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Exploring the Link between Corporate Branding and Employee Engagement: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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Abstract:
The idea of employee engagement is still alive after around two decades from its appearance in both management and psychology literature. Employee expectations around the world is changing and they expect a lot out of the working environment, that is, career-development, challenging work, leadership roles, global exposure and the list goes. Matching these desires calls for creation of a culture of engagement in the organization. Whereas, the concept of brands and branding, widely used as a marketing tool, are also not new to the firms. Developments in branding literature highlighted the applicability of branding from products and services to company and from company to entire corporation where involvement of all stakeholders became crucial. Branding in customer or marketing context is nothing but attracting, engaging and retaining existing and potential customers. The current study also tries to apply the same logic to existing and potential employees of an organization by reviewing the supporting literature. Thus, employee engagement in practice is seen as creating alignment with the organizations' goals and, particularly in the case of corporations, with the organization's brand. This has created a link between employee engagement and corporate branding, which argues for a closer alignment between the employees' values and those of the corporate brand. This paper therefore seeks to explore and demonstrate the link between the two concepts, i.e., corporate branding and employee engagement through developing a framework. Four bodies of literature, that is, employee engagement, corporate branding, internal branding, employer branding were considered for review. Selected papers were examined for the proposed framework in the study based on their implications that conceptualize the relationships between employee engagement and corporate branding. Furthermore, this exploratory study provides a solid platform for further research in this area.

Keywords: Employee engagement, corporate brand promise delivery, employer branding and internal branding.

1. Introduction

Successful corporate stories have been scripted on the contributions of the engaged workforce. Employees who categorized under engaged are profoundly express themselves emotionally, cognitively and physically during their role performances in the organization. They act as drivers for market, financial and overall corporate growth and success. Engaged workforce always extend themselves to give stellar performance and also strive continuously to reach extra miles and set new benchmarks. Therefore, employee engagement has received significant attention among CEO's, HR's and business leaders of many organizations across the globe. Connecting employees with the organization will be critical and also be a competitive advantage in the diversified nature of work and the workforce. In the future, the ability to make employees to stay and engage with the work and company for longer period is going to be one of the toughest organizational challenges. Owing to this, enhancing employee engagement may therefore be the 'deal-breaker' for organizations seeking sustainable corporate success.

Further, companies need to realize the change and understand the conditions that enhance the employee engagement and also create a work culture where competitors find very difficult to imitate. A central intangible asset 'that a company will not have to share with others or competitors find very difficult to imitate' is the organization's brand (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007; Keller, 2003; Olins, 2000). Therefore, organizations are using branding as a strategic tool for the business success. However, brands and branding are not new concepts to firms where most of the companies considered them as important and applying in more diverse settings (Wentz and Suchard, 1993). A strong and well-managed corporate brand qualifies as a sustainable valuable resource and also a powerful navigational tool to all stakeholders, which includes not only existing employees and shareholders, but also potential employees (Balmer and Gray, 2003).

An effective and successful corporate brand takes its starting point within the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, 2001; Balmer & Gray, 2003). That is, internal stakeholders are considered to be most valuable assets and play a major role among all stakeholders in the overall corporate branding process (Foster et. al., 2010; Harris & Chernatony, 2001). Therefore, the two stand-alone concepts from the branding literature, that is, employer branding and internal branding were identified for the study. Internal branding can be used to guide employees to act and behave in accordance with the brand and to deliver brand promises to customers (Foster et. al., 2010). Similarly, the concept of employer branding arose in the early 1990's and it is rooted in the idea that brands and human capital are one of an organization's most valuable assets to be considered. In order to attract potential employees and also to engage and retain the existing employees with the organization and corporate brand, the concept of employer branding evolved from the fields of human resource management and brand management (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

While employer branding is concerned with positioning the organization as an attractive employer in order to attract potential employees and to retain current employees, internal branding focuses on current employees' fulfillment of the brand promise proposed to external target groups. Although the objectives of employer branding distinguish with the objectives of internal branding, but both focus on the target group of employees in the overall corporate branding process. Thus, engagement in practice is seen as creating alignment with the organizations' goals and, particularly in the case of corporations, with the organization's brand.

