



EXPLORING EMPLOYEES BRAND KNOWLEDGE IN SRI LANKAN BANKING SECTOR

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Abstract:

Brand knowledge ponders had to increase significant consideration from both experts and researchers. The comprehension of brand knowledge could be converted into good disposition and conduct that guide advertisers in figuring engaging marketing procedures. Be that as it may, much examination had centered on customers brand knowledge and little is comprehended on how employees brand knowledge comprehends the brand. Employees brand knowledge is significant as they are the brand advocators; henceforth this is important for them. Subsequently, this examination plans to inspect on how employees perceived and comprehend the banks brand heretofore. The investigation among 312 employees from banking sector uncovered that over 75% of the respondents surely knew their behavior, their own work and contribution. Banks goals and policies and customer expectations and almost over 60% of respondents know the brand meaning, targets customers, These employees accepted to carry on as needs be to the brand promise that later could satisfied customer. Conclusion and suggestion, future research likewise are examined toward the finish of this article.

Keywords: brand knowledge, internal branding, banking sector

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Conceptual Clarification

Employees brand knowledge is the feeling of how do employees obtain organizational knowledge to enable them to do their roles and duties as per the brand promise (King and Grace, 2008). By and large, training and internal communication are the key wellsprings of how do employees comprehend their jobs and association (Punjaisri et al., 2009; King and Grace, 2008; Ellickson, 2002; Thomson et al., 1999). The even more

training and important data got by the employees, the more ability they are in accomplishing general organization's destinations (Ann and Herman, 2008; Buckley and Caple, 1995). Subsequently, in connection to brand performance.

Be that as it may, little is known the employees' condition of brand knowledge particularly in internal branding point of view. As brand dominantly alludes to brand performance, employees that remain behind the brand assume a critical part in the conveyance such promise. This is agreed with Devasagayam et al. (2010) and Miles and Mangold (2005) that workers first need to comprehend and know about the brand before they can satisfy the brand guarantee to the customers.

Concentrates by different brand specialist reliably specified the absence of employees' understanding on the association's brand i.e. brand knowledge preceding brand conveyance. The Brand Consultancy Knowledge Board [BCKB] (2002) shockingly uncovered that more than 90% of the employees did not see how to adequately speak to their association's brand, 70% did not bolster their organization's brand activity, and half did not comprehend what a brand implies. In view of the insights, it is basic for internal branding to be fruitful as it accentuates employees brand performance. On the off chance that employees are not prepared and unfit to comprehend the brand, they won't have the capacity to convey the brand promise in a predictable way.

The financial services sector of Sri Lanka demands extended empirical studies in terms of performance, branding and competitiveness (Dissanayake, 2015; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015). Additionally, a limited research led in Asian nations is found referring brand knowledge of internal branding into neighborhood social background and aides in adopting this branding idea in a more extensive setting Nirmali, AbYajid, Ali khatibi and Azam (2017); Nirmali et al (2017). Banking sector of Sri Lanka is a noted context as per its contribution to national wealth and initiatives on employees have been extendedly highlighted within the practice scenario. In this way, this investigation means to examine employees' level of brand knowledge particularly in Sri Lankan context Dissanayake, Wasantha & Jinadasa, (2016). With the end goal of the examination, employees from banking sector were studied. Thus, conceptual review encouraging empirical research directions could contribute to knowledge whilst practice related insights are also supported.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What is Brand?

Brands have been characterized contrastingly among various researchers. More often than not brands are characterized as *"a name, term, symbol, sign, image, outline or a blend of these planned to recognize the merchandise and enterprises of one vender from those competitors."* This was American Marketing Association's (AMA) definition scrutinized to be tight and being mistaken for the meaning of brand given by US Federal Trademark Act as *"trademark is any word, name, image, device or any mix thereof received and utilized by producers and dealers to distinguish their products."* (Cohen. 1986). Indeed,

even AMA Dictionary of Marketing Terms expressed these terms as they are nearly the same by saying “*the legitimate term for the brand is the trademark.*”

As a rule, we can state brands as not just the delegates of a product or services or an organization yet, in addition, the visions and overall general rules of creating and conveying product and services through representatives of a given organization.

2.2 Define of Brand Knowledge

The idea of brand knowledge is the establishment stone to comprehend customer-based brand value CBBE (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). In like manner, employees brand knowledge is exceptionally considered as the premise to recognize the significance of internal branding endeavors in building Employee based brand knowledge EBBE. And additionally, the two ideas (CBBE and EBBE) are concentrating on the inalienable idea of the brand. In any case, EBBE describes the differential effect that brand knowledge has on an employee’s reactions to the workplace (King and Grace, 2009). Through distinguishing of brand knowledge, employees can diminish the role ambiguity which is endlessly identified with their performance. Thusly, the different and obscure comprehension of the association's brand means will most likely lead employees to pass on misty brand promise for the customers, which toward the end may crush organizations brand value.

