Relationship between Internal and Employer Branding and their influence on Brand Outcomes

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Abstract As the world becomes more competitive with each passing day with the growth of media and proliferation of brands, branding plays a pivotal role to thrust a business forward and give it a competitive edge. This has given rise to new marketing lexicon such as internal branding and employer branding. This paper seeks to explore the role and relationship between internal branding and employer branding. Next, we broaden the focus of internal branding and employer branding and their effect on brand performance. Based on our literature analysis our research methodology adopted for this study was based on the development of a survey questionnaire. The unit of study in this research was the health sector being the sector which is not already explored in terms of branding in India. Survey was conducted in major hospitals in Chandigarh. Survey was conducted on doctors and interns in major hospitals. The hypotheses were tested on a structural equations model but before testing the model, the scales were evaluated using the confirmatory factor analysis to determine the scale validity and reliability. The results of the statistical analysis reveals that both internal and employer branding have a positive impact on brand commitment brand loyalty and brand indentification.The study provides insight in demonstrating empirically the role of employer branding and internal branding in promoting brand loyalty, brand commitment and brand identification. The analysis of the literature reveals a degree of synergy and integration between employer branding and internal branding too. The study also facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the two concepts of branding and corporate brand management. Further work is required to interpret the role of different mediators and moderators which influence the relationship. Employer branding is relatively new as a topic. Prior work is predominantly conceptual and this paper is novel in demonstrating empirically its role in promoting brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand identification. The main contribution of the paper is to provide empirical evidence of the influence of employer branding and internal branding on brand outcomes i.e. brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand identification and to clarify the inter relationship that exists between internal branding, employer branding and branding outcomes

Key words   Employer branding, Internal branding.

I.Introduction

As the world becomes more competitive with each passing day with the growth of media and proliferation of brands, branding plays a pivotal role to thrust a business forward and give it a competitive edge. In today's world, a brand is the most valuable thing occupying quiet a chunk of the consumers mind. It creates a separate identity for competitors and helps in creating recalling value for a product. Branding pays great emphasis on internal and external factors for building corporate image.

This has given rise to new marketing lexicon such as internal branding and employer branding. The ultimate aim of building brand has always been to deliver a consistent and distinctive customer experience which is possible only when brand has been established in context of its image as an employer (employer branding) and how it is perceived internally (internal branding). The factors internal to the organization include employee's attitudes and behaviors and the also the role of such factors which makes the brand desirable as an employer.

Employer branding is relatively new as a topic but is attracting the attention of both marketers and practitioners. Internal branding focuses largely on the adoption of the branding concept inside an organization to ensure that employees deliver the brand promise to the external stakeholders, whereas employer branding offers a way of ensuring that an organization recruits the right people in the first instance.

However, the relationship between internal branding and employer branding are yet to be fully explored in the corporate branding literature, (foster et al 2010). Authors such as Punjasiri at el. (2008, 2009), Mahert and Torrens (2010) empirically assessed the relationship between internal branding and employees' delivery of the brand promise as well as the relationships among their brand indentification, brand commitment and brand loyalty along with the partial meditating effects of employees' brand indentification, commitment and loyalty.

Only one study namely (foster et al, 2010) has brought to light the inter-relationships that exist between the corporate branding, employer branding, and internal branding concepts. The study has also uncovered the areas where internal branding could be supported and enhanced by employer branding and vice versa, thereby proposing the possibilities for integrating the two concepts to attain the success of a corporate branding. Furthermore, how the two concepts of corporate branding, namely internal branding, and employer branding are inter related and has been overlooked/ignored /disregarded till date which will be focused in this study.

This paper begins by considering the relationship between internal branding and employer branding. Next, we broaden the focus of internal branding and employer branding and their effect on brand performance. Although a lot of research is being carried out in Employer branding and internal branding, few studies have paid little attention to the outcomes of internal and employer branding their affect on branding outcomes as a whole. The main contribution of this paper is to provide empirical evidence of the influence of employer branding and internal branding on brand outcomes i.e. brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand identification.

II.Literature Review

A. *Employer branding*

Brands are considered as the most important assets for companies and branding has been a topic of debate among scholars and academicians for many years. In simple words, brand is the image which emerges in the minds of the consumers based on the benefits which they perceive from the brand may be in the form of emotional and functional benefits. Originally the concept of brand was first of all given by Keller (1999). In the past product brand was very popular but with the changing scenario the approach has shifted to service sector service sector relies heavily on employee's actions and attitudes. Service brands provides holistic experiences which is based upon excellent personalized service to the consumer and its delivery is frequently dependant on the staff effectively delivering the core values to the customer. More recently brands have been segregated into different aspects internal brand, external brand, corporate brand, employer brand. Despite the growing popularity of the employer branding, academic research on the topic is limited to few areas of employer branding. Ambler and Barrow (1996) was the first person who initially introduced the concept of employer branding. The first definition of employer brand as given by Ambler and Barrow was "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company. In a similar way the same has been proposed kimpakorn, Tocquer (2009) which states that employer branding is to create a perception in the minds of employees that the brand is unique relative to its competitors and that the company is a good place to work with. These all definitions indicates that employer branding includes all those features of the company as an employer which are provided to the employee and which promotes the company both inside and outside as a desirable employer.