Few studies (Ahmed et. al., 2014; Jacobs 2003; Thomson et. al., 1999) discussed the relationship between employee engagement, commitment and staff understanding with employee brand equity. Limited research has been carried in these areas and understanding the relationships among internal branding, employer branding and employee engagement are still evolving. Although internal branding and employer branding are fundamentally interrelated and has been overlooked. The current study tries to explore the link between internal branding, employer branding and employee engagement from the available literature. Further, the study demonstrates the link between employee branding practices and employee engagement through a proposed conceptual framework. The focus of this paper was service organizations and customer touch points that is front-line employees, since they act as a crucial interface between the organization and external stakeholders (King, 1991).

2. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, as a concept that has developed overtime, and identified as challenging term presented in the literature. It has been defined in many ways by academicians, consultancies and companies, so much so that the term has become ambiguous to many and difficult to identify two people defining it similarly (Macey & Schneider, 2008a). Most of the studies, conceived engagement as a psychological or affective state, or/and as a performance construct, or/and as an attitude, or/and even relate to other constructs like altruism or initiative (Macey & Schneider, 2008a). A little consensus has been reached in the engagement literature as to identify which definition is the 'best suitable' or atleast widely accepted logical and reasonable model of employee engagement (Robertson & Markwick, 2009). Therefore, the present study categorized engagement literature into four categories, in order to conceptualize the term employee engagement for the study.

The term employee engagement was first defined by Kahn in 1990 based on 'Need-Satisfaction Approach' (Maslow, 1970) and considered as the pioneer in engagement research. Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles, in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (p. 694). Engagement as a 'psychological state' and proposed that engaged individuals use all aspects of themselves to the successful completion of work activities (Kahn 1990, p.700). Most of the engagement studies, draw on the bases of Kahn's conceptualization and common theme running through all these engagement definitions.

Burnout researchers originally defined employee engagement as the opposite of burnout which falls under 'Burnout-Antithesis' literature refer engagement as both psychological and emotional state "persistent, positive affective- motivational state of fulfillment' (Maslach et.al.2001, p.417). Employee engagement has subsequently been redefined as being composed of three slightly different, but related, components: vigor, absorption, and dedication which is further refined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind (Schaufeli et. al. 2002). According to Shirom (2003), employee engagement has been conceptualized as a separate psychological state and identified flow, commitment and peak experiences as constructs of engagement. Similarly, Welfad (2008) critically examined the concept of employee engagement and provided empirical evidence regarding its validity as a work related construct.

Third category of literature focuses more on behavioural outcomes of engagement and categorized under 'Satisfaction-Engagement' literature. Employee engagement has been linked to business unit outcomes, that is, customer satisfaction, safety, turnover, productivity and profitability (Harter et. al., 2002). Similarly, several other studies explored the role of managerial self-efficacy, management style and practices affect the level of engagement, optimism and performance of teams (Arakawa & Greenberg 2007; Luthans & Peterson., 2002).

A notable benefit of employee engagement has been categorized under 'Multidimensional Literature' where engagement has been positively associated with attitudinal organizational constructs like organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction (Kamalanabhan et al., 2009; Koyuncu et al., 2006; Saks 2006); Job involvement (Rich et. al., 2010), workplace optimism (Medlin & Green, 2009), employee psychological and physical well-being (Attridge, 2009; Camkin, 2008; Kinnunen et. al., 2008; Schaufeli et. al., 2008; Koyuncu et. al., 2006). It has been negatively associated with the outcomes that organizations wish to minimize are intentions to quit (Saks, 2006; Harter et al., 2002) and absence frequency (Schaufeli et. al., 2009). Furthermore, engaged workers are more creative and more willing to expend discretionary effort than unengaged workers, which benefits organizations not only financially, but also behavioural (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Corporations are where the concept of engagement ultimately puts into action, hence, they provided great insights to engagement and how it can use in the reality. Dell (2008) refers engagement as "giving time and talent to team building". Similarly, Vodafone defines

employee engagement as "an outcome measured or seen as a result of people being committed to something or someone in the business - a very good effort that is willingly given" (Suff 2008 cited in Robertson & Markwick, 2009). Furthermore, majority works on engagement are carried by consultancies. Similar to corporate and academicians, consultants also defined engagement as a psychological aspects of employment and additionally, they highlighted the importance of organization and its role; aligning individual and team performances with organizational objectives and achievements; creating the cultures that value, respect and encourage staff and their needs (CIPD, 2007; Baumark & Marusaz, 2004). They defined engagement as a "state of mind where people involve themselves fully and have considerable energy and passion for their work and an intellectual and emotional connection to their work and firm" (Robertson & Markwick, 2009; Conference Board, 2006; Baumruk & Marusarz, 2004; Blizzard, 2004; Towers Perrin, 2003).

