EMPLOYEE BRAND CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR IN THE NIGERIA TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Employee's brand-consistent behaviors are argued to play important roles in brand building. Organizations particularly service brands have realized the importance of employees in the delivery of the brand promise to meet customer expectations. In the paper employee brand-consistent behavior is argued to be both in-role and extra-role behaviors. Specifically, the focus of the paper is on the extra-role behaviors employees' exhibit in order to achieve brand goals, and such behavior is termed as brand citizenship behavior. The purpose of the paper is to examine the level of employee's brand citizenship behaviors of Nigeria telecommunication, how exhibiting such behaviors by employees can help the operators to effectively deliver the brand promise to customers. The paper conclude that the problem facing the telecommunication operators in Nigeria, can be solve if the management of the companies encourage positive brand behaviors specifically brand citizenship behaviors.

Keywords: Internal branding, Brand citizenship behavior, organizational brand citizenship behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

Both marketing researchers and practitioners have acknowledged that employee's brand behavior is crucial to the success of the brand, particularly service brands. Product brands unlike service brands, the perception of customers on the brand depends predominantly on the product attributes such as product quality (Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak, 2009). The researchers further argued that the perception of customers on the service brands depends largely on the behaviors of employees. As such, the task of service firms particularly telecommunication is to ensure positive employee brand behavior. Therefore, in order to ensure consistent delivery of brand promise, service firms most stimulate or encourage employee brand behavior (Hasnizam, Salleh, & Hussin, 2012). In this paper, employee brand behavior will be term as brand-consistent behavior. Hence, employee brand-consistent behavior is crucial in delivering brand promise in order to meet customer expectation.

Brand-consistent behavior can be either in-role behavior or extra-role behavior. In-role behavior according to Morhart et al. (2009) can be seen to refers to as the employee's meeting the standard set up or prescribed by the organization as a brand representative. On the other hand, the researchers view extra-role as employee's action that goes beyond the prescribed roles and are discretionary in order to achieve the brand goals. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) refer such behavior as employee brand citizenship behavior (BCB). Brand citizenship behavior is considered to be crucial for the success of the brand, as employees that

exhibit such behavior will not do anything that may tarnish the image of the organization brand. Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley (2009) argued that BCB has an impact on customer-brand relationships; this is because the employees that exhibit such behavior are found to be willing to help customers. Thus, Nigeria telecommunication as an organization requires their employees to exhibit such behavior in order to achieve its brand goals.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian telecommunication sector has been considered to be among the sector where the consumers complain about the brand behavior of their employees. Evidence from the industry has shown that four critical factors affect the delivery of brand promise in consistent manner to customers. Factors such as unstable power supply, insecurity, equipment failure and employee related problem (attitude and behavior) are considered to affect brand performance in the industry (Globacomm, 2016). Moreover, Egene, (2013) argued that employee brand behavior particularly contact staff has been a major challenge in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria, as it has a great impact on employees satisfaction. in addition, Adeleke, and Aminu, (2012) in their study revealed that 70% of the customers expressed their dissatisfaction with the behaviors of employees of telecommunication companies, particularly on the way their complaints are handled by the employees.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the level of employee's brand citizenship especially in the Nigerian telecommunication. For the purpose of this paper, related literatures would be reviewed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal Branding

Internal branding has been used by organization particularly service brands to ensure employees deliver the brand promise to meet consumer expectations by shaping their behaviors and attitudes. Organizations initially concentrated their branding strategies on external customers in order to achieve competitive advantage. According to Aurand, Gorchels, and Bishop (2005) organizations through marketing activities such as advertisement, communicate brand information to consumers. But as competition increases, organizations shifted from product branding to corporate branding; hence the concept of internal branding comes into being(Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng, 2010). Therefore, organizations have realized the importance employees in building strong brand.