The main objective of employer branding is to persuade employees that their organization is the best work place and establishes the firm as an employer of choice and there by enables it to attract the best possible work force. In contrast, some authors view employer branding as an active and interrelated process of co creating brands by rooting the employer branding in the philosophy of corporate social responsibility. They are of the view that by incorporating the philosophy of employer branding into corporate social responsibility, they transform employer branding into a sustainable and trust worthy value creating process (Aggerholm et al., 2010). Although a universal definition has not been proposed , various authors agree that employer branding as the process of developing and communicating organizational information that is specific and enduring for a firm as an employer and differentiates it from its competitors(Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004 ;Sullivan,2002 ;Conference board,2001;Davies2008; kucherov,Zavyalova,2012). It is right to say that employer branding concept has emerged from marketing ,but it has become the nexus of human resource management, as it reduces HR cost, specially it helps in improving the recruitment cost, contribute to employee retention and thereby reducing staff turnover(Berthon et al.,2005,Backhaus and Tikoo,2004.,Barrow and Mosley,2006). As such it helps a lot in organizational career management. A number of publications have defined employer branding as a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of potential employees, current employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm. Some studies have also found that employer branding leads to employer attractiveness and can be affected by four employees' values, namely, social value, interest value, developmental value and economic value (Berthon et al., 2005; Biswass, Saur 2013). Recently (Bondarouk,2012) empirically validated that there is a direct relationship between employer branding and organizational attractiveness and this relationship is moderated by the presence of corporate websites and Social Networking Sites. Some literature further explored the role of employer branding in influencing employees perceived differentiation, loyalty, satisfaction and affinity which are well versed predicted by different aspects(agreeableness, enterprise. Chic, competence; and ruthlessness) of brand personality and the impact of employer branding on employee performance (Buttenberg 2013; Davies 2007). Moreover, some studies linked various aspects of organizational identity, organizational identification and organization personality from organization behavior and psychology fields and linked them with the employer brand. Some other studies (Foster et al., 2010; Balmer, 2009) highlight the inter-relationships that exist between the corporate branding, employer branding, and internal branding concepts .These studies further explored that internal and employer branding support the brand promise delivery from different aspects. Internal branding has an internal focus while employer branding tends to focus on the external constituencies, namely potential employees, which could also be an organization's customer. Furthermore, the study from employer branding literature concurs that there is a positive relationship between employer based brand equity and organizational attractiveness; brand commitment and brand citizenship behaviour. (King, Grace 2010; Jaing, Iles, 2011). Despite the growing interest in employer branding, there has been a little research undertaken on the subject from the perspectives of what are the outcomes of employer branding. Therefore, this link necessitates the empirical evidence. This study aims to understand the impact of employer branding on brand outcomes. It will also empirically assess the interrelationship between the employer branding and the internal branding as well as the impact of both (employer and internal branding) on brand outcomes in the form of brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty. To achieve this objective in service sector, we have selected health sector as it is an emerging area of branding and very few empirical studies have been conducted regarding branding in this particular service sector.

B. Internal branding

Internal branding is the concerted, inter-departmental and multi-directional internal communications effort carried out in order to create and maintain an internal brand. Internal

branding attempts to achieve consistency with the external brand and encourage brand commitment and the propensity for brand championship among employees. To this end, internal branding is the reflection of the values and the realisation of the promise of the brand internally and externally (Mahert, Torrens, 2007).

Internal branding has emerged as to assist an organization in promoting the brand inside, namely to employees (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003) with an aim to ensure the congruence between internal and external brand messages (Mitchell, 2002). That is, it ensures that brand messages (i.e. brand promise) are transformed by employees into reality that reflect the customers' expected brand experience (Boone, 2000). Internal branding can be defined as the process that enables the employees to know the values of the brand, to develop a positive attitude towards the values and to develop the skills to deliver on the values of the brand. So internal brand building is the process of creating enthusiastic, engaged employees who admire how the organizations values and competencies make a distinctive difference for its customers. (Raj, Jyoti 2011). Poor staff performance often results in gaps between customer expectations and the brand promise (Parasuraman 1985, 1988), therefore, employees have to be enabled to deliver the brand image (Keller 2003, Wallace and de Chernatony 2005). Internal branding is considered as a means to create powerful corporate brands (Punjasiri and Wilson, 2007). A number of publications have identified that successful internal branding engenders employees' commitment to (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky (2002) indentification with and loyalty to (Papasolomou I. and Vrontis, D. (2006) to the brand. . When employees internalize the brand values, they will consistently deliver on the brand promise across all contact points between the company and its stakeholders. Moreover, while some studies have provided empirical evidence for the link between internal branding and employees' brand commitment (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005), some have focused on the relationship between internal branding and employees' brand loyalty (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006a, b). However, the literature has argued for the influence of internal branding on employees' brand-supporting behaviours (Boone, 2000; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006; de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001; Hankinson, 2002; Kotler and Heskett, 1992).Internal branding that coordinates training and internal communications has a positive impact on employees' brand indentification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty. In particular, employees' brand indentification was found to be influenced most by internal branding (Punjasiri at el.2009). In short, internal branding is argued to be instrumental in influencing employees' attitudes and shaping their behaviours to be aligned with a brand, by creating employees' understanding of brand values and engaging them in living brand reality (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001; Drake et al., 2005; Kotler and Heskett, 1992; Thomson et al.). Some publications have provided empirical evidence showing the influence of internal branding on employees' brand-supporting behaviour. Also, empirically revealed the partial mediating effects of employees' brand-supporting attitudes on the extent to which internal branding influence the performance of employees in delivering the brand promise (Punjasiri and Wilson 2009). Internal communications and training programmes were identified as the two most important and relevant mechanisms in the internal branding process (Punjasiri, Wilson, and Evanschitzy, 2008). In a recent study, Foster, Punjasiri and Cheng (2010) have analyzed the literature and found a degree of synergy and Integration between employer branding and internal branding. Rewards and recognitions were considered as the most used method of internal branding. (Patla, Pandit, 2011)

C. *Brand outcomes*

a. *Brand identification*

It is well established fact by many authors that internal branding affects employees in terms of attitude and behavior. According to Punjasiri et al.(2008) internal branding is considered important because it enhances employees sense of pride and belonging to the brand .Also, when employees are informed about the brand working (i.e. what and how of brand) their

sense of belonging increased. The study of (Bergstorm et al., 2002) brings in fact that internal branding creates in employees a sense of oneness by communicating its brand values to them. Also the study of Punjasiri and Wilson, 2007 have reported that internal branding could induce employees brand indentification. Brand indenfication is found to be most influenced by brand internal branding (Punjasiri et al.2009). The study also provides empirical evidence that internal branding exerts some influence on the extent to which employees behave in ways that are consistent with the delivery of the brand promise. It was too disclosed in the same study that employees brand identification act as a mediator in the link between internal branding and employees brand promise delivery. A recent study by Punjasiri and Wilson (2015) found that employees shows their sense of belonging to the brand as will, as they use the word "we" to represent their brand and regarded themselves with the brand. They also found brand indemnification as a partial mediator between internal branding and employee's delivery of the brand promise.