Therefore, from the literature, study identified the notion of employee engagement and its associated behaviors in an organization depends on individual identification and identities (who am I?), Internalization (what do I believe?), psychological ownership (is it mine?) and commitment (will I stay?). These four elements of individual-organizational relationships have been the subject of intense research and speculation, and are at the core of modern human resource management. Firstly, Social Identity Theory (SIT) is the base for understanding the link between individual identity and identification with the organizations which answers the question 'who am I?' .This helps in forecasting whether someone will fit the organization and be able to become an effective performer (Ashforth & Mael 1989). Secondly, organizations are striving for employees to internalize (what do I believe?) the organization's identity (Pierce et al.'s 2001; Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth 1992) which results in building pride in membership, positive inclinations to the organization and its leadership (Reade 2001), as well as behaviors such as remaining with the organizations and performing beyond contract. Thirdly, the concept of psychological ownership is extremely important and stated as "possession of the organization, job or area of work (is it mine?) (Pierce et al., 2001, p. 299) which leads to 'promotion of' or 'resistance to' change and integration of employees with work. Finally, the core proposition of organizational commitment (will I stay?) is to build the desire to remain with the organization by developing the sense of belongingness, security, strong beliefs and values towards the job and organization.

Bringing them altogether (identification, internalization, ownership and commitment) are four components where employers are looking for. These are importantly competent and relevant behaviors that translate these emotions, attitudes and understandings into practice, i.e. better customer satisfaction, increased efforts and sharing knowledge. Practitioners and HR professionals have identified its importance and begun to use employee engagement as a way of adapting the psychological concepts to the practical concerns of aligning HR with the business strategy (Martin & Hetrick 2007). Therefore, emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions reflect on the definition of employee engagement considered in the present study as "it is the degree to which an employee is emotionally bonded to his/her organizations and its values; passionate about his/her work; and a desire to stay with the company for long time".

3. Corporate Branding

Brands have changed over the years, initially, they were a means of products which are created and managed exclusively by marketers. Later, as products' lifecycles shortened, organizations shifted towards branding of corporations rather than its products in order to achieve competitive advantage and at the same time reduces promotion costs. Therefore, the notion of corporate branding has progressively risen and became one of the "today's most fashionable management fashions" (Morsing 2006: 97). Schultz et al. (2005) discuss corporate branding as having had two waves so far and in a way to shift towards third wave. The first wave took shape in the mid 1990's and ended up diving corporate branding into two camps where "one camp was characterized by a product driven tactical and visual focus, while the other camp emphasized corporate branding as a strategic and integrated field" (Schultz et al., 2005, p.10). The first perception stated dominating academic and ended up resulting in the second wave of corporate branding, which sees corporate branding, as a dynamic "process through which an organization can continually work out its purpose – a purpose that is meaningful to people inside and outside the organization (Schultz et al., 2005, p.16).
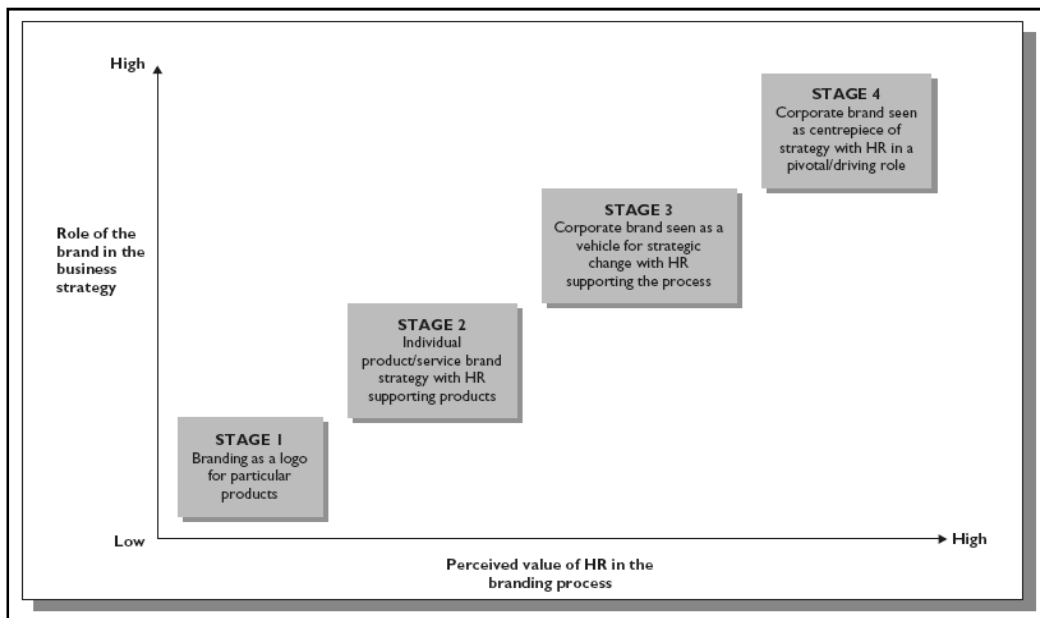
Figure 1: Stages on the road to branding
Source: Martin & Hetrick, 2012

