How Internal Branding Shapes Organisational Image: The Mediating Role of Brand Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to determine the factors that influence internal branding in the promotion of the image of the organisation. The study explored how employees perceived internal branding and how it related to the organisation's image, resulting in the enhancement and positivity of the image of an organisation. This study used a relevant theory and model, namely, Organisation Image Management Theory and an Associative Network Model. This study collected data from 282 employees of a chosen organisation utilising cross-sectional data and quantitative research methodologies. The findings of this study indicate that internal branding can enhance the organisation's image. The key elements of hiring and retention, reward and recognition, internal communication, and identity congruence all have a big influence on improving the organisation 's image. The study also revealed that the indirect effect of brand knowledge mediates the relationship of internal branding and organisational image. This study will be very useful for employers to understand the value of organisational image in engaging the workforce effectively. This study yields some important and useful suggestions for employers to engage and retain their workforce in the present dynamic work environment. Future researchers are recommended to implement mixed research methods and expand the scope of the study to increase data collection and enhance the accuracy of the study results.

Keywords: Organisation Image, Internal Branding, Hiring and Retention, Reward and Recognition, Internal Communication, Identity Congruence

INTRODUCTION

Image may be referred to as a kind of characteristic of a person or object. To be more explicit, it refers to the individual perception when dealing with a thought pattern and concerns associated with the subjects (Chajet & Shachtman, 1991). As noted by Sallam (2016) and Douglas et al. (2001) in earlier research, image is a separate entity that is extremely important for an organisation's stature because it can impact long-term goals and serve as a source of information for the organisation through direct observation, which can generate attitudes and beliefs about the organisation. According to Hatch and Schultz (2008), a positive image can have an impact on attracting potential customers and at the same time ensuring the existing customers remain loyal in purchasing goods and services provided by the organisation. According to Corte et al. (2011), it can also have a positive impact on the organisation's internal operations by drawing in qualified candidates who share the organisation's values in fulfilling branding promises. This could also give the company a competitive edge that sets it apart from its competitors (Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

Traditionally the organisation puts a lot of effort into their external branding by targeting the customer to evaluate the image of the organisation, and this is done by instilling the image in their mind (Cable & Graham, 2000). However, this method of evaluation has shifted to an internal-focused mechanism where the organisation starts to target the employees instead as the audience for brand image initiatives (Balmer & Greyser 2006). By utilising the internal branding, Dechawatanapaisal (2017) agreed that it could support the long-run success of an organisation, as the employees themselves are the ones who act as a medium to deliver the organisation's brand promises. Effective internal branding can ensure the organisation recruits the right person in the first place (Cable

& Graham, 2000). Besides that, DeConinck and Johnson (2009) also believed that through the existence of a reward system, it can improve morale, build trust, and create a good image internally.

In the Malaysian context, in alignment with prior studies on organisational image, the former prime minister, Tun Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, introduced the GLC Transformation Program to improve the 10-year performance of the GLCs, of which one of the highlighted pillars is to enhance better job prospects, increase performance management, offer more competitive compensation, and improve empowerment, value creation, and attractive and better selection processes (Khazanah, 2015). The priority of this program is to improve the organisation's competitiveness and performance. The fundamental goal of this transformation is to strengthen the organisation 's structure over time, gaining the trust of stakeholders and reaping both immediate and long-term advantages (Khazanah, 2015). As a result, internal branding elements are found and examined in this study. The study's conclusions might help an organisation's management enhance its image and plan strategies for increasing its value.

Objectives Of Current Study

Therefore, the study aims: (i) To determine the level of organisation image from employees' perspective; (ii) To identify the relationship between internal branding elements (hiring and retention; rewards and recognition; internal communication and identity congruence) in enhancing image; (iii) To identify brand knowledge and mediate the relationship between hiring and retention, rewards and recognition, internal communication, and identity congruence and organisation image; and (iv) To examine the most influential factors between hiring and retention, rewards and recognition, internal communication, and identity congruence in determining organisation image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisation Image