According to Mael (1988), brand identification refers to a sense of belonging to a group and perception of being intertwined with the group's fate; employees see themselves as personifying an entity (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, 1995;) For example, employees who identify themselves with the brand perceive the success or failures of the brand as their own (James et al., 1977). They take pride in their group membership and this is likely to trigger behaviour that enhances an external image of the brand and its organisation (Oakes and Turner, 1986). Kelman (1958) and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) considered brand identification with the brand identity as a driver of brand commitment.

b. Brand commitment

The term brand commitment has been extensively used in marketing literature first of all by (2001). Commitment comes from loyalty and loyalty of an employee is measured in terms of length of service, resonating with the continuance or calculative commitment. (Blomerand, 2006).Punjasiri et. el(2009) provides empirical evidence regarding the influence of internal branding on brand commitment . Study stands for the view that brand commitment has a high level of influence on brand performance and brand commitment acts like a mediator between brand identification and brand loyalty and internal branding and brand performance. Other authors such as kimpakorn and Tocquer(2007) that appropriate human resource management , organizational strategy and leadership and marketing strategy can create a powerful employees brand commitment .In addition the study also highlights the importance of human resource management in terms of brand commitment.

If employees represent a source of brand equity for services, their commitment in supporting the brand should be a priority for top management. Employee's brand commitment to the organization has been covered comprehensively in the management literature. Commitment is usually defined as an employee's effort, measured by job performance and the frequency with which employees consider leaving the organisation. Commitment is an individual's positive or negative attitude toward the organization as a whole (Keller and Aaker, 2007). The term commitment has a variety of definitions, which include: a strong tendency to keep the membership with a specific organization, inclination to put in much effort in the organization and the firm belief to accept the organization's values and objectives. Porter et al. (1974) (Homburg and Stock, 2005) define the term brand commitment as matching one's goal with that of an organization. For them, brand commitment, at least, includes three elements: accepting the organization as well as its objectives and values, tendency to put in extra efforts and willingness to keep the organization membership. Most research on employee commitment emphasizes on the affective dimension, that is, the extent to which employees experience a sense of identification and involvement with an organisation. Some scholars like Iverson and Mcleod (1996), Heffner and Rentsch (2001) for example define employee commitment to organizational values as a willingness to exert additional efforts to achieve the goals of the organisation. Employees' brand commitment is defined as the degree to which

employees identify and are involved with their service brand, are willing to exert additional efforts to achieve the goals of the brand and are interested in remaining with the organisation.

c. Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is the ultimate goal; a company sets for its products merchandise and service. When a consumer or individual responds to the cues from external marketing environment, he buys a brand and may buy it constantly over a period of time and may habituated with it ultimately. This process later results in brand loyalty. The concept of repeated regular Aaker (1991) considered brand loyalty as a measure of the attachment that an employee's has towards a brand. Chaudhuri (1995) defined brand loyalty as a consumer's preference to buy a single brand, name in a set of product class. Brand loyalty once established, bring benefits in terms of recommendations of brand to the relatives or friends (Lau and lee, 1999).

III.   Hypothesis And Research Methodology

A.   Measurement scale

The main purpose of this research is to clarify the inter relationship that exists between internal branding, employer branding and branding outcomes. Based on our literature analysis our research methodology adopted for this study was based on the development of a survey questionnaire. The unit of study in this research was the health sector being the sector which is not already explored in terms of branding in India. Survey was conducted in major hospitals of Chandigarh. Survey was conducted on doctors and interns in major hospitals. To analyze the several concepts in the literature, different scales were indentified.

B.   Information Collecting Method

The survey was conducted in major hospitals of Chandigarh. The questionnaire was distributed to doctors and interns individually and respondents were assured of their anonymity. Out of the 350 questionnaire, 300 were returned giving a response rate of 85%.

C.   Measures

The questionnaire used a 5 point likert scale as it is one of the most common ways of measuring attitudes (Wilson, 2006). Measures for the key constructs (brand indentification, brand commitment, brand loyalty, internal branding, employer branding were adopted from prior literature. Please refer to   for the assessment of the validity and reliability of the scales using confirmatory factor analysis. Further discriminate validity was tested .CFA was conducted as a second order factor analysis .the analysis of reliability of scale using cronbach coefficient alpha was performed using SPSS. The results suggested adequate to very good scale reliability. (Appendix **A)**

### IV. Statistical Techniques Applied

A.   Quantitative Research Findings

Initially bivariate correlations between the items within each construct were inspected and all coefficients fell within an acceptable range for factor analysis .validity is checked through convergent validity, where average variance explained (AVE) in items by their respective constructs is greater than the variance unexplained (AVE). In order to assess the constructs (factors) for convergent validity, the squared multiple correlations from the reliability analysis were used to calculate the average variance explained. This resulted in all factors having an average variance explained (AVE). This resulted in all factors having an average variance explained (AVE) greater than or equal to 0.50 therefore meeting the recommended criteria for convergent validity .The calculated AVE for each of the factor is shown in Appendix B