In a broader way, corporate branding "a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining favorable images and consequently a favorable reputation of the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders by managing behavior, communication and symbolism" (Einwiller &Will 2002). Most importantly the term 'behavior' refers to the staff behavior in delivering the corporate brand promise. Further, claims that the employees of an organization are the key to build an organization's corporate brand (Foster et. al., 2010). Moreover, employees play a key role in constructing strong corporate brands and managers should work to achieve a united view of the brand among all internal stakeholders (Harris & de Chernatony 2001). Therefore, communication capabilities and coordination among staff are considered as important internal resources in the corporate branding process so that employees will experience a coherent brand identity. Internal sharing of values and beliefs among employees of the organization are also part of the brand building process, especially organizations offer services to customers (Gronroos, 2007; Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

Employees act as the interface between the organization and customers, especially with the service brands delivering of brand promises through personal interactions between customer-facing staff and customers (de Chernatony et. al., 2003; King 1991). Therefore, employees are the key elements of building an organization's corporate brand (King 1991) as it requires the total commitment of all existing employees within an organization to deliver the brand promise to external stakeholders (Balmer, 2001b). The corporate brand promise is drawn from the understanding of the corporate identity and its culture which represents the organizations ethos, aims and values (Foster et al 2010). The importance of employees in the corporate branding literature has been exclusively highlighted and stated that "employees have the potential to make or break the corporate brand" (Foster et. al., 2010; Hatch & Schultz 2001; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Ind 1998 p.324). Employee behaviours have greater influence on how external stakeholders perceive the corporate brand and make sense of its identity and image (Anixter 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2001). Furthermore, "the heart of corporate branding is the idea of nurturing existing employees as well as attracting and recruiting the right candidates in the first instance" (Foster et. al., 2010)

Internal branding and employer branding are two standalone concepts identified in the branding literature to address the issues related to existing and potential employees. The primary focus of employer branding is how an organization communicates its brand promise externally to potential employees rather than internal staff; similarly internal branding focus on existing employees and fails to address the issues related to potential employees (Davies 2008; Mosley 2007; Knox & Freeman 2006; Foster & Harris 2005; Lloyd 2002; Pelled et al., 1999; Appelbaum et. al., 1998). Therefore, aligning the internal branding and employer branding with the corporate branding process benefits the organization in various ways (Foster et. al., 2010).

4. Corporate Branding and Internal Branding
The terms corporate branding, internal branding and employer branding has been highlighted in both branding and service literature. Corporate branding is the promise between an organization and its stakeholders and it includes all the attributes of the company's identity (Foster et.al., 2010), focuses on all stakeholder groups. Internal branding on one hand shifts the focus of a specific stakeholder group, that is, the existing employees. Its aim is to teach and communicate the brand values to employees, in order to ensure they live up to the promises that brand should deliver to its external constituents (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Punjaisri et al., 2009; Foster et. al., 2010). Employer branding on other hand, refers to "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187).