In general, organisational image is a concept that serves as a bridge between public relations, corporate branding, organisational studies, organisational communication, and any other elements that are based on the researcher's findings from various schools of interest. However, connecting the image with their audiences is crucial (Frandsen, 2017). Previous research states that when an organisation invests in its image, it allows them to receive many benefits until, at one point, it could help the company pull itself out of a market crisis (Coombs, 2004). Corte *et al.* (2011) also mentioned the importance of understanding the needs and expectations of various groups to create a favourable image, which can lead to attracting good employees, encouraging investment from stakeholders, and avoiding any controversy or complaints. Fatt *et al.* (2000) highlighted that effective internal dimension could positively affect the organisation image. A positive image could make the employees feel proud of belonging to the organisation and at the same time maintain their motivation while reducing anxiety from worrying about the organisation's performance or the possibility of layoffs by the company (Boxall & Purcel, 2003). According to Maxwell and Knox (2009), when an organisation is clear about its image, it can grant them additional privileges because it is difficult to imitate the value. It also creates obligations to meet the demands of external stakeholders for quality, ethics, and profitability as well as the personal standards set by employees.

Internal Branding

Internal branding is carried out as an attempt to achieve consistency with the external brand by making employees understand the organisational goal and objectives (Lee *et al.,* 2014). It must be aligned since the external stakeholders are confronted with the promises propagated by the employees of the company, whilst the employees, on the other hand, hear the external voices in return (Rane, 2011). By having effective internal branding, it can ensure that the employees deliver the service in a good manner aligned with the company's values (Cable & Graham, 2000). Anisimova and Mavondo (2010) added that employees can stay relevant and rational by working closely with the brand value to improve employees' experience. Therefore, in this study it further discusses on the elements of internal branding which can enhance the organisation image:

Hiring and Retention

According to Lievens and Highhouse, (2003), it is found that through a systematic hiring and retention system, it can positively influence the organisation's image especially when related to potential job applicants' intention to apply for a job in the organisation. Rynes' (1991) added that the image of the organisation is found to be connected with employees' sense of self-awareness, where if the organisation receives high and positive regard from others, it could affect the employees' satisfaction, resulting in lower turnover rates (Lyons & Marler, 2011), thereby making them feel proud to belong to the organisation (Ahmad & Daud., 2016). Chhabra and Sharma (2011) stated that if the organisation has a poor image, it could limit the attractiveness value and portray the failure of the organisation in creating a systematic recruitment process that matches the organisation's values.

Reward and Recognition

Hussain *et al.* (2019) states that an organisation image can be positively affected when the organisation is able to attract and retain the employees, as shown through the recognition and rewards systems strategized by them. Ali and Akram (2012) added that in order to motivate the employees to contribute toward enhancing the organisation, high and strategic reward systems are needed. Gale (2002) stated that through an equitable and just rewards system, it could boost employee confidence and trust, which would positively affect the organisation's image since the employees would be motivated to do well. Credible workers might represent or reflect corporate discipline and a favourable image (Dewhurst et al., 2009). Additionally, Mcrill (2011) noted that when employees feel valued by the company, they are more likely to express this sentiment both internally and externally, which might foster a favourable public image of the company.

Internal Communication

Szymańska (2004) mentioned that the efficiency of the whole organisation can positively be influenced if the internal communication is being managed appropriately. Rogala and Kaniewska-Sęba (2013) added that if the organisation image is positive, employees can identify themselves with the company eagerly. This shows that they are satisfied with the job and become more effective because they are certain about the uniqueness of the image. Internal communication instruments should ensure efficient transfer of information concerning all aspects of organisational function to the employees (Mishra, 2013). Coombs (2004) mentioned that a strong image can be created through good and strategically designed communication programs. Overall, internal communication is the most appropriate medium in helping to shape the organisation's image (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005).

Identity Congruence

Simoes *et al.* (2005) suggested that brand identity management could positively impact the image of the organisation. According to Scott and Lane (2000), organisations that have a clear sense of purpose in ensuring everyone understands the image can influence a strong sense of belonging amongst the employees. In addition, the management should focus on creating a consistent identity adaptation instead of creating major organisational change that would be unnecessary in creating institutional characteristics (Balmer, 2008). Birkight and Stadler (1986) added that the organisation's identity can be communicated through organisational actions where stakeholders are able to judge the actions conducted by the employees when dealing with them. If they are treated poorly, it would negatively affect the organisation's image overall. Through positive attitude, it can increase favourable image of the organisation in the stakeholders' perspective (Dacin & Brown, 2002).

