internal branding and emphasizes its significance in fostering a resolute and cohesive staff team. Organizations may make sure that their brand promises are successfully conveyed and fulfilled by cultivating brand knowledge and endorsement, which will eventually boost brand performance and consumer happiness.

Literature

In service-oriented businesses where employee interaction directly affects the customer experience, internal branding is identified as an essential part of organizational management. Companies understand that to maintain consistency across all touchpoints, employees must internalize and embrace the brand as the competitive landscape becomes more dynamic. Internal branding is the methods and techniques used to help staff members relate to the company's brand identity, forging a deep behavioral and emotional bond that empowers them to successfully fulfill the brand promise. The main components of internal branding are discussed in this section along with its use and effects in service-oriented businesses.

Internal Branding Practices and Their Role

The successful dissemination of brand values among the staff members is essential for internal branding. Employees are pledged to comprehend the brand's vision and objectives, as well as to feel participating in and dedicated to its success. Internal branding techniques aim to align employees with the organization's brand concept using both formal and informal communication channels, including leadership messaging, internal marketing initiatives, and training programs (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Research

has indicated that employees' brand understanding is improved by clear and consistent communication, which affects their attitudes and actions. According to King and Grace (2009), employees are more likely to act in ways that are consistent with the brand's integrity when they comprehend and internalize its principles.

Research also emphasizes how crucial leadership support is to the internal branding process. The function of senior management is crucial in promoting and integrating the brand across the company. Leaders express the brand's vision and serve as role models for staff members, demonstrating the significance of the brand's values in their day-to-day work. Employee adoption and advocacy are facilitated by management support for internal branding, which guarantees that staff members receive training, resources, and recognition (King & Grace, 2008). Employees are more inclined to show actions that reflect the objectives of the brand when they perceive that their leaders are supporting them, which improves internal and external brand consistency (Vallaster, 2004).

Internal Branding in Service-Oriented Firms

Internal branding is especially important in service-oriented companies where client contacts with employees play a vital role in the brand experience. Employees play a critical role in helping service firms fulfill their brand promises because they frequently rely on intangible goods and direct consumer interaction. According to Punjaisri and Wilson (2011), employees are the brand's living representation, and a consistent and genuine customer experience depends on their knowledge of the brand.

Due to the individualized and variable nature of service delivery, service-oriented businesses have difficulties when it comes to internal branding. Employees need to be able to express and embody the brand values in dynamic, customer-facing settings in addition to having the requisite brand expertise. These businesses frequently place a strong emphasis on developing in-depth brand understanding and making sure staff members have the abilities necessary to provide outstanding customer service that embodies the brand. Comprehensive training programs that guarantee staff members comprehend the brand's guiding concepts and know how to apply them in their jobs are crucial to reaching this alignment (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006).

Research indicates that workers in service-oriented companies with a deep understanding of the brand are more assured of their capacity to meet client needs and deliver experiences that live up to the brand promise. Because of their self-assurance, employees are more likely to become brand ambassadors, actively communicating the company's value to consumers and boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty (King & Grace, 2009). Management's persistent dedication to internal branding, which guarantees that staff members consistently interact with and reinforce the brand throughout their careers, further strengthens the capacity of service personnel to represent the brand.

The Role of Teamwork in Internal Branding

In the process of internal branding, teamwork is especially important, especially in service-oriented businesses where smooth client experience frequently requires employee participation. Employee collaboration may strengthen brand values, promote a sense of brand ownership among all staff members, and share brand expertise, according to research conducted by Punjaisri & Wilson (2011). Team-based methods of internal branding guarantee that staff members not only comprehend the brand on their own but also grow to share a dedication to its principles, which they can subsequently consistently communicate to clients.

Employee engagement is frequently higher when internal branding initiatives place a strong emphasis on cooperation since it makes workers feel like they are all working toward the same goal. According to King and Grace (2010), teams that have a common concept of the brand are better equipped to respond to customer needs in service sectors, where customer contacts are frequent and frequently unpredictable. This ensures that the brand promise is constantly fulfilled. Employees can also benefit from this collaborative atmosphere by learning from one another, which promotes the sharing of brand knowledge and guarantees that the brand is consistently portrayed across various service touchpoints.

Employee Brand Knowledge and Endorsement

Employee brand knowledge, or the comprehension and internalization of the brand's values, vision, and goals, is a key purpose of internal branding. Strong brand understanding enables staff members to act in a way that is consistent with the brand and function as brand ambassadors for clients. Given that employees' direct interactions with clients have the potential to impact their opinions of the brand, brand expertise is particularly crucial in service-oriented businesses (Miles et al., 2011).