Literature highlighted the link between corporate branding and internal branding, however, there are lack of models explaining the synergy between the two concepts (Foster et. al., 2010). It is further stated that corporate branding is a promise to the stakeholder groups and holds the organizations' identity. In order to deliver the corporate promise clearly to the external stakeholders, the message need to be communicated internally to ensure consistent brand deliver throughout the corporation. Therefore, internal branding has been found to be an effective tool in securing the standards of a corporate. Furthermore, internal branding practices are used to educate and communicate the existing employees about the corporate brand in order to increase the employees' emotional and intellectual engagement with the brand (de chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001). According to Gronroos (2007), it is about shaping the perceptions of employees about the organization's brand, so that a concordat between internal and external values can be created.

The role of customer facing staff in service organizations is more, therefore, effective implementation of internal branding activities could help employees feel comfortable with the brand and it becomes easier for them to act naturally in the service environment during each encounter (Schlage et. al., 2011). Internal branding ensures that existing employees communicate the 'espoused brand value', which set customers' expectations about the company into action during the delivery of the corporate brand promise (King & Grace, 2008; Manhert & Torres, 2007; de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006; Aurand et. al., 2005; Boone, 2000). Therefore, it is clear that the role of existing employees and internal branding activities are vital in achieving overall corporate brand consistency and also identified that an internal branding activities should be implemented and managed together with a corporate branding strategy (Foster et. al., 2010).

5. Corporate Branding and Employer Branding
While the concept of corporate branding not only focuses in attracting and retaining customers, also take cares in retaining existing employees as well as attracting potential employees into the organization (Foster et. al., 2010). However, internal branding targets only on existing employees and fails in addressing the importance of recruiting potential talents whose values fit with an organization (Hatch& Schultz 2003; Ind 1998). Therefore, study adopted the central idea of 'employer branding' , that is, differentiate the firm itself from the competing firm from attracting potential talents (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). Employer branding has a capability of creating a unique employment experience by managing consistent company's image among existing and potential employees. That is, it focuses on rewards and experiences provided to current employees, which in turn communicated to potential hires at the time of receiving services (Martin & Beaumont, 2003). Employer branding encompasses the firm's policies, values, systems and behaviors toward the objectives of attracting, motivating and retaining the organization's existing and potential employees (Dell & Ainspan, 2001). Therefore, aligning corporate branding and employer branding provides clarification and management of an organization's tangible and intangible employment offerings with the benefit of increasing applicant quantity and quality (Collins & Han 2004) and organization performance (Fulmer et al., 2003).

6. Internal Branding and Employer Branding
The alignment of internal branding and employer branding increases the organization performance and also strengthens the corporate brand. The employer branding targets to convince the potential recruits whereas internal branding focuses on existing employees due to the fact that a strong employer brand contributes to favorable employee attitudes, which leads to the interactive marketing experience (Schlager et. al., 2010; Foster et. al., 2010). Similar to the corporate brand, the employer brand also delivers the promise between a company and a stakeholder group. Therefore, the emotional and rational benefits of employer brand are in line with the existing and potential employees expectations of the employer brand (Foster et. al., 2010).

Studies also suggested that potential employees compare their requirements, personality and values to the company to find a person-organization fit and it is similar to the potential customer behaviour which is based on an advertisement or some external brand-related communication practices. Further, it is also understood from the branding literature that potential aspirants were more attracted through interactions with the existing employees at the time of service encounters rather than company's controlled recruitment advertisements and activities. According to Punjaisri et. al., (2008), internal branding practice effects on attitudes and behaviours of employees towards customer. That is, the word of mouth by the current employees plays a crucial role in creating a positive image externally among customers and other stakeholders. Therefore, the employer brand and corporate brand need a common strategy that involves the current employees, so that the two concepts do not affect each other negatively (Ibid).

7. Aligning Internal Branding and Employer Branding with Corporate Branding
Corporate branding is an overall theoretical discipline that is about positioning the organization as a whole that involves all stakeholders. The concepts of product branding, employer and internal branding operates within the corporate branding context based on the target audience. When an organization is branded as a great place to work shall generate a positive perception of the organization as a whole and contribute to the total brand value. From the literature, it is suggested that there is a clear link exists between corporate branding, internal branding and employer branding (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; Foster et. al's., 2010). Internal branding and employer branding can be regarded as developments or extensions of corporate branding and their alignment may ensure effective corporate brand management.