Brand Knowledge

This study takes brand knowledge into account as the mediator between internal branding and organisational image. Sufficient brand knowledge among the employees is crucial to ensure employees can translate the brand promise into brand reality, as mentioned by King and Grace (2009). Sokro (2012) stated that in order for an organisation to become a top choice for top talents looking for new jobs, brand knowledge is vital in influencing and attracting people, particularly when weighing a job offer. The employees also should have knowledge of the benefits and rewards offered by the organisation to motivate them in enhancing the performance and value of the organisation through their contribution (Ali & Akram, 2012). Good knowledge sharing on effective

internal communication can uphold the organisation image and improve the trust level between workers and management that exists in the organisation (Zeffane *et al.,* 2011). Piehler *et al.* (2015) also agreed that employees who have knowledge of the identity and values reflected from the brand perform in a consistent manner.
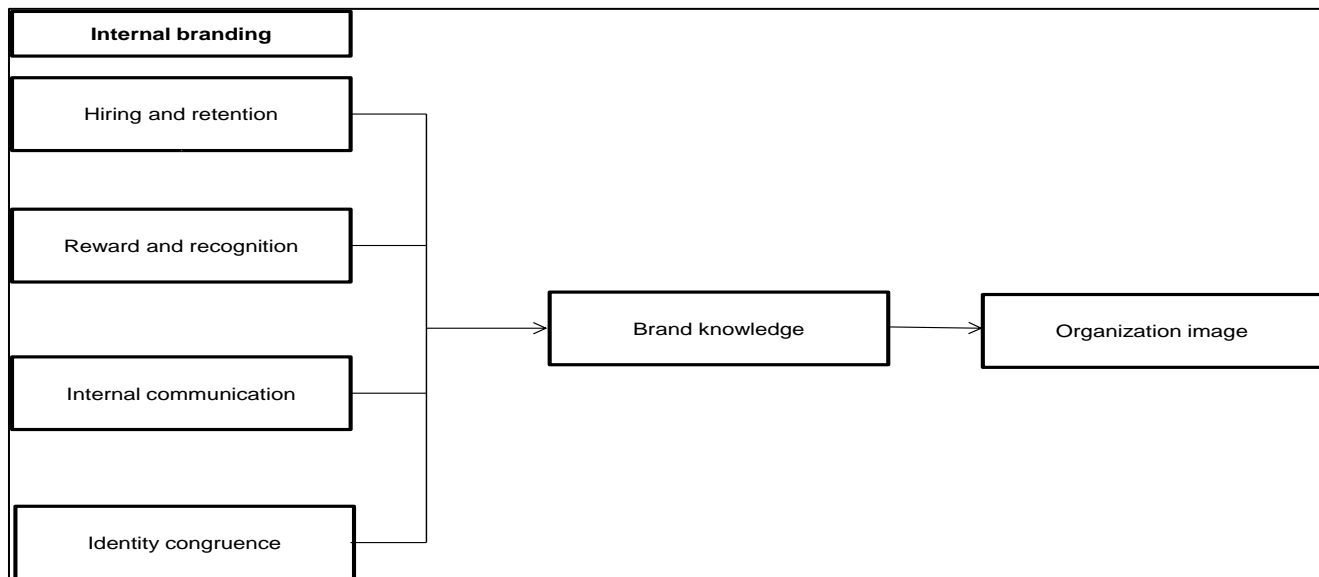
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of Organisations Image

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach to fulfil the research objectives. Data for this study was directly collected from one Public Listed Company (PLCs) involving 13 departments ranging from trainee to upper rank to represent the population for this study. The total population that has been identified in this organisation is 314, according to the official record. To reach the minimum sample size, this study has used stratified random sampling to ensure that every element has a chance of being selected, and this technique also usually has been used in organisational and societal studies where the structure exists. There were 282 completed questionnaires, and all are useable.