Workers who are familiar with the brand's stance and values are more likely to support it both within and outside of the office. According to Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006), brand endorsement is the term used to describe the active promotion of a brand by employees, especially in their contacts with customers. This is frequently seen as an indication of the employees' internal alignment with the brand. Since employees serve as the main channel through which consumers interact with brands, employee brand endorsement is essential to customer engagement in service sectors. Employees who actively promote the brand have been found to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty because consumers are more likely to trust those who are enthusiastic and informed about the brand (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Internal Branding and Organizational Performance

Internal branding has an impact on overall organizational success in addition to employee involvement and brand endorsement. Organizations that successfully execute internal branding projects typically observe a surge in brand equity, customer loyalty, and staff happiness. Employees who are familiar with the brand and have a sense of belonging are more likely to act in ways that support its goals, which improves customer satisfaction and maintains brand consistency (King & Grace, 2008).

Internal branding has a direct impact on how customers perceive a brand in service-oriented businesses because employee-customer interactions are the primary way that the brand is experienced. Employees are in a better position to provide consistent, superior service that lives up to brand promises as they absorb the company's core values. Employee behavior that is in line with brand values builds the brand's reputation and encourages devoted customers, which eventually improves organizational performance and gives the company a competitive edge (Natarajan et al., 2017).

Internal branding is also associated with lower staff turnover and better employee retention, especially in service-oriented businesses where employee engagement and happiness are essential to company success. According to Natarajan et al. (2017), employees who belong to brand support are more likely to stick with the company lowering training and recruitment expenses while maintaining a stable and competent workforce.

Internal branding is becoming a key component of organizational performance, employee engagement, and brand endorsement, particularly in service-oriented businesses where customer-employee interactions are crucial. Companies may create a work environment where employees are not just aware of the brand but are also inspired to promote it by clearly conveying the company's values and making sure that these are shared by all employees. In service sectors, where staff behavior influences the brand experience, internal branding is crucial for preserving brand consistency, raising customer satisfaction levels, and promoting overall company performance.

Research Model, Model Variables, and the Development of the Hypotheses:

Internal communication

For some scholars, the concept of brand communication is highly praised as it can create and maintain a positive image and reputation of an organization (Argenti & Forman, 2002; Tench & Yeomans, 2006). From an organizational point of view, brand communication is a conscious effort made by managers to develop the workforce (Dryl, 2017). Efforts for communicating internally were found to be rooted in branding programs (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006). Fewer researchers (Berry, 2000; Foster et al., 2010) emphasize that an organization's overall branding effort should

be integrated with internal communication among the employees, particularly in the service sector. Internal communications literature reveals its significance in stimulating employees' commitment and attachment to the brand (Asif and Sargeant, 2000; Steers, 1977). Also, this has been supported by Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006a, b) in a study among banking employees where the need for employee training was also emphasized heavily. In this regard, Punjaisri et al., (2009) argued that the necessity of conducting regular training sessions to develop employees' understanding and capabilities that resemble the organizational brand ideologies and facilitate them to develop their performance in line with the brand promise. Thus, effective internal communication, training, and development programs are imperative for strengthening employees' brand identification and increasing commitment to the brand values, leading to increased brand-building behavior (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). In an organizational context, knowledge is generated through social interactions (Mazzei, 2010). Herein, we declare the following hypothesis to be tested:

H1: *The more the employees are communicated about the policies taken by the management of an organization, the more the development of knowledge about the brand.*

Training

For late-career employees, training programs emphasize more capacity building delivering brand messages; and simultaneously, strengthening the overall understanding and behavioral alignment with comprehensive branding strategies. In addition to the regular professional development programs, some social events and informal training initiatives can be conducted to transmit and cultivate brand orientation among the employees (Aurand et al., 2005). A growing number of researchers also identified that organizational socialization programs influenced to development of employees' commitment and loyalty toward the organization; thus, the inclusion of internal communication, training, and development programs affects the internalization of organizational brands (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006; Ahmed et al., 2003). Therefore, the following hypothesis has been elucidated:

H2: *Institutional training in all forms is positively associated with the development of brand knowledge.*

Management Support

As the employees become satisfied with their workplace and the surroundings, the influence of internal branding practices on the employees' attitudes and behavior is amplified. Indeed, management's support regarding internal branding is also considered by the employees through the flexibility and decision-making ability that the staff is

allowed to have at any level during their tenure with the company. Thereby, cooperation between the management of the company and the organization is essential to disseminate brand knowledge within the organization and, in turn, improve their commitment (King and Grace (2008); Thereby, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: The positive support of the management will have a positive effect on the development of brand knowledge.

Senior leadership

In addition to this, internal branding among the senior leaders in the organization lowers turnover along with promoting brand-supporting behavior (Morhart et al., 2009). Thus, the internalization of beliefs about the brand among employees facilitates the delivery of brand promise. From a global perspective with a diversified workforce, the role played by organizational leaders is quite imperative in building and communicating brand values resulting in brand-specific behavior and performance from the employees (Vallaster, 2004). Hence, the following hypothesis has been proposed to validate:

H4: Senior leadership of an organization will make a positive impression on brand knowledge development.