V. Model and Hypotheses
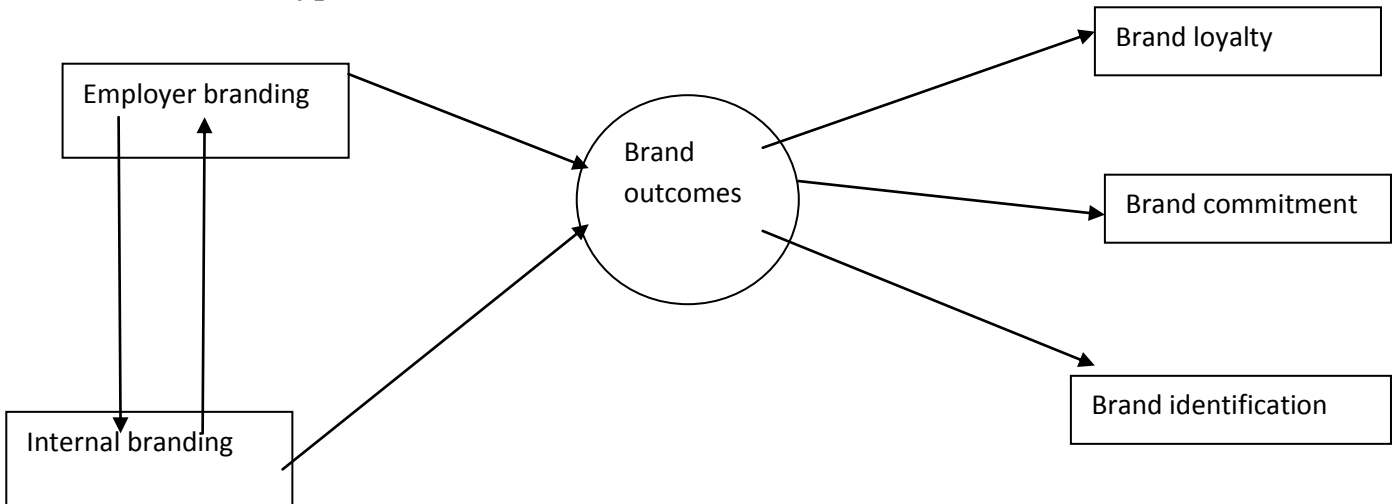
VI. SEM Results of Doctors
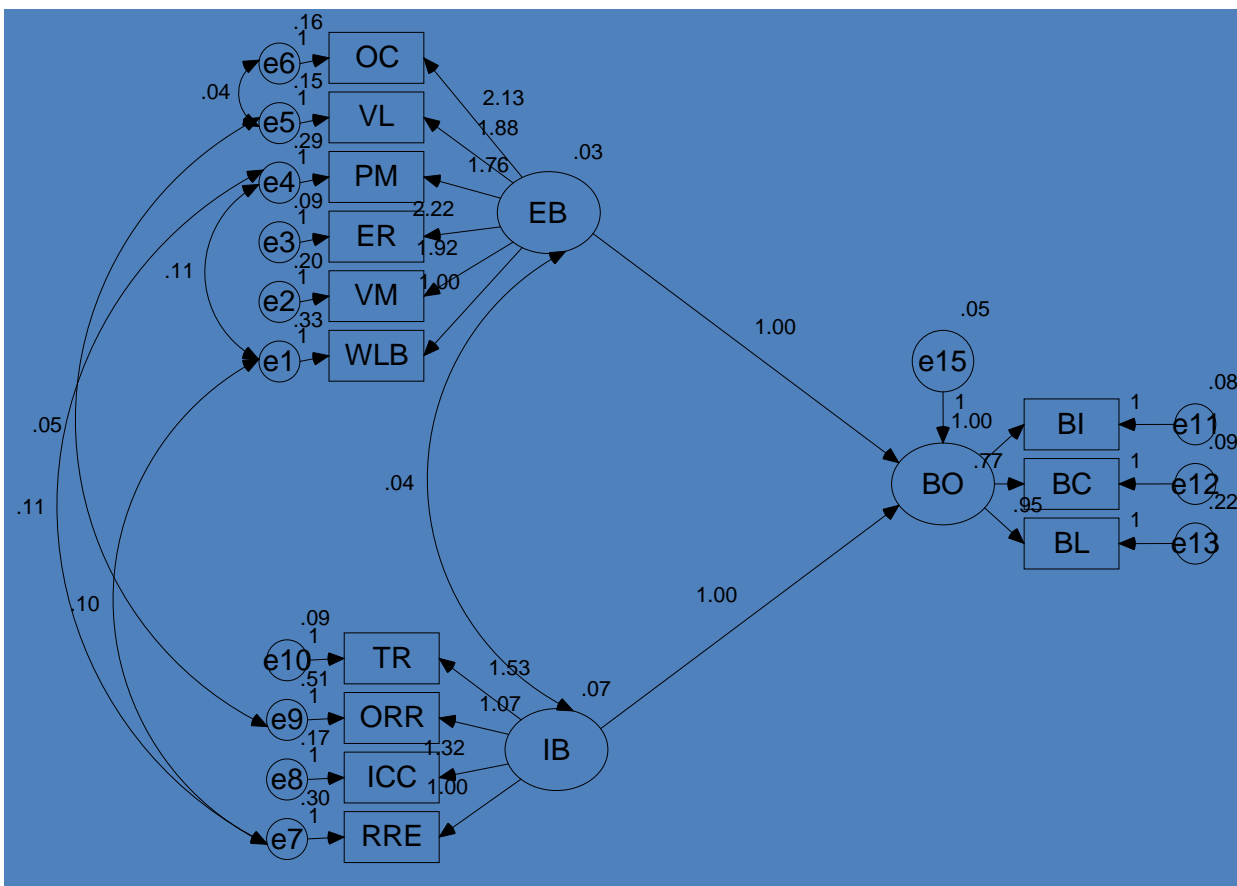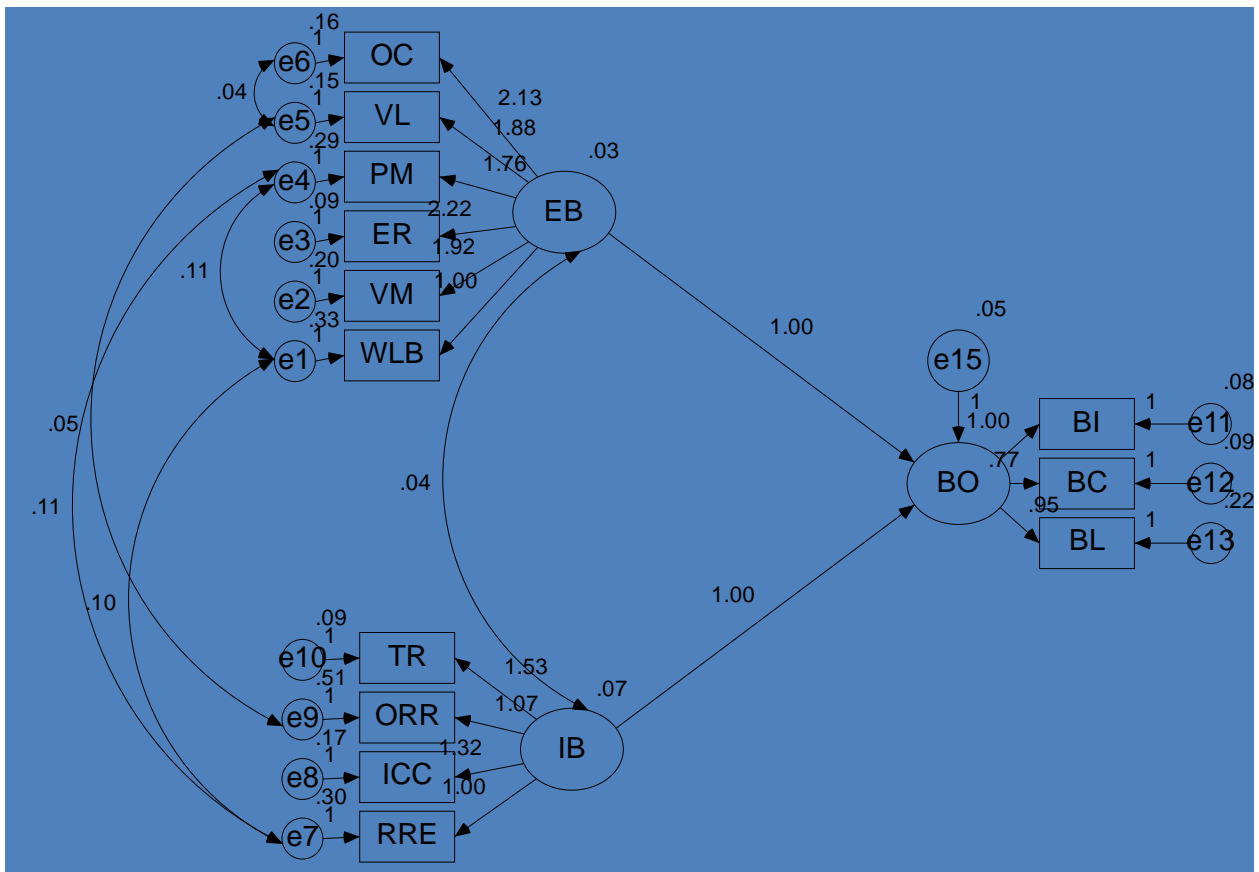
VII. SEM Results of Interns