According to Foster et al. (2010)internal branding focused on the adoption of branding strategies within the organization in order to align the behaviors of employees with brand value. In the same vein MacLaverty, McQuillan, and Oddie, (2007)view internal branding as a set of processes that organizations follow to align and empower the employees behaviors to deliver customer expectations in a consistent fashion. The researchers further argued that organizations achieve such alignment and empowerment through such practices as brand leadership, brand reward, brand communication, brand recruitment, brand training and development, and other sustainable factors. As such, through internal branding organization motivates and stimulates employees by providing brand understanding and the skills needed in order to encourage positive brand behavior (Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013).

Similarly, Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, and Wilson (2009)opine that through internal branding strategies organization ensure that the employees deliver the brand promise to customers in order to achieve brand goals. As effective delivery of brand promise require employees to exhibit positive brand behavior, therefore employees need to be comfortable with their roles and responsibilities for them to live the brand effectively. In addition Burmann and Zeplin (2005)argued that internal branding enables a shared understanding of the brand among employees in and organization, as such effective internal branding encourages employee brand commitment. Branding literature has established that internal branding enable the attainment of competitive advantage through employee as is difficult to be replicated by other competitors (Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2009).

Internal branding has been considered to enable the delivery of brand promise during service encounters, as it is argued to be an instrument organizations used to influence employee's attitudes and shapes their behaviors (Burmann et al., 2009). As such, through internal branding employees are encouraged to exhibit brand consistent behavior particularly brand citizenship behavior in order to achieve brand goals.

Brand Citizenship Behavior

The concept of brand citizenship behavior was first introduced by Burmann and Zeplin (2005), which was derived from organizational citizenship behavior OCB. They argued that BCB is different from OCB, as employee BCB is externally targeted behavior while on the other hand OCB is internally targeted behavior. Hasnizam et al. (2012) opine that BCB is an extension of OCB which focus more on brand-customer relationships. Hence, employee BCB includes brand-oriented behavior for the achievement of brand goals. Contrary view was argued by King and Grace (2012) as the two concepts can be used synonymous. In the present paper, employee BCB and OCB are viewed as different concepts based on theargument put forward by Burmann and Zeplin (2005).

Brand citizenship behavior is viewed to be extra-role behavior employee's exhibit in order to achieve organization brand goals (King & Grace, 2012). The researchers defined employee BCB as the behaviors that are not specified but consistent to the brand values of the organization, thus engendering positive organizational and brand outcomes. In the same vein, Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) viewed employee brand-building behaviors as employees behavior both on and off job that contribute to the success of the brand. The researchers term extra-role as brand development which include behaviors that employee exhibit that goes beyond the job description and indicated active, responsible involvement in nurturing and building the organization's brand. In addition Helm, Renk, and Mishra (2016) defined employee BCB as employees discretionary behaviors, which in the aggregate enhance brand identity and brand strength.

Additionally, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) defined employee BCB as an aggregate construct which describe number of generic behaviors that enhance rand identity. The researchers viewed BCB as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of seven dimensions. Theses dimensions were derived from the dimensions proposed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that the first dimension of OCB (helping colleagues) is more internally behavior and it should also be extended to the

customers. For the remaining six dimensions, the researchers assert that such behaviors should be narrowed to the brand than to the whole organization. Hence, they further renamed the dimensions and come up with the following dimensions helping behavior, brand consideration, brand enthusiasm, sportsmanship, brand endorsement, self-development, and lastly brand advancement. The table below shows the differences of the dimensions of employee BCB and OCB as argued by Burmann and Zeplin (2005).

The Differences of BCB and OCB Dimensions

No.	BCB	OCB
1.	**Helping behavior** Willingness to exhibit positive attitude, friendliness, helpfulness and empathy to both internal and external customers.	**Helping behavior** Willingness to help other co-workers on work related problems
2.	**Brand consideration** Considering the impact on brand image before taking action in any situation.	**Organizational compliance** Adherence to organizational rules, regulations and procedures even when not monitored
3.	**Brand enthusiasm** Willingness to show extra initiatives when engaged in brand-related behavior.	**Individual initiative** Willingness to engage in task-related behavior any level.
4.	**Sportsmanship** Willingness to engage for brand even if it causes inconveniences.	**Sportsmanship** Willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconvenience and imposition of work without complaining.
5.	**Brand endorsement** Recommending the brand to others in non-job related situations (to friends) and on the job situation (new employees)	**Organizational loyalty** Promoting the organization to others
6.	**Self-development** Voluntary enhance ones brand related skills and knowledge	**Self-development** Employee voluntary improving his or her knowledge, skills and abilities
7.	**Brand advancement** Behaviors of employees toward enhancement of brand identity may be via customer feed-back or initiatives ideas.	**Civic virtue** Voluntary participating in activities that affect the organization.