Teamwork

Concerning internal brand management, it has been underlined that internal branding should address the transmission of brand-related information to the employees to obtain and cultivate relevant and meaningful knowledge of the brands. This can be accomplished through group meetings and team briefings to enhance employees' knowledge regarding responsibilities in fulfilling the brand's promise (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). To nurture effective IB practices, openness (as demonstrated through socialization in the organization), management cooperation, and employee participation are imperative (King & Grace, 2010). Moreover, a collaborative work environment, i.e., good relations between colleagues, relationships with immediate supervisors, and customers, enhances employees' intentions to perform better and reinforces the intended mission and values of the brand (King & Grace, 2010). Thus, in the current study, "teamwork" has been hypothesized as a factor affecting employees' behavioral actions on brand endorsement; therefore, we propose the hypothesis below.

H5: The more the organization follows a collaborative work environment, the higher the development in knowledge about the brand.

Brand knowledge

Employees with better knowledge about the organizational brand are the 'intellectual capital,'; likewise, employees with greater brand commitment are considered 'emotional capital' (Nataranjan et al., 2017). Hence, for an organization intending to improve its overall performance, it is imperative to address the development of brand knowledge among the employees based on emotional and intellectual perspectives (Thomson et al., 1999). The internal branding process succeeds when employees are provided with relevant information that encourages them positively to act on and promote the required brand messages to external clients (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004; Miles & Mangold, 2004). These messages need to be reflected within the organization and mission, vision, and core values, which may help the employees understand their roles. In addition, internal branding was found to be influenced by brand orientation (Iyer, Davari, & Paswan, 2018). Therefore, we state the following hypothesis:

*H6: The better brand knowledge employees have, the greater the brand endorsement
an organization may have.*

Conceptual Model

The research model (Figure 1) comprises five exogenous variables: internal communication, training, management support, senior leadership, teamwork, and two endogenous variables such as brand knowledge and brand endorsement.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model
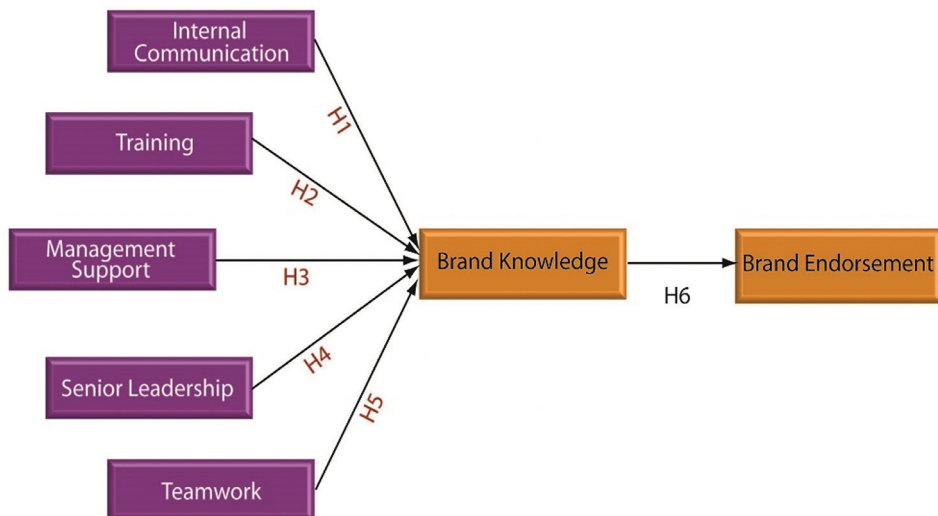
Source: Own Illustration

Methodology

Research Setting, Instrument, and Measure

This research collected primary data using a structured and self-administrated questionnaire (paper-based) comprising items compiled from prior studies. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections: respondents' profiles and items to measure the key constructs. The printed questionnaires were handed out among the participants of the various institutions. The items of the questionnaire were primarily adopted from prior studies akin to the same field. The items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (Lewis, 1993). The variables 'Brand Endorsement' and 'Training' were measured by 5 and 4 items, respectively. The rest of the variables were measured by three items each. The research adopted scales from Punjaisri and Wilson (2011), Nataranjan et al. (2017), King and Grace (2010), Ahmed et al., (2003), Punjaisri and Wilson (2017), King and Grace (2010), Nataranjan et al. (2017) and the instrument BE was adapted from Nataranjan et al. (2017). Some of the statements adopted were further reworded to fit into the study located in Bangladesh. Constructs utilized in the research are deemed to be reflective as the selected items (observed variables) of these constructs are exhibited through the relevant constructs with strong correlations with the items (Freeze & Raschke, 2007). Table 1 summarizes these items used in the study along with the sources.

The sample for this study is made up of employees at all levels of Bangladeshi service-oriented industries, including those in banking, telecommunications, healthcare, aviation, and tourism. These businesses were selected because they are important service sectors in Bangladesh and make a substantial contribution to the country's economy. Because these businesses rely on employee-customer interactions to deliver brand promise, the selection of these industries guarantees that the study focuses on organizations where internal branding and brand endorsement are crucial elements.

