



The Internal Branding Practices and Employee Brand Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Effect of Employee Brand fit

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Abstract

This study integrates equity theory and social exchange theory to explore the impact of internal branding practices on employees' brand citizenship behaviour (BCB) through the mechanism of employee-brand fit. Self-administered questionnaires were randomly distributed to 377 employees in Nigeria's telecommunication industry. However, only 254 were found to be useful in the present study giving the response rate of 68%. The empirical results show that brand training and brand leadership have significant impact on employees' BCB. In the same vein, significant relationship was revealed between brand leadership and employee-brand fit, but insignificant impact was established between brand training and brand fit. Moreover, it was discovered that employee-brand fit has significant impact on employees' BCB. Employee-brand fit was found to mediate the relationship between brand leadership and employees' BCB while it does not mediate the relationship between brand training and employees' BCB. Practically, our study has provided the management of companies in the telecommunication industry with the importance of internal branding for employees' outcome such as brand fit and BCB. Therefore, the management of companies in the telecommunication industry should prioritise, promote, and improve their internal branding management. Implications and directions for future study were discussed.

Keywords: internal branding, brand citizenship behavior, employee brand fit

1 Introduction

Organisations particularly the service brands type are focusing on brand management in order to achieve long-lasting competitive advantage. Traditionally, organisations focused mainly on their external customers in building and managing their brands (22). However, due to the need to balance internal and external brand management, organisations are now focusing on their internal customers, who are their employees in order to sustain their brands' competitive advantage (43). This is because of the importance of employee's brand consistent behaviors in achieving competitive advantage particularly during service encounter (43, 8). As employee's brand behavior is considered to represent the heart of the organization particularly service brands (19). Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) have argued that the delivery of brand promise to customers requires employees to exhibit brand consistent behavior. Hence, brand consistent behavior plays an important role for the success of the brand (9). Despite the importance of employee's brand consistent behavior, few attempts have been made to analyze how to instill the firm's brand values and to encourage them to manifest positive brand consistent behavior (9, 29, 10), leaving the question on how to motivate employees to exhibit brand consistent behavior unanswered (7, 20, 16). This study examines how the adoption of internal branding practices can promote employee's brand consistent behavior both directly and indirectly through the mechanism of employee brand fit. Brand consistent behavior is viewed to be

either in-role behavior or extra role behavior (43). In-role behavior is viewed as prescribed behavior that is set up by organization for its employees to follow in order to achieve brand goals. Meanwhile, extra role behavior is considered as non-prescribed behavior that is not recognized by the formal reward system, which employees voluntarily engage in to achieve brand goals (42). In particular, the present study is on extra role and conceptualized it as brand citizenship behavior (BCB) in line with the argument put forward by Burmann and Zeplin (2005). The extra role is considered because it is argued to be superior in achieving brand differentiation as compared to the in-role behavior (9, 42). Previous studies have provided empirical support on the impact of internal branding practices on employee's BCB (42, 9, 10, 13, 26). However, limited research has been conducted on the impact of practices such as brand leadership and brand training on employee BCB. Specifically, the question on how organization can use internal branding to enhance their employee BCB is still unanswered. Moreover, the mediating effect of employee brand fit on the relationship between internal branding practices and employee BCB is still missing in literatures. Acknowledging these gaps in literatures, this study intends to adopt a survey research design to draw evidence from both frontline and backstage employees in the telecommunication industry's context in order to show the importance of internal branding for enhancing employee's level of brand fit and encouraging BCB towards their brands. It is therefore expected that this study will contribute by providing empirical support on the impact of internal branding towards employee BCB. Similarly, given that studies rarely encapsulate the importance of brand fit in

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internal branding studies, this study highlights the importance of internal branding in enhancing employee brand fit.

The study is constructed in the following way. First, we provide the theoretical background of hypothesized relationships. Followed by conceptual framework, methodology and present the findings of the study. Finally, discussions, implications and some insight for future research were provided.

2 Research questions

RQ 1: What are the participants' attitudes towards the importance of stance taking and engagement in writing a dissertation?

RQ 2: What challenges do participants encounter in stance taking and engagement during writing their dissertations?

3 Literature Review (HEADING 1)

3.1 Theoretical background

Our study integrates social exchange theory (5) and equity theory (Adams, 1963) to provide the theoretical underpinnings of our model. In particular, social exchange theory underlies our model as it is considered as the most influential theory that best explains workplace behavior of employees (41). It was further argued to explain why employees engage in behaviors that are not rewarded and not contractually enforceable, but yet such behaviors are beneficial to the organization. Specifically, the concept of social exchange theory provide the importance of exchange relationships that exist between the organization and individual employees (10). It is therefore argued that high social exchange will exist where the employees have high levels of trust, respect, loyalty and commitment with the organization (13). Moreover, employees that believe that reciprocal value exchange may occur between them and the organization are more likely willing to establish exchange relationship with the organization.