Moreover, the corporate brand promise is derived from the organization identity and culture, these must act as a guide to both internal branding and employer branding (Vallaster and de Chernatony 2006; Aurand et. al.'s 2005; Thomson et al.'s 1999). Employer brands should fit the identity, values and culture of an organization (Maxwell and Knox, 2009). If the rational and emotional benefits of corporate brand and employer brand goes hand in hand so that identity, values and culture of the organization positively affect the delivering of contract to internal stakeholders, and from them to external stakeholders (Foster et. al's., 2010).To establish a strong

corporate brands, there must be link between identity and image. In order to assure that there is a connection between identity and image, the employees must clearly understand the brand values and must able to deliver them when interacted with external stakeholders (Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2009; Maxwell and Knox, 2009; Foster et. al's., 2010). Furthermore, alignment even effects on the role of HR positively, that is, involving HR with all branding activities develops closer relationships with other departments, especially with the marketing and communication department to recruit, train and develop employees so that they connect with the corporate brand (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Moroko and Uncles, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2008, 2009; Edwards, 2010). Similarly, alignment of employer branding and internal branding with the corporate branding also identified the importance of internal communication system, in order to avoid information overload and mislead within the organization (Mosley 2007). Thus, corporate branding can be defined in the study as
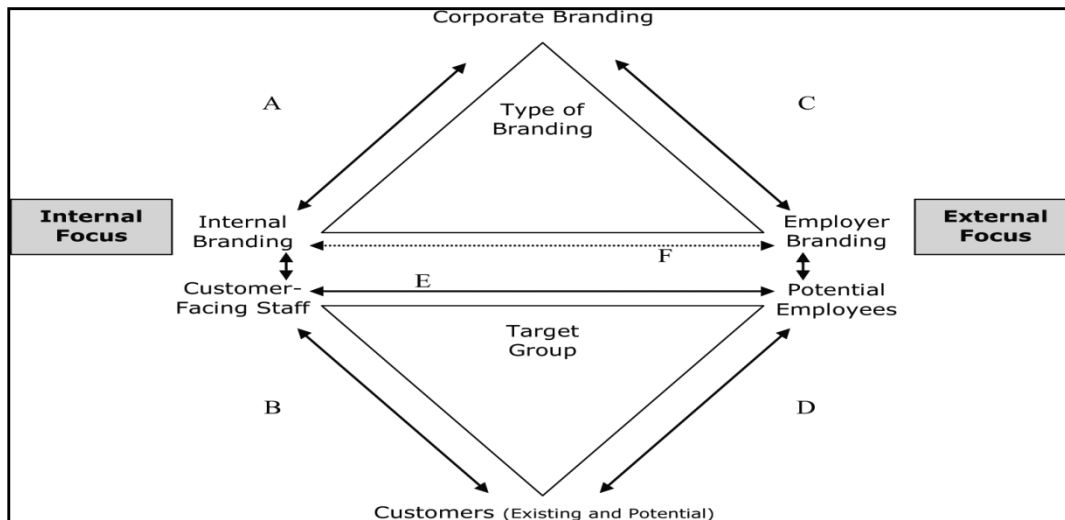

Figure 2: The relationship between internal, employer and corporate branding
Source: Foster et. al., 2010, p. 405

As the process of creating, nurturing, and sustaining a mutually rewarded relationship between employee and employer by clearly defining and communicating the brand values internally and externally, to encourage employee identification with the corporate identity and enhance commitment, enthusiasm and consistent staff behavior in delivering the core values and organizational objectives.