Table 1: Measurement Items and Sources

Constructs	Items (Codes)	Statements	Adopted from
Internal Communication (IC)	IC1	Briefings contain all the essential information for me to provide services according to the brand expectations	Nataranjan et al., (2017)
	IC2	The brand mission and its promise are constantly reinforced during the briefing	
	IC3	I would suggest excellent communication exists within the organization I work for	
Brand Endorsement (BE)	BE1	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this company	Nataranjan et al., (2017)

Constructs	Items (Codes)	Statements	Adopted from
Brand Endorsement (BE)	BE2	I regularly recommend the organization I work for to family and friends i.e. nonjob related acquaintances.	Nataranjan et al., (2017)
	BE3	I bring up the brand names of our products/services in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances	
	BE4	I view the success of the brands of the company as my own success	
	BE5	I encourage friends and acquaintances to buy the products and services of the company.	
Brand Knowledge (BK)	BK1	I understand how our customers can benefit from our brands	King & Grace (2010)
	BK2	I know how our brands are different from our competitors	
	BK3	It is clear to me what is promised to our customers by the brands of our company	
Management Support (MS)	MS1	Management of the company regularly interacts with employees	Punjaisri & Wilson (2011)
	MS2	In the company, cooperation exists between the management & employees	
	MS3	My manager is willing to extend themselves in order to help me to perform my job to the best of my ability	
Senior Leadership (SL)	SL1	Creating and upholding the brand vision helps in Brand Endorsement	Nataranjan et al., (2017).
	SL2	Encourage participative communication helps in Brand Endorsement	
	SL3	Shape an organizational culture based on brand beliefs helps in Brand Endorsement	
Teamwork (TM)	TM1	During the group meeting, I am clearly informed about the brand's mission	King & Grace (2008)
	TM2	I clearly understand my role in relation to the brand mission, after attending the group meeting	
	TM3	In the company, cooperation exists between the management & employees that help in Brand Endorsement	
Training (TR)	TR1	The company provided us with excellent training about our job that help in Brand Endorsement	Punjaisri & Wilson (2011)
	TR2	The training has enabled me to do the job well	
	TR3	Training gives me appropriate skills in relation to delivering the brand promise based on the brand standards	
	TR4	Supervisor's instructions are valuable in doing better work	

Participants

The population for this study comprised employees working for service-oriented organizations e.g., Banks, Universities, Telecommunication Operators, Hospitals, Airlines, and Tourism at all levels: Entry, mid-Level, and top. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the individual who is working for companies. The study considered responses gathered from both the managerial and non-managerial employees, who were chosen following the convenience sampling technique. The total sample size of the study was determined by a simulation named 'G*Power' which estimated a total sample size of eighty-two considering medium effect size. However, the study considered the responses of 112 employees at various levels.

With an emphasis on businesses that are actively involved in competitive markets and have realized the value of internal branding for preserving brand equity, the companies were chosen based on their significance in the service industry. These businesses, which include both big, well-established corporations and up-and-coming leaders in their respective industries, are typical of Bangladesh's larger service sector. The study covers differences in internal branding techniques across various service sector industries by incorporating a wide range of businesses. With their substantial contributions to GDP growth and employment, the chosen industries are vital to Bangladesh's economy.

Since the service sector accounts for a sizable and quickly growing percentage of Bangladesh's economy, a sizable portion of the study sample is made up of workers in these sectors. Without access to comprehensive employment data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, it is challenging to determine the precise proportion of participants in comparison to the country's service sector. The sample size is sufficient, therefore, to offer a reliable depiction of internal branding strategies in these important industries.

By incorporating workers from entry, mid, and top organizational levels, the sample quality is guaranteed and offers a thorough grasp of internal branding strategies from diverse angles. Since both managerial and non-managerial staff are included, a wide variety of perspectives is possible, guaranteeing that the study includes a wide range of viewpoints and experiences. Purposive sampling was also used to reach a broad spectrum of employees, providing a useful strategy considering the study's constraints.

Data Analysis

As recommended, the researcher utilized IBM SPSS (V26) for encoding the initial survey data and Smart PLS 3.3.2 for testing both the inner and outer models (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Before we conducted the rest of the tests, the common bias issue was checked following the methods suggested by Knock (2015). The study tested the collinearity issue by regressing the model variables versus the random dummy variable. Accordingly, subsequent VIFs had been observed as follows, Brand Endorsement (2.049), Brand Knowledge (1.719), Internal Communication (1.322), Management Support (2.236), Senior Leadership (1.624), Teamwork (1.703), and Training (1.518) which were all lower than 3.3 and 5.0; thus, indicating that the common method bias is not indicating a critical concern in this research.

Results

Respondents' Profile

As shown in Table 2, the participants of the study are the professional working crowd, who are working for organizations in Bangladesh, in which 70.5% of the respondents are male and the remaining (29.5%) are female. The majority (27%) of the respondents work for the Bank, followed by educational institutions (19.6%). About 17.9% of the respondents belong to the Telecommunication sector, whereas 14.3% of the respondents are in the healthcare industry. Fewer respondents, around (11.6%) and (8.9%), are from the aviation, and travel & tourism industries, respectively. The majority (79%) of the respondents are master's degree holders, whereas 31% of the respondents are graduates.