The independent and dependent variables were measured by using an interval scale. Items for organisational image were adopted and adapted from the Biraghi and Gambetti (2013); Villanova *et al.* (2000); Coombs and Holiday (2006); and Maxwell and Knox (2009). Items for hiring and retention were adopted from Vijayalakshmi and Uthayasuriyan (2015), Ahmad and Daud (2016), and Schiemann (2011). Items for reward and recognition were adopted and adapted from DeConinck and Johnson (2009), and Gostick and Elton (2007). Items for internal communication were adopted and adapted from Zeffane *et al.* (2011), and Lings (2004). Meanwhile, items for identity congruence were adopted and adapted from Kapferer (2012) and Arendt and Brettel (2010). Items for brand knowledge were adopted and adapted from Xiong *et al.* (2013) and King and So (2015).

Table 1*: Structure of questionnaires*

Section	Variables	No. of Items	Reference
Section A	Demographic Profile	8	
Section B	Organisational Image	9	Biraghi & Gambetti (2013); Villanova *et al.* (2000); Coombs & Holladay (2006); Maxwell & Knox (2009).

Section C	Hiring and Retention	9	Vijayalakshmi & Uthayasuriyan (2015); Ahmad & Daud (2016); and Schiemann (2011)
Section D	Reward and Recognition	9	DeConinck & Johnson (2009); and Gweostick & Elton (2007)
Section E	Internal Communication	9	Zeffane *et al.* (2011); and Lings (2004)
Section F	Identity Congruence	9	Kapferer (2012); and Arendt & Brettel (2010)
Section G	Brand Knowledge	9	Xiong *et al.* (2013); and King & So (2015).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of Respondent

Table 2: Analysis of Demographic of Respondent (n=282)

Items	Sub-Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	114	40.4
	Female	168	59.6
Age	21-29 years old	123	43.6
	20-39 years old	110	39
	40-49 years old	41	14.5
	50-59 years old	8	2.8
Position	Trainee	42	14.9
	Officer	110	39
	Receptionist	17	6
	Executive	76	27
	Senior Executive	21	7.4
	Manager	13	4.6
	Senior Manager	2	0.7
	Others	1	0.4
Length of Services	Less than 1 year	90	31.9
	1-5 years	101	35.8
	6-10 years	62	22

	11-15 years	26	9.2
	15 years and above	3	1.1
Education	SPM	9	3.2
	Diploma	119	42.2
	Degree	110	39
	Master	44	15.6
	Doctorate	0	0
Department	Group Legal and Compliance Department	9	3.2
	Group Internal Audit, Risk Management and Identity Governance	45	16
	Group Finance	31	11
	Group Human Capital Management	19	6.7
	Heavy Industries	23	8.2
	Plantation	10	3.5
	Properties	65	23
	Group Secretarial	10	3.5
	Global Risk Solution	9	3.2
	Group Corporate Communication	10	3.5
	Group IT	14	5
	Corporate Planning	20	7.1
	Property Management	17	6.0
How do you get information in the company?	Team meeting	83	29.4
	Mails	74	26.2
	Poster	19	6.7
	Newsletter	23	8.2
	Colleague	52	18.4
	Intranet	31	11.1
	Not at all familiar	6	2.1

How well do you know about the company image?	Slightly familiar	70	24.8
	Moderately familiar	117	41.5
	Very familiar	86	30.5
	Extremely familiar	3	1.1

Based on Table 2 above, 282 feedbacks were collected, in which the male and female respondents' profiles were 40.4% (114) and 59.6% (168), respectively. Majority of the respondents' age are between 21 to 29 (42.6%, 123). The majority of the respondents are in officer or non-executive positions, which is 39%, equal to 110 respondents. About 35.8% of the respondents have the length of service around 1 to 5 years in the organisation. Furthermore, about 42.2% respondents are diploma holder. About 16% of the respondents' feedback was collected from Group Internal Audit, Risk Management and Identity Governance. 83 respondents have agreed that most of the information they received regarding the companies was through team meetings. About 41.5% of the respondents has moderately familiar with the company image.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study are also discussed based on the objective of the paper. There are four (4) highlighted objectives as below:

Table 3: Mean Score Intepretation

Mean score	Interpretation
4.21–5.00	Very high
3.21–4.20	High
2.61–3.20	Medium
1.81–2.60	Low
1.00–1.80	Very low

Source: Moidunny (2009)

Table 4**:** Level of Organisation Image (n=282)