Internal branding has been considered to be the process through which organization promote the brand to employees, providing them with brand knowledge and align their behavior with the brand values (3, 46). Therefore, it is argued here that when individual employee's needs are satisfied through exchange relationships, he or she will engage in a behavior that is not rewarded (BCB) in order to achieve brand goals. Furthermore, our study argued that through internal branding practices such as brand leadership and brand training organization align and empower the employee to behave in consistent manner so as to deliver the brand promise made to customers.

In addition, our study stress the importance of equity theory (Adam, 1963) which underpin internal branding implementation and is based on the notion that individuals evaluate their fit with the brand by comparing their inputs with the corresponding outputs (6, 2). Specifically, the theory was used in our study to underpin the mediating role of employee brand fit on the relationship between internal branding and employee BCB. It is argued here that employees are at fit with brand if they perceive balance between their inputs (effort, abilities, commitment, compliance to brand policies) and outputs from the organization (such as reward, required training, appropriate leadership, and communication) (34). Therefore, employees respond to this by increasing their efforts, commitment and may likely engage in extra role (BCB) in order to achieve brand goals.

3.2 Internal Branding Practices and Brand Citizenship Behavior

Internal branding practices such as brand training and brand leadership have been argued to have great impact on the

behaviors and attitudes of employees (39, 4, 10, 44, 29). Internal branding literatures has established that employee's behaviors and attitudes plays an important role in the success of the brand; as it has great impact on the perception of customers toward the brand (35, 28, 39, 9, 3). Punjaisri et al., (2008) assert that organizations require their employees to behave in consistent manner particularly during service encounter; hence, organizations are focusing on internal brand building to ensure that employees are attitudinal and behaviorally ready to deliver the brand promise made to their customers. Therefore, internal branding is seen as a doctrine to ensure that employee's behave in a consistent manner.

In particular, Wallace, Chernatony, and Buil, (2013) in their study argued that the behaviors of the leaders in organization have impact on the employees behavior and attitude. They further asserted that when an employee perceives that the leader's support behavior is appropriate, he/she will reciprocate with a behavior that will benefit the organization, hence engaging in BCB. Moreover, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that certain types of leadership behavior enhance employee brand commitment, and committed employees are more likely to exhibit BCB. Similarly, brand training has been considered as a means to encourage employees to live the brand (46). Therefore, providing employees with brand training has been argued to influence their behaviors and attitudes towards the brand (36). Furthermore, empirical evidence has shown that brand leadership and brand training significantly affect employee BCB (29, 44, 10). In addition, in line with social exchange theory (5), employees who perceive that organization has provided required training and appropriate brand leadership such will encourage them to exhibit positive behavior such as BCB in order to achieve organizational objectives. Hence, based on these arguments, the present study formulates the following hypotheses:

H1 there is significant relationship between brand training and employee's brand citizenship behavior.

H2 there is significant relationship between brand leadership and employee's brand citizenship behavior.

3.3 Employee Brand Fit and Brand Citizenship Behavior

The concept of employee brand fit has been considered by researchers to play an important role in determining the perception of employee's towards the organization and its brand, hence affecting their attitudes and behaviors. Studies have shown that employees that perceive a fit between their values and the values of the brand; may be encouraged to have high brand loyalty, identification satisfaction and brand commitment, and hence encouraging them to exhibit brand consistent behavior such as brand citizenship behavior (49, 25, 30). In particular, employees who share values with the organization, are likely to help its cause and more willing to exhibit extra behaviors to achieve the objective of the organization (49, 11) Similarly, Helm et al. (2016) argued that employees who are at fit with their organization are more likely to exhibit positive brand behavior such as brand citizenship behavior. Furthermore, Lauver and Kristof-Brown, (2001) in their study argued that higher employee brand fit leads to high employee BCB. It is therefore argued in this study that employees that are fit with their brand are more likely to be willing to engage in extra role behavior (BCB). Therefore, based on these arguments the present study formulates the following hypothesis.

H3 there is significant relationship between employee brand fit and brand citizenship behavior.

3.4 Internal Branding and Employee Brand Fit

Aligning the attitudes and behaviors of employees with the brand values has been argued to encourage employees to behave in consistent fashion so that the goals of the brand can be achieved (36). As such, there is a need for the organization to encourage a high fit between the values of the brand and employee's personal values (24). Boukis and Gounaris, (2014) asserted that while employees may engage themselves into jobs that best fit their interests, skills, and abilities, but due to changes in the environment they may find themselves in a state of mismatch or misfit situation. They further argued that organization should restore the fit through their internal brand building. Therefore, it is argued here that such employees require more training and appropriate brand leadership in order to achieve a good fit with the organization. In addition, Chatman (1991) opined that employees are provided with better understanding of their roles, values, abilities and expected behaviors through practices such as training. Hence, the more organizations attempt to influence their employees, the more similar the employee's values becomes to the organization's brand values.