FIGURE 1 presents our model and the associated hypothesis, applied to the employer and internal branding and outcomes. . The general structure of this model conforms to the employer branding and internal branding literature (reference). There is a link between internal branding and employees brand supporting behaviors (Punjasiri, Wilson (2015), which in terms affects the brand outcomes in terms of brand commitment, brand loyalty, brand performance. In addition to the relationship model, we propose two new relationships that exist between employer branding and internal brand and the affect of employer branding on brand outcomes.

VIII. Statistical techniques applied

The proposed hypotheses were tested on a structural equations model. Nevertheless, before testing the model, the scales were evaluated using the confirmatory factor analysis to determine the scale validity and reliability. Reliability was tested using three tests. First, with Cronbach alpha (requiring values higher than 0.7(reference).Second, with an analysis of composite reliability index, needing values greater than .80 to accept the each scale. Finally, an analysis of the average variance extracted was done to determine the reliability. The results have to be greater than .50.

Having noted the reliability of the instrument, we proceeded to analyze. Its validity using evidence of confidence intervals. The results are shown in table. As for the average variance extracted results verify that the values of average variance extracted (in diagonal) are superior to the covariance (below diagonal) between pairs of factors analysed.Therefore, we can say that the measuring instrument measured what , indeed , was expected to measure.

IX. Conclusion, implications, limitations and future research for employer branding, internal branding and branding outcomes

There was a need to align internal branding and employer branding to ensure that effective branding is achieved. This paper argues that internal branding and employer branding have a great impact on brand outcomes. The frame work interwoven between employer branding , internal branding , and brand outcomes and the synergy exists between all these is of utmost importance to stakeholders including existing employees and customers and staff .This paper and the model also highlights the areas where   moderators between internal and employer branding as well as between internal and employer branding and branding outcomes exists. The through framework represents that internal and employer branding both helps in bringing brand identification, brand loyalty, and brand commitment. . Despite the evidence that personal interactions are generally more important in driving customer service satisfaction, there has been a tendency for service companies to focus more of their attention on the functional/operational factors involved in service delivery. Successful service companies stress the role of organizational culture in promoting on-brand customer service behaviours, but the mechanisms for shaping an on-brand culture (such as internal marketing and internal branding) have typically relied too heavily on communications-led approaches to sustain a lasting effect. The discipline of employer brand management takes a more holistic approach to shaping the culture of the organisation, by seeking to ensure that every people management touch-point is aligned with the brand ethos of the organisation. In providing a robust mechanism for aligning employees' brand experience with the desired customer brand experience, and a common platform for marketing and HR, employer brand management represents a significant evolution in the quest for corporate brand integrity.