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
1. I know my organisation's image very well	3.627	.745	High
2. I am happy to recommend others	3.273	.954	High
3. I know my organisation is constantly improving over time	3.376	.706	High
4. Personally, I consider my organisation well-known	3.507	.774	High
5. I believe my company has its own personalities	3.500	.702	High
6. I have confidence with the organisation	3.596	.809	High

7. I am satisfied with the organisation	3.372	.777	High
8. The organisation has a clear view of its image	3.372	.754	High
9. This organisation is considered one of the best	3.443	.658	High
Overall Organisation image	3.4340	.621	High

Table 5: The Findings of Correlation (n=282)

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Organisational Image	3.434	.621	1				
(2) Hiring and Retention	3.593	.567	.351**	1			
(3) Reward and Recognition	3.472	.642	.296**	.361**	1		
(4) Internal Communication	3.614	.635	.245**	.387**	.582**	1	
(5) Identity Congruence	3.169	.593	.237**	.087	.234**	.168**	.237**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: The Mediation Table: Indirect effect(s) of X on Y

Mediating				
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Hiring and Retention	.1508	.0305	.0951	.2132
Reward and Recognition	.2224	.0341	.1598	.2929
Internal Communication	.1529	.0425	.0782	.2448
Identity Congruence	.0313	.0165	-.0014	.0640

The Level of Organisation Image

The information from Table 4 shows the contributing elements at a high level and provides the mean and SD for each factor (Moidunny, 2009) that affects organisational image. The overview elements influencing their ability were at the high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.4340), and the mean and SD were divided into nine categories determining organisational image. According to Table 4, the most significant factor influencing the organisational image ($\bar{x}$ = 3.627), which was in the first range, was "I know my organisation's image very well" (item 1). However, item 2 (I am happy to recommend others) was in the ninth range and had the lowest level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.273). Regarding the other ranges of the elements influencing the organisational image, item 6, "I have confidence in the organisation" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.596), was found to be the second range. Next, item 4, "Personally, I consider my organisation well-known," falls into the third range ($\bar{x}$ = 3.507). Meanwhile, item 5, "I believe my company has its own personalities" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.500), item 9, "This organisation is considered one of the best" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.443), item 3, "I know my organisation is constantly improving over time" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.376), item 7 and item 8, "I am satisfied with the organisation" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.372), "The organisation has a clear view of its image" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.372), were the fourth to eighth range, respectively.

Hiring and Retention and Organisation Image

Based on Table 5, the findings have shown a positive relationship between hiring and retention and organisation image among the employees. The finding is also consistent with prior studies conducted by Lee *et al.* (2014) where through an effective hiring and retention process, it could ensure employees serve the organisation for a long period of time, which in return reflects a good image of the organisation. This is reflected in this study, where the majority of the respondents, 161 in total, agreed that they feel satisfied with the training and development offered by the organisation, while 117 respondents can see themselves working in the current organisation for many more years. Chhabra and Sharma (2011) added that an effective process is not enough. The organisation needs to provide brand awareness of what it would be like to work in the particular organisation, however, in this study it is found that even though 166 out of 282 respondents are satisfied with the whole system, they still think that the organisation is not doing enough to promote brand awareness since 91 respondents are not aware and have no idea about the existing brand of the current organisation.

This study reveals that 155 respondents had a good awareness of their career path and promotion plan, which represents professional advancement and long-term organisational needs. This outcome is in line with earlier research by Vijayalakshmi and Uthayasuriyan (2015), who claimed that in order to encourage employees to feel drawn to and stay with the company, it must give them a clear route by aligning it with the brand image. Therefore, it is shown that hiring and retention could influence the image of the organisation.

Reward and Recognition and Organisation Image among Employees

There is a significant relationship between reward and recognition and organisation image among the employees. The outcome is in line with earlier research by Caligiuri et al. (2010), which found that an efficient system of rewards and recognition might boost workers' drive to fulfil brand commitments and improve the organisation's reputation. It is found that 130 out of 282 respondents always feel motivated to work, whereas 167 out of 282 respondents expressed that they feel appreciated and valued working in the current organisation. Hence, by having credible employees, it portrays or reflects the organisational discipline with a positive image (Dewhurst *et al.,* 2009). In terms of reward and recognition, 49.6% of respondents express that they have been well-informed about the rewards and recognition program clearly before joining the organisation. However, only 142 out of 282 respondents are moderately attracted to the reward promised by the organisation. Therefore, the equitable distribution on the reward and recognition should be satisfy both parties to avoid negativity for future growth (DeCenzo and Robbins (2010); MCrill (2011). Therefore, it is shown that reward and recognition could influence the image of the organisation.