Source: (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2000)

Review of literatures revealed that the numbers of dimensions were reduced after empirical studies were conducted by researchers. In a particular study Burmann et al. (2009) revealed that BCB has three dimensions namely helping behavior, brand enthusiasm, and brand development. In the same vein Hasnizam et al. (2012) conducted a study and conclude that employee BCB have four dimensions namely helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-development, and brand endorsement. Hence, some studies measured employee BCB as a multi- dimensional construct while other studies measured the construct as a one-dimension construct.

Studies conducted have measured employee BCB as a one-dimension construct as argued by king and Grace (2012). In a particular study, King and Grace (2010) opine that employee BCB can be measured using seven items and as a one-dimension construct. In addition King and Grace (2012) assert that employee BCB is not a multi-dimensional construct as argued by Burmann and Zeplin (2005). Hence, based on these arguments put forward by researchers, the present paper view employee brand citizenship behaviors as a one-dimension construct. Because the researcher finds it difficult to replicate the dimensionality of the construct and the items used by researchers.

Internal branding literatures has recognized the importance of employee's attitudes and behaviors in building strong brand with high brand equity (King & Grace, 2012). This is because the functional and emotional values of the brand are delivered by the employees during their interaction with the customers. Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006) argued that the success of service brands depends on the positive behaviors of employees, as it affect the delivery of the brand promise to the customer. As such, delivering the brand promise is seen as the major problem facing services brand particularly telecommunication, as service is intangible and varies depending on the person and the time it is delivered (Uen, Wu, Teng, & Liu, 2012). Therefore, consistent delivery of brand promise to customers depends largely on brand-consistent behavior specifically employee BCB.

In addition, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that brand commitment is a driver of brand citizenship behavior, as such employees who are committed to the brand are more likely to exhibit such behavior. Therefore, there is the need for the organization to encourage such behaviors. In the same vein, Henkel et al. (2007) assert that employees plays an important role in determining the perception and attitude of customers toward the brand. Hence, based on the argument put forward by Keller (1993) that the power of the brand depends on the favorable response of the consumers, therefore brand citizenship behavior may have a great impact on building strong brand with high brand equity. Jung and Yoon (2013) in their study argued that employees who are satisfied with their job and the environment, are likely to deliver the brand promise to meet customer satisfaction effectively. Hence, organization most provides their employees with the right knowledge and skills of the brand to enable them deliver the brand promise.

In line with service-profit chain proposed by Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, and Schlesinger (1994) who argued that profit and growth of organization depends on customer's loyalty, and customer loyalty is stimulated by the services the organization provide to the customer. They further opine that employees are responsible for the delivery of the services to customers, and for effective delivery of the services the employees have to be satisfied and loyal to the organization. The researchers assert that employee's satisfaction and loyalty depend largely on the quality support services and policies from the organization which affect the delivery brand promise to customers. Based on this arguments, the present paper opine that through internal branding practices such as brand leadership, brand knowledge, brand training, brand reward, brand recruitment and brand communication, the employees BCB may be encouraged.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review of related literatures, the present paper concludes that employee brand-consistent behavior particularly brand citizenship behavior is crucial to the success of the brand. Organizations should concentrate their branding strategies to internal customer that is their employees in order to achieve competitive advantage. Therefore, to achieve competitive advantage the Nigerian telecommunication operators must pay attention to employees as their attitudes and behaviors are crucial to the brand success. Effective internal brand management is required to encourage employees to exhibit brand citizenship behavior. As such, review of

literatures has shown that employee's brand commitment, brand identification, brand loyalty and brand satisfaction can be achieved through effective internal brand management, therefore affect the brand-consistent behaviors of the employees specifically BCB.

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