Table 2: Demographics (N= 112)

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	79	70.5
	Female	33	29.5
Age	20-24	4	3.6
	25-29	30	26.8
	30-34	35	31.3
	35-39	20	17.9
	40-44	16	14.3
	45-49	5	4.5
	50 & above	2	1.8
Education	Graduate	31	27.7
	Master	79	70.5
	MPhil/PhD/Higher	2	1.8
Professional experience (Total)	Below 1 year	8	7.1
	1-3 years	12	10.7
	3-5 years	17	15.2
	5-7 years	25	22.3
	8-10 years	35	31.3
	Above 10 years	15	13.4
Type of organization	Bank	31	27.7
	Education	22	19.6
	Telecommunication	20	17.9
	Hospital/Health	16	14.3
	Aviation	13	11.6
	Travel & Tourism	10	8.9

Source: Survey result

Most of the respondents (31.3%) are aged between 30 and 34 years. The respondents aged between the groups of 25 and 29, 35 and 39 cover 26.8% and 17.9% of the samples, respectively. In terms of professional experience, the majority (31.3%) spent on average 8 to 10 years in the organizations. About 22.3% of the respondents have

professional experience of over 5 to 10 years. Around 15% of the respondents spent around 3 to 5 years in the organizations, whereas 13% of the respondents are quite senior as they have professional experience, on average, around 10 years and above.

Measurement Model

To measure the validity and reliability of the required measures, loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) along with composite reliability (CR) were used. Hair et al. (2020) suggest that loadings should be bigger than 0.7, AVE larger than 0.,5, and CR bigger than 0.7. The outer model comprised twenty-five items with loading values of 0.60 and above. Two Items: BE4 and BE5 were eliminated due to low loadings. The model finally yielded twenty-three items. As shown in Table 3, it can be summarized that the AVE and CR values are well above the cutoff point of 0.50 and 0.70, respectively. Convergent validity is considered as well-established as per the above indicators.

Table 3: Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loadings	CR	AVE
Brand Endorsement	BE1	0.912	0.915	0.782
	BE2	0.911		
	BE3	0.826		
Brand Knowledge	BK1	0.692	0.836	0.631
	BK2	0.830		
	BK3	0.852		
Internal Communication	IC1	0.670	0.874	0.701
	IC2	0.903		
	IC3	0.917		
Management Support	MS1	0.840	0.885	0.72
	MS2	0.848		
	MS3	0.857		
Senior Leadership	SL1	0.830	0.874	0.698
	SL2	0.789		
	SL3	0.884		
Training	TR1	0.751	0.843	0.574
	TR2	0.824		
	TR3	0.656		
	TR4	0.790		
Teamwork	TM1	0.846	0.864	0.68
	TM2	0.822		
	TM3	0.806		

Note: AVE: Average Variance Extracted, CR: Composite Reliability

Source: Survey result

Further, the discriminant validity issues were also checked considering the HTMT ratio as per guidelines recommended by Henseler et al., (2015). Again, when the HTMT ratios are lower than 0.85 or 0.90, no drawback is there with discriminant validity (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). As observed in Table 4, all HTMT ratios are smaller than the suggested value of 0.90 standard, therefore, the measures are deemed to be distinct.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT ratio)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Brand Endorsement							
2. Brand Knowledge	0.669						
3. Internal Communication	0.492	0.542					
4. Management Support	0.750	0.630	0.367				
5. Senior Leadership	0.417	0.414	0.350	0.564			
6. Teamwork	0.513	0.676	0.480	0.585	0.633		
7. Training	0.175	0.314	0.249	0.578	0.611	0.399	

Source: Survey result

Structural Model

For measuring the proposed hypotheses, a bias-corrected bootstrapping comprising a resample of 5,000 was conducted (Hair et al., 2020). The 5 predictors of Internal communication, Training, Management Support, Senior leadership, and Teamwork together exhibited an R^2 of 0.380 ($Q^2 = 0.195$) indicating that 38% of the variance in Brand knowledge can be explicated by the 5 predictors taken together while brand knowledge was presented with an R^2 of 0.284 ($Q^2 = 0.214$) referring to the matter that 28.4% of the variance in Brand endorsement can be clarified by Brand knowledge.

We complemented our analysis with the predictive power of the model by following the suggestions of Shmueli et al. (2019). We used a 5-fold holdout sample to test predictive power (see Table 7). The Q^2 for the LV (BK) was 0.299 and for BE was 0.289 whereas the prediction errors for the PLS based on RMSE were all lower than LM for BE which indicates a high predictive power while for BK a majority was lower thus indicating we have a moderate predictive power in relation to the guidelines by Shmueli et al. (2019).