As indicated by King and Grace (2008) and relying upon inside and out meetings with employees, they demonstrated that furnishing employees with far reaching and precise data about the brand can enable employees to acquire solid brand knowledge, and hold brand promise for clients. Subsequently, employees can't change over associations' brand vision into brand value without exhaustive brand knowledge (Miles and Mangold, 2005). Consequently, banks managers need to ensure that brand promise have a similar importance for all employees, with a specific end goal to convey steady messages to customer.

2.3 Importance of Brand Knowledge

The requirement for the uniform comprehension of the brand among the representatives Devasagayam et al. (2010). The scientists allude it as the brand group (i.e. employees brand identification, brand interaction, brand support and brand fulfillment) and discovered it is significance among employees in light of the fact that such brand group is fundamentally essential for the general inside brand success. Furthermore, Heaton and Guzzo (2000) noticed that workers can't convey the brand guarantee due to a few obstructions, for example, (1) insufficient staffing and training (2) wasteful business process (3) lack of data, (4) misaligned motivators, and (5) poor correspondence. However, they attest that the primary reason is about the inability to give sufficient brand-related data/information to employees.

Commander et al (2007) likewise focused on the significance of employees brand knowledge in impacting their brand behavior and attitude. As indicated by this consultant group, representatives and their brand knowledge can be assembled into four primary classes in particular (1) brand advocates, (2) delivers of brand, (3) brand

students, and (4) brand resisters. Table 1 indicates how these classes influence employees can brand behavior and attitude. Given the before measurements on employees brand knowledge, it can be inferred that most association's employees are still at the 'brand resisters' and 'brand students' classes, which is far underneath the brand advocate/brand delivers classification.

Along these lines, it is vital to close what are the stages of employee's brand knowledge, particularly in the Sri Lankan context since this brand knowledge would later impact employee's behavior and attitudes. While brand knowledge in client behavior consider prompts the brand preference and additionally brand adoption (Keller, 1993), it is hypothesized that in connection to employees behavior, employees brand knowledge will be converted into workers brand attitude and behavior.

Table 1: The Relationship between Brand Knowledge, Behavior and Attitude

Stage of brand advocacy	Knowledge	Behavior	Attitude
Brand Advocates	Offer information of brand internally and externally Participate in driving right direction of brand	Active verbal marketing Live brand at work and in group Model behavior for others	Feel engaged Excited to shape eventual fate of the brand Believe in the separation of brand
Brand Believers	Comprehend brand importance to the particular job Understand client needs	Engage in verbal marketing Try to experience the brand yet feel compelled	Passionate about brand Believe in brand Believe that the client is constantly right
Brand Learner	Take an interest in training Know brand message, qualities, and stories	Meet fundamental client needs Live occupation to the letter of law portrayal	Happy when things are going admirably in the association
Brand Resisters	Lack of comprehension of brand Misconceptions of brand	Conflicting behavior Put self-intrigue first	- Indifference - Apathy - Unhappy at work

Source: Commander et al. (2007)

3. Methodology

With the end goal of the investigation, banks in the western province were approached and various 425 questionnaires were appropriated to distinguish employees. 425 representatives were approached; accordingly, response rate is 73.4%. In any case, just 312 surveys were usable and continued for data analysis. Banking sector was chosen in light of the fact that the business is profoundly work concentrated and very focused consequently request employees to speak to the brand as needs are. Subsequently, banking sector is considered as the best stage for analysts to test the exploration demonstrate. The measures of brand knowledge were received from the size of Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) with 9 items. Inquiries essentially in 5-point Likert Scale.

4. Findings

4.1 Respondents' Profile

Generally, Majority of the respondents are male (56.7%), working at least 10 to 25 years to particular brand/organization (43.6%) with degree (30.1%) and diploma holders (29.2%), and earned between Rs.100, 000 to Rs150, 000 monthly (23.7%). Majority of the respondents also aged between 31 to 40 years old (almost 36%).

4.2 Evidence of Employees' brand knowledge

In general, based on the mean score, most of the respondents' answer is skewed towards the agreement continuum of the statement given. This indicates a positive or favorable attitude towards the brand among the banking sector employees.

Table 2: Respondents behavior

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Clearly know goals and policies	0.00%	1.60%	11.50%	63.10%	23.70%
Know the customer expectation	0.00%	1.30%	10.90%	61.90%	26.00%
My work is important to success	0.00%	1.60%	8.30%	49.70%	40.40%
How my behavior is impact	0.00%	1.30%	6.10%	51.60%	41.00%
My own work contributed	0.00%	0.60%	9.00%	57.10%	33.30%
Understand my role delivery brand	0.00%	1.30%	22.80%	47.40%	28.50%
I know the meaning	0.60%	2.60%	18.80%	51.90%	26.30%
My bank is excellent	0.60%	4.80%	28.20%	38.50%	28.50%
I know who are target customer	0.60%	6.70%	20.80%	51.90%	19.90%

In detail, when respondents were asked about their knowing of bank goals and policies, about 1.6% of the respondents clearly didn't know, 11.5 % specifically didn't know, and almost 63.1% of them clearly know goals and policies and 23.7% perfectly know. About 10.5% of the respondents specifically didn't know the customer expectation. Almost 62% know the customer expectation and 26% of them perfectly know. Respondents then asked on their knowledge of organization's target customer. Almost 52% of respondents known their target customer and 19% of respondent strongly know their target customers 21% neither agreed nor disagreed and 6.7% didn't know of their target customers. When respondents were asked about the importance of their work in overall brand success, surprisingly, 49.7% of the respondents were towards the agreement of the statement and 40.4% strongly agreed, while 8.3% either agreed or disagreed and only 1.6%disagreed.