Annexure A

Reliability of doctors

Cronbach alpha

Constructs	Employer branding	Internal branding	Brand outcomes
Doctors	.825	.805	.869
Interns	.899	.875	.843

Composite reliability

Constructs	Employer branding	Internal branding	Brand outcomes
Doctors	0.98	0.98	0.99
Interns	0.97	0.98	0.98

Annexure B

Average variance explained

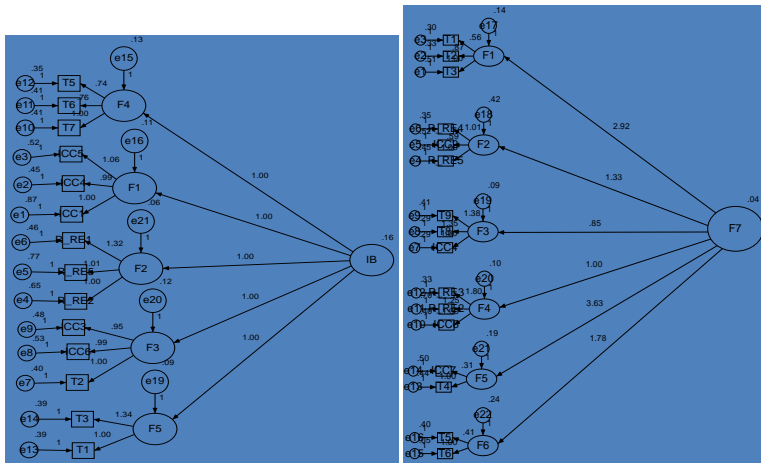| Constructs	Employer branding	Internal branding	Brand outcomes
Doctors	0.81	0.83	0.892
Interns	0.77	0.86	0.85

Annexure C

CFA

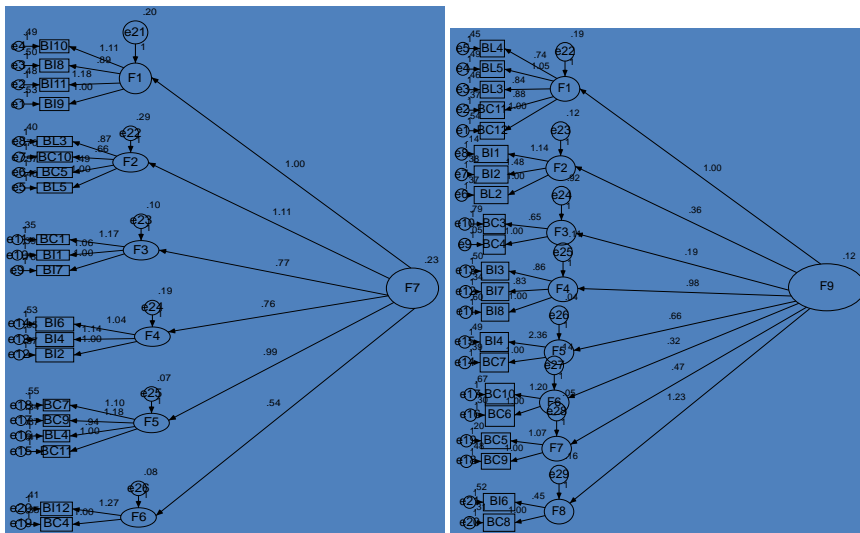Fig1.1 IB Doctors   fig 1.2 IB Interns
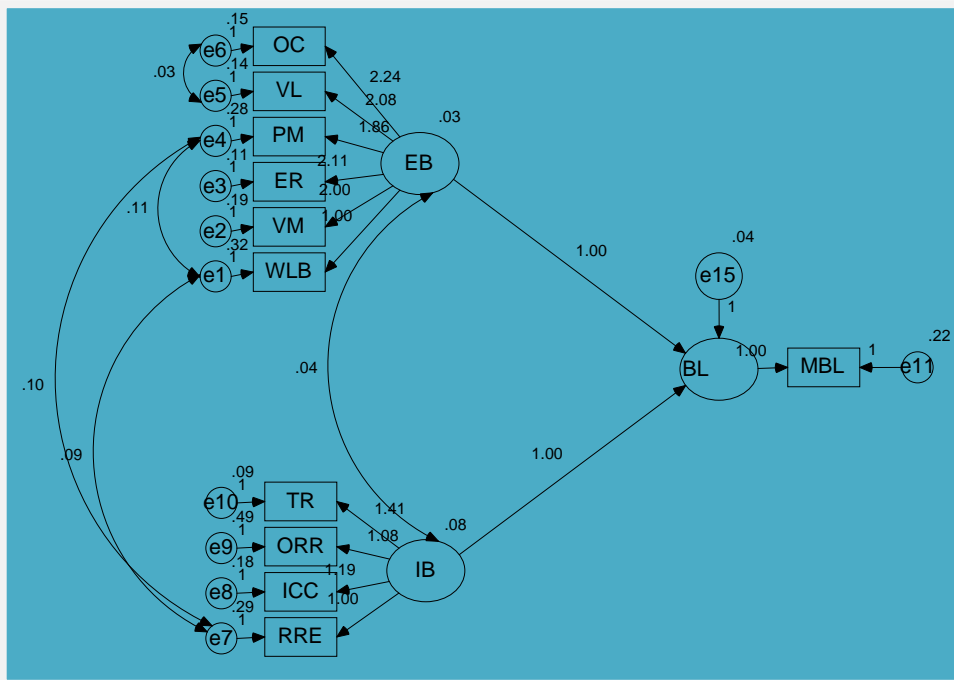