Table 6: Hypotheses Testing

Hypo-thesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	f²	VIF
H1	Internal Communication → Brand Knowledge	0.207	0.089	2.320	0.010	0.067	0.355	0.057	1.202
H2	Training → Brand Knowledge	-0.040	0.114	0.350	0.363	-0.309	0.092	0.002	1.430
H3	Management Support → Brand Knowledge	0.306	0.103	2.963	0.002	0.164	0.502	0.097	1.558
H4	Senior Leadership → Brand Knowledge	-0.018	0.087	0.202	0.420	-0.160	0.130	0.000	1.609
H5	Teamwork → Brand Knowledge	0.316	0.111	2.859	0.002	0.125	0.490	0.105	1.539
H6	Brand Knowledge → Brand Endorsement	0.533	0.079	6.773	0.001	0.362	0.636	0.398	1.000

Source: Survey result

Table 7: PLS-Predict

MV	PLS		LM		PLS-LM		Q²_predict
	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE	
BE1	0.904	0.682	0.978	0.747	-0.074	-0.065	0.219
BE2	1.077	0.766	1.09	0.8	-0.013	-0.034	0.248
BE3	0.955	0.761	1.118	0.808	-0.163	-0.047	0.244
BK1	0.868	0.702	0.826	0.661	0.042	0.041	0.145
BK2	0.707	0.584	0.799	0.64	-0.092	-0.056	0.141
BK3	0.791	0.641	0.84	0.664	-0.049	-0.023	0.246

Source: Survey result

Discussion of the Findings

According to Muhammad, Salleh & Yusr (2019), 'internal brand communication has a positive significant effect on brand commitment.' Starting brand commitment from a proper communication environment provided by employers enhances employees' brand knowledge. This is how internal communication enhances the brand knowledge of employees. This study also supports the hypothesis that the more the employees are communicated about the policies taken by the management of an organization, the more the development of knowledge about the brand.

Organizations are providing training not related to branding. That is why in this study the hypothesis Institutional training in all forms is positively associated with the development of brand knowledge is not supported.

If workers are happy with their jobs and environment, the effect of internal branding on the attitudes and actions of employees is increased. Management support for

internal branding is often viewed by employees through the versatility and decision-making capacity that employees are permitted to have at any stage during the company's tenure. The management support from the organization is important for the propagation of brand awareness within the organization which highlights the brand knowledge of employees. King and Grace (2008) in their study stressed the relationship between management support and brand knowledge. In this study, the hypothesis also supported that the positive support of the management will have a positive influence on the formation of brand knowledge.

Participating in senior management to discuss internal branding with employees in the business reduces turnover and promotes the behavior of the brand's employees. From a wider perspective with a multicultural workforce, the role played by corporate leaders in developing and communicating brand values is completely essential, resulting in brand-specific conduct and employee performance (Vallaster, 2004). As a result, senior management will improve the brand awareness of employees in any organizational structure. However, this study does not support the hypothesis (Senior leadership of an organization will have a positive impact on the development of brand knowledge) of lack of support from the senior leader. This condition needs to improve the climate for employees to learn about the brand.

Teamwork increases the awareness of internal brand management and strengthens employees' perception of their positions in the purpose of the brand (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; (King & Grace, 2010). A cooperative working climate, i.e., healthy relationships among colleagues, and communications with immediate supervisors and consumers, strengthens employees' willingness to execute efficiently and generate the expected brand values for the organization (King & Grace, 2010). Thus, teamwork has been hypothesized (The more the organization follows a collaborative work environment, the higher the development in knowledge about the brand) and endorsed as a factor that affects the brand knowledge behavior of the organizational staff.

This research's objective was to explore the factors responsible for developing and advancing brand knowledge within organizational settings. The study was directed to the identification of the phenomena observed in the institutions, such as Bank, Educational Institutions, Telecommunications, Hospital / Health, Aviation, Travel & Tourism of Bangladesh and to convert the phenomena into an academic model. The analysis found that the identified variables (internal communication, management support, and teamwork) had a clear and positive impact on the formation of brand knowledge among the employees, which, in turn, was found to have influenced the formation of brand endorsement of the employees as well. The study provided concrete empirical support as all the stated hypotheses, which were formulated by reviewing studies, tested employing standard parameters, examined, and compared with the studies done previously. A significant impact of the factors: internal communication, management support, and teamwork on brand awareness (King & Grace, 2008; Nataranjan et al., 2017; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011) and brand endorsement behaviors

(Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006a, 2006b; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007) were confirmed. In addition, the research emphasized internal communication, management support, and teamwork, which are the factors of internal branding, function as mechanisms that impact positively on the formation of employees' Brand Knowledge, which further improves brand support for employees of the organizations.

These measures engendered an identity of pride among the organizational members with a specific role, and responsibilities within the team, or are assigned to proper distribution of information to the right individual. A cooperative mindset is needed to improve managers' attitudes toward their employees, who are committed to serving as loyal employees and enticing them to try to produce the desired result. Besides, this also led to an emotional connection and devotion of employees to the company. The conception of 'internal branding affected employee perception of brand knowledge' was relevant to the past findings (Punjaisri et al., 2009).