Further, with regards to the statement that their understanding of how their behavior influences the organization's success, about 51.6% of them agreed and 41% strongly agreed, 6.1% either agreed or disagreed and only 1.3% disagreed. In detail, when respondents were asked on how their own work contributed to overall brand success, 57.1% agreed and 33.3% strongly agreed, 9% either agreed or disagree. Respondents also were asked on their understanding of their role in delivering the brand promise. It is recorded, 28.5% clearly understand, 47.4% understand, 22.8% either

understand or didn't understand and 1.3% didn't understand their role in delivering the brand promise.

When respondents were asked about their understanding of brand meaning, about 2.6% of the respondents were not understood the brand meaning clearly and 18.6% were either understood or not understood, 51.9 % quite understood, and almost 26.3% of them understood the brand meaning. Finally, About 28.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 38.5% agreed that their organization's brand is excellent in the service it provided. Almost 28.2% either agreed or disagreed towards knowledge of their organization's excellence in providing the services and only 4.2% of them didn't know.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Item Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Clearly know goals and policies	4.0897	.64026	312
Know the customer expectation	4.1250	.63683	312
My work is important to success	4.2885	.68526	312
How my behavior is impact	4.3237	.64729	312
My own work contributed	4.2308	.62987	312
Understand my role delivery brand	4.0321	.75159	312
I know the meaning	4.0064	.78160	312
My bank is excellent	3.9006	.88561	312
I know who are target customer	3.8365	.84234	312

Means, standard deviations, and squared correlation matrix are provided in table 3. Height mean value indicates the "How my behavior impact" value 4.3237 and slandered deviation 0.647. All questions positively answered by the respondents.

In view of the findings, it is obviously demonstrate that banking sector employees in Sri Lanka had sufficient brand knowledge whereby greater part of the score extending from 50-80%. Consequently, this is negated with the finding by BCKB (2002). Based on Commander et al. (2007), Sri Lankan banking sector employees in this study could be gathered as brand advocators. As indicated by Commander et al. (2007), employees in this group have a decent information of my behavior is effect to the bank. The vast majority of them sees how their job could contribute to overall brand success and comprehend customers' need and desire goals and policies and customers.

This is upheld by this investigation whereby just about 75% of the employees unmistakably see how they behave could contribute to the general brand success. What's more, very nearly 60% of the respondents comprehend customer's expectation. Curiously, the discoveries contributed to expand the limit of knowledge that Sri Lankan had satisfactory brand knowledge regarding bank's brand and this upheld by Shari et al (2013), Tagay Firde Abebe (2014) and furthermore past Examination neglected to affirm such employees brand knowledge (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). Hence, these respondents accepted to carry on in-steady with the brand value.

5. Conclusion

In view of the findings, it is clearly demonstrated that Sri Lankan employees, particularly in the banking sector, had the satisfactory brand knowledge to satisfy the clients' needs and wants. This examination had expanded the literature in brand management particularly internal branding that employees knowledge towards the association's brand and their commitment to the overall brand success had expanded.

All things considered, internal branding activity that organized the performance of the employees as a brand advocators in Sri Lanka is progressing nicely and could be the best stage for manageable upper hand for many organizations. As this investigation figure out how to profile Sri Lankan workers as a "brand advocators", it considerably less demanding for advertisers to satisfy the brand promise. As shown by Commander et al. (2007), this group of respondents brand advocators figure out how to show suitable brand-conduct yet restricted because of a few requirements. Thus, the management should look for the recipe to change those respondents to wind up brand advocates. In spite of the fascinating findings, this investigation just endeavors to profile and to inspect the level of employees understanding towards the bank's brand.

As workers are the organization's brand advocates, internal systems and procedures ought to be set up with the goal that they can assume their role adequately. One of the key internal system (Aurand et al., 2005; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Chiang et al., 2012; Al-Shuaibi, et al (2016)), which ought to be adjusted and facilitated well with the marketing exercises to promote brand supporting attitudes and practices that are critical to brand value conveyance to external constituents.

Without reliable help and recognition from the top management about the significance of adjusting the internal and external branding strategies, creating brand advocators that could convey the brand promise and incentive to definitive customers isn't probably going to be viable. A decent administration gives a proper brand knowledge and a work condition that is helpful for the training, communications, and working of brand behaviors through different works on, starting with the procuring endeavors. At the point when the best possible system is set up, it is, in this manner, workable for the employees to live the brand and turn into the brand.

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