Fig 1.3 BO Doctors   Fig 1.4 BO Interns

Fig2.1 Overall impact of internal and employer branding on brand loyalty
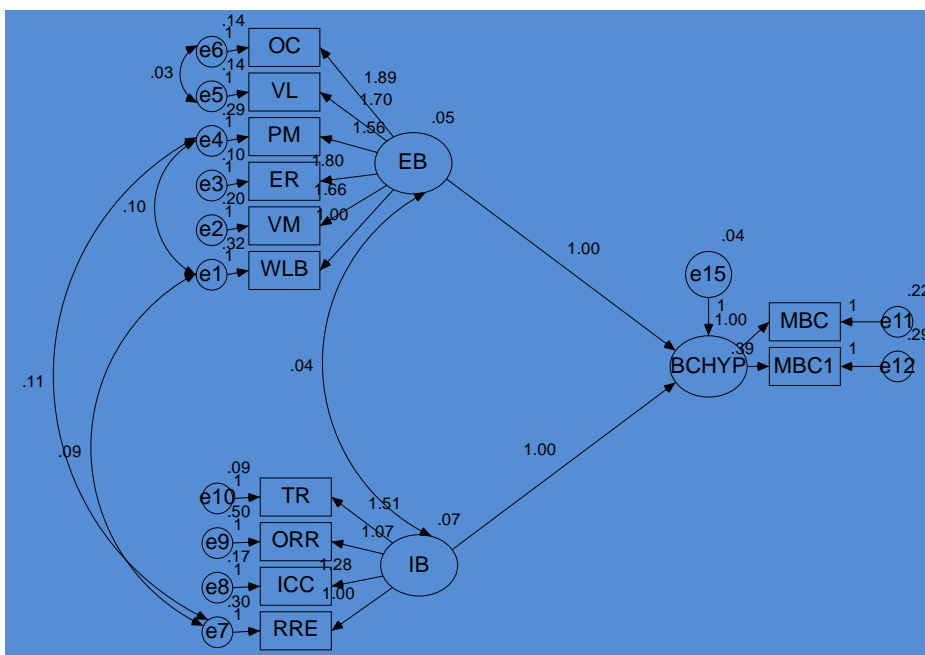

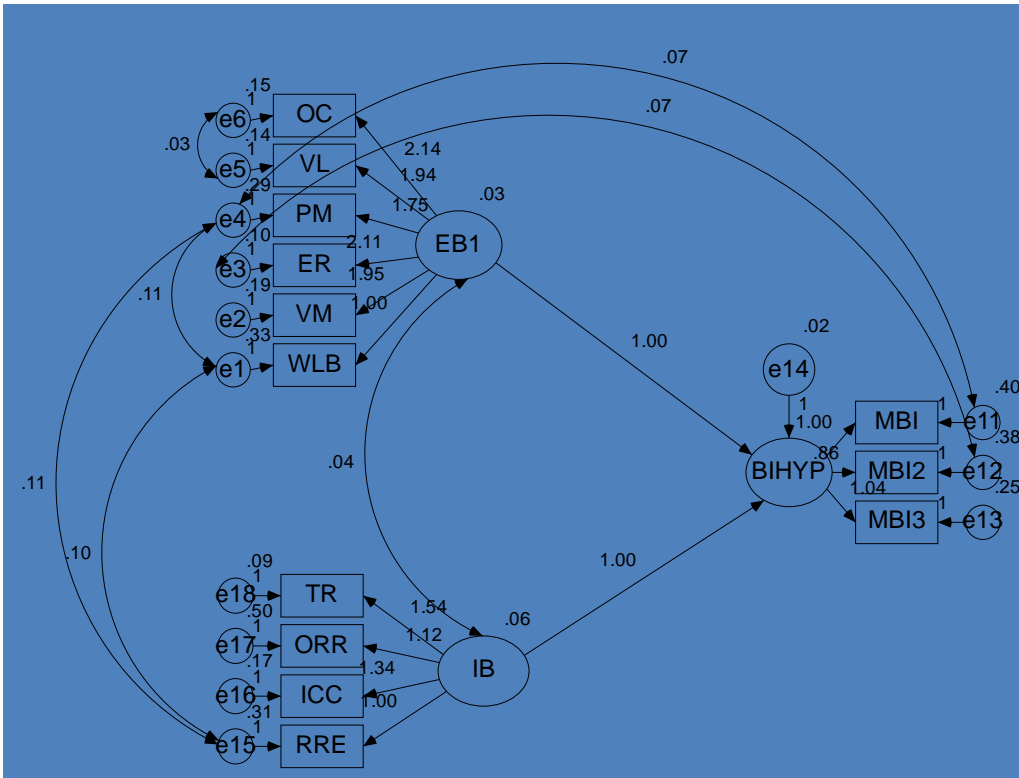Fig 2.2 Overall impact of internal and employer branding on brand commitment

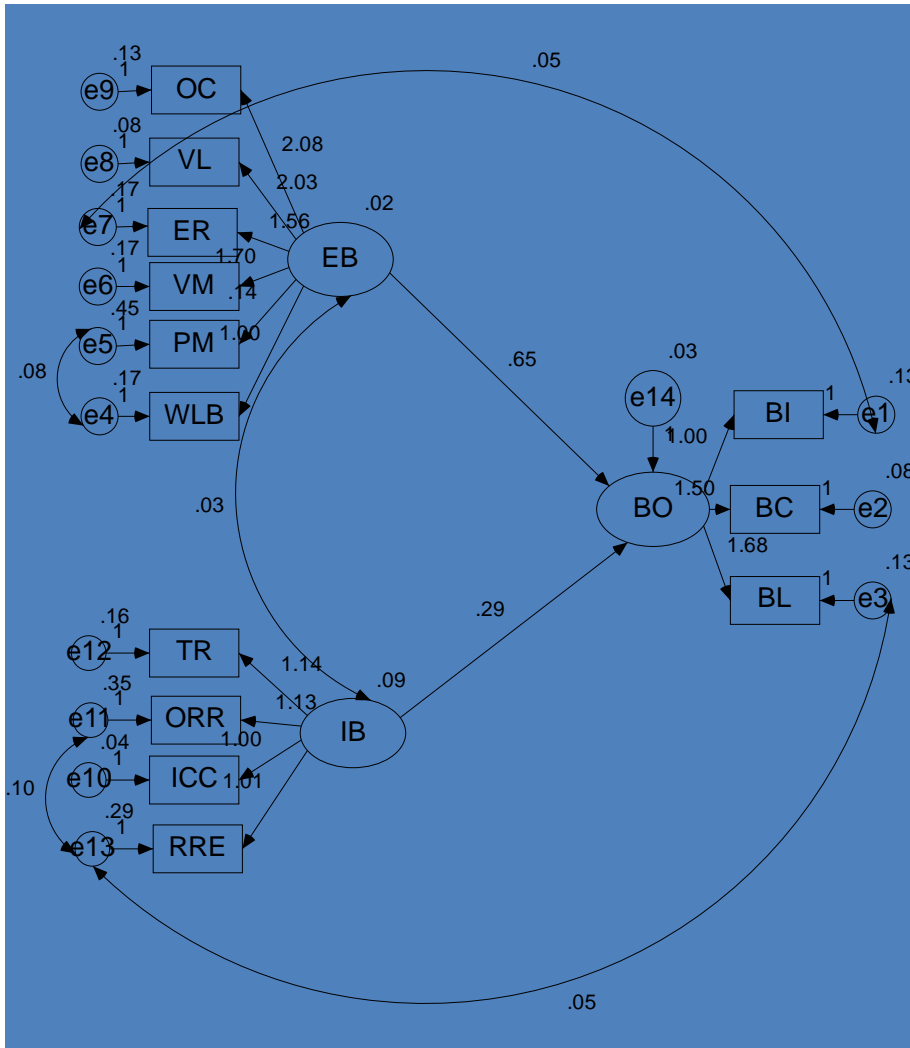Fig 2.3 Overall impact of internal and employer branding on brand identification