Internal communication and organisation image

Based on table 5, there is a positive relationship between internal communication and organisation image among employees. 74% of the respondents agreed that they receive sufficient information from their superiors and colleagues while 155 of the respondents express that they are always encouraged to give feedbacks through every channel provided by the organisation. It is consistent with study conducted by Robson and Tourish (2005), where the employees need various internal communication channels to encourage more openness and empower the employees. Besides that, 184 out of 282 of the respondents agreed that there is no communication barrier and are satisfied with the current state of internal communication in the company. This finding aligned with Matanda and Ndubisi's (2013) study, where the organisation should treat the employees as internal customers by removing communication barriers in order for the employees to communicate effectively. Therefore, based on the findings of earlier researchers and corroborated by this study, it shows that internal communication may affect the organisation's reputation.

Identity congruence and organisation image

The findings have shown a positive relationship between identity congruence and organisation image among the employees. 50% of the respondents agreed that they have a clear understanding on the short and long-term goals as well as the organisation values. However, 36.8% of the respondents disagreed that their employer has an effective identity. As suggested by Simeos *et al*. (2005), the organisation should effectively manage their

identity, as it could give a competitive advantage through the favourable organisation's image in the minds of the stakeholders. Dutton *et al.* (1994) also added that the identity should be created to help an organisation adopt suitable strategies to build up their image on a long-run basis. However, in this study, it is found that 96 out of 282 employees disagreed that the current organisation is very supportive of change, which supposedly the organisation should be aware of.

The Mediating Effect of Brand Knowledge between Hiring and Retention, Reward and Recognition, Internal Communication and Identity Congruence and Organisation Image

The objective of this study is to examine the mediating effects of brand knowledge between hiring and retention, reward and recognition, internal communication, and identity congruence towards organisation image.

As depicted in Table 6, it was found that brand knowledge has mediated effects between all IVs and DV except for identity congruence (IV). This indicates that brand knowledge does not mediate the relationship between identity congruence and organisation image. The previous studies believe that those employees that have knowledge of identity and values reflected from the brand can lead to consistent behaviours and good brand image, which has identity, attributes, and benefits that create a sense of belief an employee has about the brand (Piehler *et al.,* 2015; Hatch & Schultz, 2008). However, according to Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Sirianni et al. (2013), knowledge is what makes people behave in a certain way toward a brand, but it does not have the power to change someone's understanding into a real understanding of the organisation's image. If brand knowledge does not change this relationship, it means that identity congruence is more than just knowing facts about a brand. An employee does not have to study a brand to project its image if they already live by its values. Because of this, when identity congruence is high, projecting a good organisational image happens naturally and without the need for brand literacy and guidance.

Meanwhile, the findings of brand knowledge mediate the relationship between hiring and retention towards an organisational image that is consistent with the prior studies conducted. Xiong *et al.* (2018) state that in order for an organisation to become a top choice employer for top talents looking for new jobs, brand knowledge is vital in influencing and attracting people, mostly when weighing a job offer. The result of this study shows that out of 282 respondents, 168 respondents agreed that they have knowledge about the organisation brand, which has led them to remain and behave accordingly.

Brand knowledge also mediates the relationship between hiring and retention towards organisation image. This is consistent with prior studies conducted where Ali and Akram (2012) state that employees should have knowledge of the benefits and rewards offered by the organisation to motivate them in enhancing their performance and valued contribution towards the organisation. The result of this study has also proven that 42.55% of the respondents are willing to participate in building the brand and even voluntarily make constructive suggestions on how to improve the organisation.

For internal communication, it is found that there is a mediating effect of brand knowledge. This result is consistent with prior studies conducted which state that high knowledge sharing on the effective internal communication can uphold the organisation's image and improve trust levels between workers and management that exist in an organisation (Zeffane *et al.,* 2011). Based on the findings, 59.9% of the respondents agreed that they are clearly communicated of their roles in delivering the brand promises. Therefore, it shows that brand knowledge mediates the hiring and retention, reward and recognition, and internal communication towards organisational image except for identity congruence.