8. Conceptualizing the Link between Internal Branding, Employer Branding and Employee Engagement
Corporate branding has an ability to look inwards to engage the hearts and minds of employees. Marketing scholars increasingly acknowledge that corporate branding depends on the hearts and minds of employees, since much of the value of corporate brands is delivered through people; identified with the brand and align their efforts behind the brand (Martin & Hetrick 2007). The premise is that both internal branding and employer branding activities communicate and educate employees about the brand values to enhance their intellectual and emotional engagement with the brand (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn 2001; Thomson et. al., 1999).
Employee engagement literature argued that engaged employees are the one who delivers better service to customers and also stated "performance by engaged employees is linked with customer experience" which is an ultimate decider of business success (Rae & Waterson, 2005; Right Management, 2006). Similarly, branding literature viewed that effective implementation of internal branding activities makes organizations' internal stakeholders to "live the brand" before presenting it to the customers. That is, employees who understand the brand values are identified as "engaged employees" who ultimately "live the brand" and conveys the brand promises clearly to external stakeholders (Ahmed et. al., 2014). Therefore, it is understood that the employees' own values as well as organizations' values are also important to take into consideration in efforts of corporate branding (Scheys & Baert, 2007; Punjaisri et. al., 2009). According to Javnakar (2004), internal branding involves communication and training of the values of the corporate brand to the employees within an organization with the goal that their perceived image of the corporate brand is in line with the organizations' long term objectives. Therefore, internal branding in its way engaging employees to live the brand and contributing in corporate brand building.
Both internal branding and employer branding has its own purpose of existence in the branding literature. Literature indicates that these concepts having some basic idea, either the need for employees to "engage and live the brand" or "corporate image as perceived by its associates and potential hires" (Leberecht, 2004). An outcome of an employer brand is to create loyalty among employees (Davies 2008; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employees creates reciprocal obligations at the time of recruitment, that is, both the employees and the brand have obligations to fulfill; if this kind of psychological contract is fulfilled it is more likely that employees will be loyal and engaged (Moroko & Uncles 2008). Employer branding generates expectations about the workplace. Moreover, it is not about writing a contract with void promises for the potential hire, it is important to live up to its promises to reach new employees'

expectations which lead to productive and loyal future employees (Priyadarshi 2011; Foster et. al., 2010; Rosethomet et. al., 2009; Gaddam 2008).

Drawing upon social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael 1989), unique and distinctive brand values can also provide a focal point to help employees identify with the organization; and internal branding acts as a tool for enhancing employee's identification with the organization, whereas employer branding creates employee loyalty the corporate brand by impacting the culture and identity of the organization. Furthermore, the organizational identification theory suggests that employees who identify with the organization will endeavor to accomplish the company's strategic interest (Dutton et. al., 1994; Brown & Williams 1984; Cheney 1983) and similarly, the organization commitment theory suggests that employees are more likely to be emotionally attached to an organization if they accept the values of the brand (Cook & Wall 1980).

Referring to the person-organization fit concept, study has found that potential applicants compare their needs, personalities and values to an employer brand image, which is formulated based on the organization's intent statement to attract prospective employees (Judge & Cable 1997; Cable & Judge 1996; Byrne & Neuman 1992). When an employer fails to deliver their employer brand promise to new staff and new recruits look to validate their employment decision, it is likely that the post-entry performance of employees will be negatively affected and staff turnover will increase (Bachaus & Tikoo 2004; Schein 1985). This further stresses the importance of providing accurate brand messages about the organization's culture, identity and values to potential applicants and also to existing employees so as to form a realistic, psychological contract that can and will be reflected by their employment as well as working experience.