Internal branding strategies have made the organizational workforce more aware of the brand values that they are expected to deliver, and recommended, and helped to build a sense of understanding in the consumer's mind through brand endorsement. As a result, it provided employees with knowledge of the ideal brand identity, which allowed them to produce the same optimally. Research findings highlighted that brand knowledge forms a sense of commitment to passing the desired image of an organization to the stakeholders. Such results have also been confirmed by prior research confirming the impact of employees' knowledge about organizational brands on their brand endorsement activities (Miles et al., 2011). This also reinforced the enthusiasm of employees' brand engagement (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) and inspired them to create a keen sense of commitment towards the organization for which they are working. Once employees grasped the notion that the service company needed consumers to perceive and feel emotionally connected to the brand, they would convey the ideal brand identity to the consumer.

Statistical support indicates that the company must convey the ideal picture of the brand to the minds of the employees at all levels through the appropriation of several processes and programs that form brand knowledge among the employees to interact positively with the customer. Whenever employees recognize and try to reinforce the desired brand image of their company, they actively participate in promoting the brand image in both on-the-job and off-the-job conditions (Natarajan, Balasubramaniam & Srinivasan, 2017). This was apparent that brand endorsement was based mostly on employees' self-developed brand knowledge of service-oriented organizations in Bangladesh. Studies have also shown that having good management support, teamwork, and initiating successful internal communication processes and procedures within the company mostly affect employees' brand knowledge, resulting in a more robust brand endorsement.

Implications

Academic Implication

This research delves into the effectiveness and impact of selected aspects of internal branding to reinforce brand knowledge with an effect on brand endorsement. Earlier studies on internal branding interventions indicated the effect on organizational brand performance, employees' attitudes, and behavior. This research contains empirical evidence that signifies the correlation between internal branding factors (i.e., management support, internal communication, and teamwork) and the knowledge of the desired brand, along with the relationship connecting brand knowledge and brand endorsement.

Internal branding activities allow us to imprint knowledge of the brand in the minds of employees. However, this conceptual proposition does not have any empirical basis. The above discourses highlight the issues by offering empirical observations highlighting the association between internal branding and brand knowledge of the organizational members. The theoretical proposal relating to the impact of brand endorsement behavior of the employees, which is denoted by encouraging and promising word-of-mouth communications (Miles & Mangold, 2004; Miles & Mangold, 2005), has been conceptualized by experiential evidence. The present research attempted to understand how employees perceive their understating of organizational brand values and their implications in their work while delivering the brand promise. The research further contributes to the concept of reciprocal interdependence underpinned discussed in the theory of social exchange (Molm, 1994), referring to the matter that when an individual, who has obtained favorable outcomes, should respond to it positively with a mouthful given the welfare that the individual received. Employees' contribution to the organization by understanding the intended brand knowledge reflects their commitment to the internal branding interventions implemented by the organization. The resultant implications of this refer to a positive impact on brand endorsement. While different reciprocation forms, such as communication, collaboration, and favorable management actions have already been revealed, their reciprocation through brand knowledge and brand endorsement is exemplified in the above discussions. As stated by Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005), the reciprocal exchange can be regarded as recurring in nature, which prioritizes the notion that the company continues to provide positive acts and benefits for employees to ensure that they are reciprocated in the long term.

Managerial Implication

Top management should empower their employees by providing brand knowledge that helps stimulate brand endorsement. The top management must concentrate on the

brand's knowledge that stimulates brand endorsement. Employees' Brand knowledge should be generated because this is a precise mechanism for good internal communication practices between and among the organization's employees. In conjunction, management support is necessary for employees as they work for the organization; this support will amplify engagement and foster loyalty to the organization they serve. Finally, teamwork can also boost brand knowledge. Internal Communication, management support, and teamwork strengthen employee brand knowledge and deepen the connection between marketing strategies and human resource management.

Furthermore, they should incorporate various internal branding mechanisms discussed in the study in hopes of improving their employees' attitudes towards the brand they serve and their distinctive character to strengthen their trust and boost their commitment. Management must be aware of the mechanism that is necessary for developing employees' brand-related understanding and skills regularly.

While this requires organizational commitment and investment, this research has shown that management support, teamwork, and effective internal communication will ensure that employees will uphold the brand. In such cases, management may use two-way interactive communication mechanisms, such as regular briefings, and group meetings, to convey the brand messages to employees. The interventions suggested above will aid in improving the potential of employees to fulfill the delivery of organizational brand promises. In addition, these measures encourage employees' brand identification and commitment to brand values. A study conducted by Punjaisri (2009) suggested when brand identification is effectively induced among the employees, management in the organization can assume their employees are more committed towards the brand promise and accordingly they endorse the brand to the internal and external stakeholders. Likewise, it can also influence employees' brand loyalty, resulting in safeguarding the organization's interest.

The factors, i.e., internal communication, management support, and teamwork successfully influence employees' brand knowledge, and the influence can be more impactful if these factors can be practiced by the protagonists. However, management could use internal branding factors (internal communication, management support, and teamwork) to directly shape the behavior of their employees to ensure that they deliver the brand endorsement as expected. As such, management needs to emphasize the internal branding practices that explicitly and implicitly contribute to employee development, resulting in building emotional ties between the organizational brand and the employees. From the context of Bangladesh, the research features the impact of employees' brand knowledge, which is important to understand the implications of brand endorsement behaviors in different service sectors.