Fig 2.4 **Overall impact of employer branding and internal branding on brand outcomes**
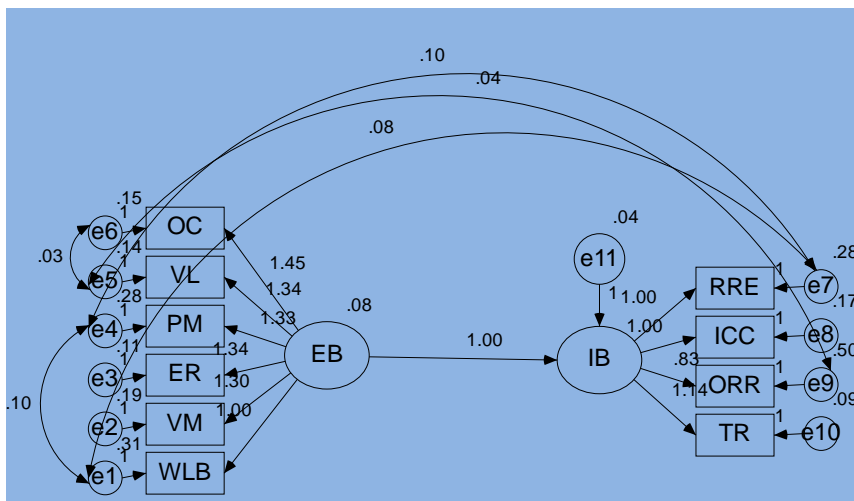

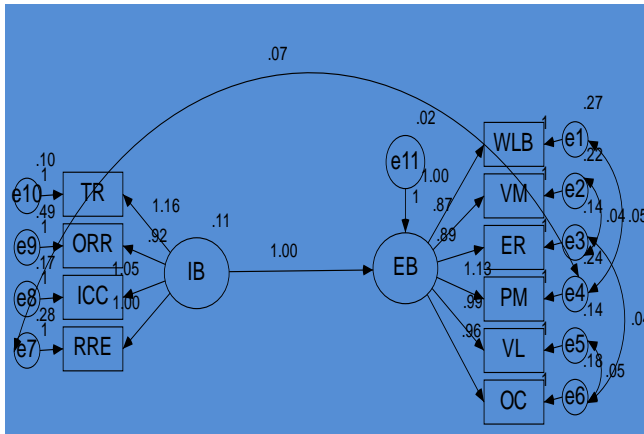**Fig 2.5 Overall impact of employer branding on internal branding**

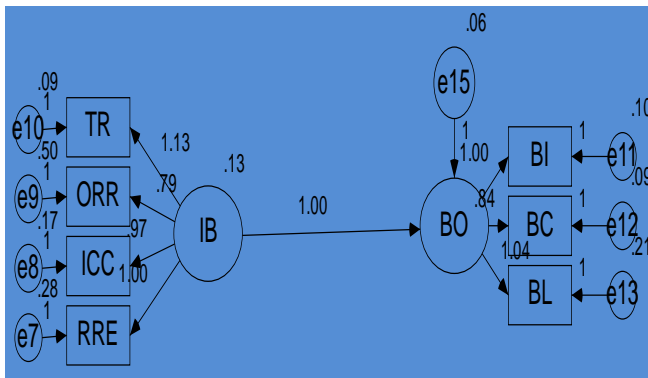Fig 2.6 Overall impact of internal branding on employer branding

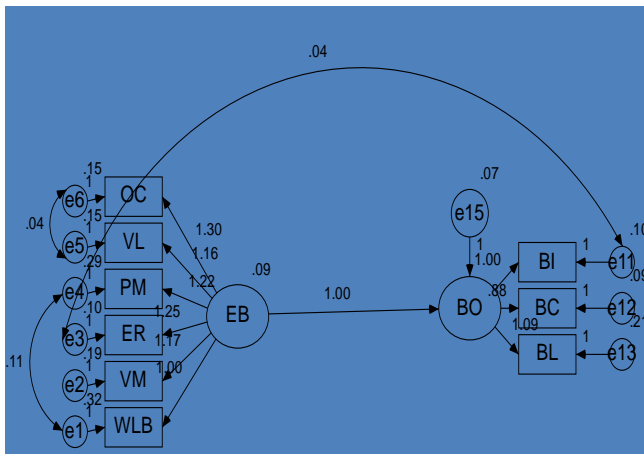Fig 2.7 Overall impact of internal branding on brand outcomes

fig 2.8 Overall impact of employer branding on brand outcomes

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