In summary, corporate branding is a process of "aligning an organization around a brand" and allows organizations to be both employee focus as well as customer focus. That is, effective implementation of internal and employer branding practices helps in engaging the current employees towards the job and organization. Furthermore, engaged employees would like to live and breathe the organization's brand values.
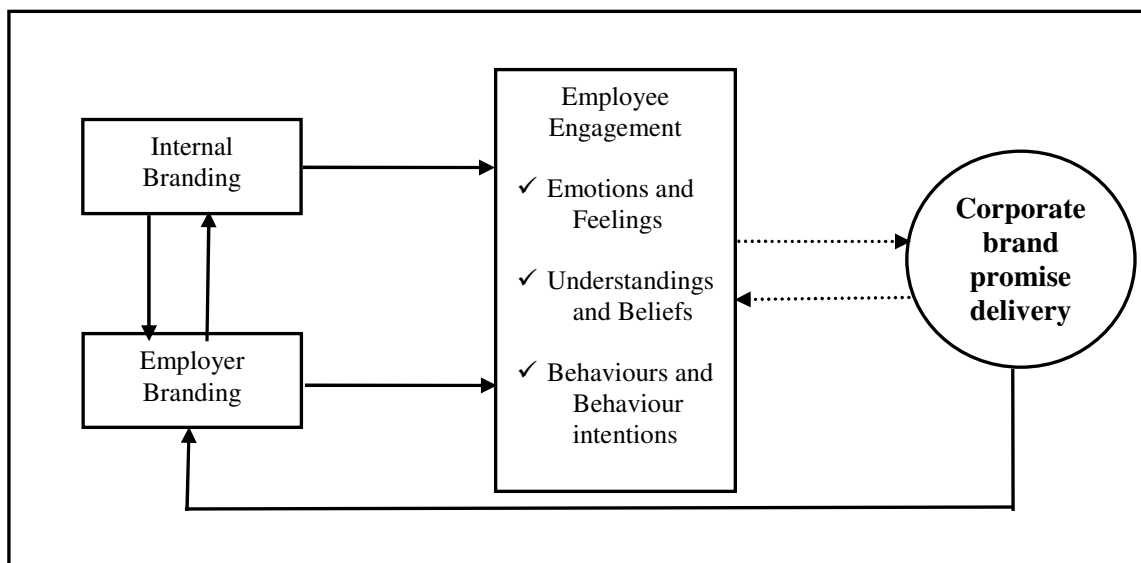

Figure 3: Relationship between employee engagement and corporate branding
Source: Compiled by author

By living the brand, the brand values might be visible at all touch-points and can easily deliver the brand promise clearly to the external environment. Therefore, a strong corporate image has been developed in the minds of external stakeholders that ultimately become 'employer of choice' for potential aspirants as well as 'best workplace' for the existing employees and the process continues.

9. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

This paper has bought to light the synergy that exists between two interdisciplinary concepts, i.e., corporate branding and employee engagement. Based on the insights drawn from the literature, this paper proposed a conceptual framework as shown in the figure 3. This framework provides a useful beginning to both employee engagement and corporate branding scholars to appreciate the link between internal branding and employer branding concepts, and to acknowledge the importance of existing and potential employees in the overall corporate success. This paper has emphasized the importance of employee engagement as 'deal-breaker' for organizations seeking sustainable corporate success.

The framework shows that overall corporate branding and employee engagement concerns "promise management", where managing brand promise to all stakeholders requires numerous practices and strategies. The present study considers the internal stakeholder role in delivering the brand promise to existing and potential customers. Aligning internal branding and employer branding supports brand promise delivery from different perspectives. As an organization's existing and potential customers tend to interact with its customer-facing staff, they may form a perception of the organization as a place to work, i.e. the employer brand based on these interactions,

which may ultimately persuade them to join/not join the organization. Once a new employee, they may then become customer facing staff and exposed to internal branding activities which may further influence on their behavior towards the job and organization. Similarly, these behaviors may further strengthen the employees' intentions to stay or quit with the job and organization. It is also implicit in the model that the employer and internal branding activities should precisely and consistently articulate what the organization, based on its culture and values, can offer its employees and customers (potential and existing), therefore highlighting the need for an integrative framework across marketing and human resources. This will ensure that the corporate brand provides consistent experiences at every touch point, which impacts on the engagement levels of employees in the organization.

The framework also indicates where the gap exists in the branding and employee engagement literature as indicated by dotted line in figure 2 which is the drawback thus far to identify the literature which directly links employee engagement and corporate branding. Furthermore, literature also fails to show the exact link between internal branding and employer branding and this can also be considered as gap for further research. Since, the main aim of this study is to explore the relationship between corporate branding and employee engagement, this study attempted to address this gap by proposing the closer conceptual links should be between corporate branding and employee engagement and have indicated (internal branding and employer branding concepts) where these links might occur. However, a limitation of what is present in the study draws upon the limited amount of conceptual and empirical works from internal branding, employer branding, and employee brand equity and engagement literature. Empirical and conceptual studies in particular to the service environment, which would enable researchers to explore the activities of both HR and marketing functions, would further our understanding of how corporate branding and employee engagement might link to enhance the corporate brand management and also the employee behaviors i.e., remaining with the organizations and performing beyond contract; and further how these two concepts could be better aligned.

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