CONCLUSION

Overall, four research objectives were discussed in this chapter. The first objective is achieved, thus indicating that there is a high level of organisation image in the organisation. The second objective is achieved in this study, as there is a relationship between internal branding (hiring and retention; rewards and recognition; internal communication and identity congruence) in enhancing image. The employees see that these components are important, and there is a significant correlation, which is essential in improving the image of the organisation. The third objective is achieved in this study, as brand knowledge mediates the relationship between hiring and

retention, rewards and recognition, internal communication, and organisation image, except for the identity congruence variable. Findings from this study also show that hiring and retention are the best predictors towards enhancing the organisation's image. This has been validated in previous empirical studies where there is competition between companies in the "Best place to work" rankings, which considers that organisations that have internal branding are strategically good in employee relations, have longer employee retention period and have excellent engagement efforts (Lyons & Marler, 2011). The study's conclusion is that the internal branding elements under investigation shape an organisation's perceived image. Frandsen (2017) describes that management must carefully strategize these elements in their internal branding initiatives to produce an excellent corporate image. Therefore, this finding has answered the research objectives and questions in this study.

Implication

This study provides a very significant contribution that can be divided in the following perspectives:

Theoretical perspectives

This research enhances the current literature on internal branding and organisational image by expanding the Organisation Image Management Theory and the Associative Network Memory Model (ANMM) in the context of internal stakeholders. The results provide empirical validation for Organisation Image Management Theory by showing that organisational image is not only affected by external communications but also significantly impacted by internal branding practices, including hiring and retention, rewards and recognition, identity congruence, and internal communication. This broadens the theory by identifying employees as active image agents whose perceptions and behaviours are crucial in the formation and maintenance of the organisational image. Meanwhile, this research also enhances the Associative Network Memory Model by establishing brand knowledge as a mediating cognitive mechanism linking internal branding practices to organisational image. The findings indicate that internal branding strengthens employees' brand-related knowledge structures, which subsequently changes how people perceive and talk about the organisation's image. Therefore, by integrating these theories, the study provides a stronger theoretical foundation for future research on organisational image formation from an internal perspective.

Practical perspectives

In practical perspectives, organisations must find effective ways to ensure that the internal branding components are well strategized to gain positive perception from the stakeholders' minds. Organisations should improve the internalisation process in establishing conducive and increased satisfaction of the stakeholders especially during delivery of services. Besides that, this study significantly contributes to the perception understanding of employees towards the organisation image where it gives a new exposure on the internal components that would affect the brand. The employees also become more knowledgeable on organisation issues and strategies taken by the latter in order to uphold and maintain its image.

Limitation

There are several limitations that should be considered, such as on the research model. The model is limited to internal branding components as outlined in the conceptual framework. While these variables provide valuable insights into the relationship between internal branding and organisational image, other factors such as leadership style, organisational integrity, and ethical climate were not included in the study. The exclusion of these variables may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalised to organisations where such factors play a more dominant role in shaping organisational image. The study also focuses on a single major organisation and its subsidiary companies. Organisational structure, corporate culture, governance practices, and internal branding strategies within this organisation may differ significantly from those of other companies. As a result, the findings may not be directly transferable to other organisational contexts, sectors, or institutional settings. Therefore, future research could enhance generalisability by incorporating additional variables, examining multiple organisations, and applying the proposed model across diverse organisational and cultural contexts.

RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTION

There are several recommendations that should be considered when conducting similar research in the future. Based on the findings, the future researcher might want to improve or to expand the research model by integrating other variables found in various literatures. The independent variables of this study are limited to internal components, as shown in the conceptual framework diagram. However, it is believed that there are other variables that might influence the organisation's image, such as leadership and integrity among the employees. The study model can also be extended to a larger sample group involving several GLCs' or any organisation in Malaysia. Future study might concentrate on the organisation that prioritises building or preserving its reputation. As the current study only focuses on one major company with their subsidiary companies, the future researcher might extend this study to further confirm or reject the proposed research model highlighted in this study. The findings might be different and yield more intriguing results.

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