According to Yang, Wan & Wu (2015), stressed, the top management of any company should develop employee values and attitudes by providing an internal branding mechanism; therefore, this study recommends that internal branding practices be included in corporate communication and occupational training for employees.

Consequently, management support that helps to coordinate a training program for employees that enhances internal communication within the company and promotes teamwork to enhance brand knowledge is given importance.

With brand knowledge, when employees distribute the company's message to their friends and social circles by media or other means, the company endorses the product or service of the organization. These messages are intended to raise awareness of the brand and increase sales.

Matthew Schwartz, (n.d.) outlined in his article the five advantages of internal branding that boost revenue through brand endorsement. According to Matthew Schwartz (n.d.), IB has five advantages, focuses on the mission of the company, deepens the bond between the organization and the employees, breaks down organizational silos, increases recruiting and retention, and enhances organizational leadership; undeniably, these five advantages are just some of what makes internal branding so important to non-profits. However, producing results involves a solid, ongoing commitment to making brand building a central part of a non-profit strategy (Matthew Schwartz, (n.d.)

Conclusion

This article aimed to generate quantitative insights through the conceptualization of the factors liable for building brand knowledge and brand endorsement behavior of the employees by assessing relevant scholarly studies pertinent to internal branding implications, such as internal communication, teamwork, training, management support, and leadership. The proposed conceptual framework in this study enables researchers, academics, and corporate managers to formulate how to prepare, create, and execute internal branding programs to promote and maintain the organizational brand identity by crafting the brand knowledge of the employees. With the increasing dynamism of the market and the nature of global business, managers need to embrace internal branding mechanisms for developing a dynamic approach to gain a strategic advantage instead of the usual marketing or practicing employee welfare mechanisms. Managers should encourage employees to communicate and interact internally so that the employees, which may positively affect the employee's perception of the core brand, appropriately represent the brand values and its mission. The research attempted to put forward ideas in favor of internal branding practices establishing empiric review and validation. The study envisions incorporating empirical insights related to the integrated branding mechanism in production-oriented organizations.

This research has been conducted in six different service-oriented organizations in Bangladesh in a particular geographic region. For generalizing the outcomes from this research, further studies require considering individual service sectors of

various areas of Bangladesh. Additionally, it will be beneficial to examine a model or a groundwork using CB-based CFA simulation or other analyses. Furthermore, the moderating effect of 'income' and 'experience' can also be tested to see the influence in intensifying brand knowledge and brand endorsement. To implement an effective internal branding strategy, companies should:

1. Develop a clear brand message and values that align with the company's mission, vision, and culture.
2. Communicate the brand message and values to employees through various channels, such as internal communication, training programs, and company culture.
3. Encourage employee engagement and ownership of the brand by involving them in the brand development process and recognizing their contributions to the brand.
4. Provide resources and tools to help employees deliver consistent brand experience, such as brand guidelines, training materials, and feedback mechanisms.
5. Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the internal branding strategy through employee surveys, customer feedback, and performance metrics.

In conclusion, internal branding is an essential component of a company's overall branding approach and practices. It involves creating and maintaining strong brand values and a brand-oriented culture within the organization, which is essential to augment customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and a stronger employer brand.

There are certain methodological limitations, even though the study employs a strong sampling strategy and a validated questionnaire. A purposive sample might restrict how broadly the findings can be applied, but the study's wide range of industries makes up for this disadvantage in part by offering perspectives from multiple fields. Further longitudinal research is required to investigate the long-term effects of internal branding on organizational performance, as the cross-sectional nature of the study suggests. The study offers useful quantitative information about internal branding strategies in Bangladesh's service industry, but it is devoid of qualitative information that would help us comprehend the underlying motives, attitudes, and difficulties that employees encounter. In-depth interviews or case studies that offer more context and aid in elaborating on the quantitative findings could be used in future research to supplement this study.

The findings' applicability to other service sectors outside of Bangladesh is another drawback. Although the study's emphasis on important Bangladeshi industries offers insightful information about internal branding strategies. Therefore, the findings may not be as generalizable to other areas or nations due to the unique socioeconomic and cultural setting. To better understand the universality of internal branding techniques across cultural contexts, future studies might compare these findings with those from other emerging economies.

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Conflicts of interest/Competing interests

There is no conflict of interest/Competing interests

Availability of data and material

The data that support the findings of this study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Code Availability

The results of the SEM application are presented in the tables included in the manuscript.

Authors' Contributions

Tahsina Khan: Conceptualization, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing. **Md. Khaled Amin:** Writing – Original Draft, Development or design of methodology; creation of models, Formal analysis, Writing – Review & Editing. **Rezbin Nahar:** Investigation, Writing – Review & Editing. **Thurasamy Ramayah:** Validation, Formal analysis, Writing – Review & Editing. **Farheen Hassan:** Supervision, Project administration.

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