Moreover, it was argued that internal branding not only improves employee's brand knowledge, but also enhance their brand fit (37). As such through internal branding management, organizations are argued to develop and enhance shared values between employees and the organization's brand (48). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argued that brand fit can be achieved through human resource activities such as brand training. Hence, our study argues that organizations can enhance employee brand fit through internal brand management to achieve brand goals. In line with these arguments, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H4 there is significant relationship between brand training and employee brand fit

H5 there is significant relationship between brand leadership and employee brand fit

3.5 The Mediating Effect of Employee Brand Fit

Based on inferences made in H1-H5, the study proposes a correlation between internal branding, employee brand fit and employee BCB. Studies have shown that employee brand fit can be enhanced by organizations through internal brand building, (7, 9, 8, 37). Employee brand fit is viewed as the compatibility between the employees and the organization when the organization provides the employees with what they need (30). It is therefore proposed that employee can be at fit with the organization when they are provided with the required brand training and appropriate brand leadership. Furthermore, research evidence has shown that employee brand fit can evoke an altruistic spirit within employee, motivating the employee to exhibit BCB (19, 49, 25). It is therefore suggested that employee brand fit contribute to brand citizenship behavior. Thus, employees who perceive that the organization has provided them with required brand training and appropriate brand leadership such will enhance their brand fit, which motivate them to exhibit brand citizenship behavior.

Review of literatures has shown that organizations through internal brand management, promote a shared brand understanding of brand values among its employees thereby ensuring employees become better brand representatives (27, 36, 46, 20). Consequently, adoption of internal branding can promote brand fit and help employees to exhibit brand consistent behavior such as BCB in order to deliver brand promise to customers. In particular, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) opined that the fit with a brand is prerequisite for brand commitment and this can be achieved through internal branding practices such as brand leadership and brand training.

They further argued that brand commitment results in BCB when employees are provided with more brand knowledge and effective leadership. In addition, Boukis et al. (2014) opined that organizations are focusing on satisfying the needs of their employees through internal branding so as to produce higher fit with their brands which in turn will manifest in brand consistent behavior such as BCB. Moreover, in line with equity theory (Adams, 1963) when the employees perceive equity between their inputs with the corresponding outputs (such as required brand training, and appropriate brand leadership) from the organization, then such employees are said to be at fit and are motivated to exhibit BCB. Hence, based on these arguments the following hypotheses are formulated

H6 employee brand fit mediate the relationship between brand training and employee BCB

H7 employee brand fit mediate the relationship between brand leadership and employee BCB

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Samples and Procedure

A total of 377 questionnaires were randomly distributed to both front line and back stage employees of telecommunication industry in Nigeria. Specifically, 282 were returned and only 254 were usable while the remaining were rejected due to either incomplete or several missing data or as a result of outliers. In line with the argument of Sekaran and Bougie (2010) a sample between 30 and 500 is appropriate for most studies; hence the sample size in this study is considered sufficient. The telecommunication industry has been chosen because it is believed to be the best platform to test the model in this study. Specifically, the industry is faced with high competition; which requires encouraging employees to exhibit BCB in order to deliver brand promise in a consistent manner so as to achieve competitive advantage. Moreover, an empirical study has revealed that employee brand behavior has been a major problem faced by the industry (15). Similarly, Adeleke, and Aminu (2012) in their study revealed that 70% of Nigeria telecommunication are not satisfied with the behaviors of the employees (40).

4.2 Measurement Items

Brand Citizenship Behavior in our study is viewed as employee's behavior exhibit on voluntary basis to project a number of generic behaviors that enhance the brand identity. The BCB construct was measured using 18 items adapted from Shaari et al. (2012). In particular, BCB is measured as multi-dimensional construct consisting of 4 dimensions. These include:

Brand Helping Behavior is viewed to as the extent to which employee have positive attitude, friendliness, and helpfulness towards colleagues and customers of the brand (42). Brand helping behavior was measured using 8 items from Shaari et al., (2012) instrument.

Sportsmanship is considered as the extent to which employee engage for the brand without complaining even if such may cause inconvenience and show willingness to engage for the brand at high cost (42). The dimension was measured using 2 items from Shaari et al., (2012) instrument.

Brand Endorsement this refers to the extent to which the employees recommend the brand to others in non-job-related situations (42). In particular, brand endorsement was measured using 3 items from Shaari et al., (2012).

Self-development refers to employee's willingness to continuously enhance brand-related skills. It was also measured using 5 items from Shaari et al., (2012).

Brand training in the present study was defined as the systematic and planned effort by organization to develop and

provide employees with brand related understanding (knowledge) and skills needed to enhance his or her brand-consistent behavior (BCB) in order to achieve brand goals. The construct was measured using 4 items from Chang et al. (2012) and Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, and Wilson (2009).

Brand leadership is defined in this study as the approach or style a leader used to motivate his or her followers (employees) to engage or exhibit brand consistent behavior (BCB). It was considered to consist of two dimensions namely transactional brand leadership (TSL) and transformational brand leadership (TSF).

Transactional brand leadership is defined as leaders' approach to motivate his/her followers to act on behalf of corporate brand by emphasizing to a contingency rationale in follower's minds. It was measured using 10 items adapted from Morhart et al. (2009).

Transformational brand leadership is defined as leader's approach to motivate his/her followers to act on behalf of corporate brand by appealing to their values and personal conviction. The dimension was measured using 20 items adapted from Morhart et al. (2009).

Employee brand fit is viewed in this study as the compatibility between individual and the organization or brand that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs or they share similar values or both. The variable was operationalized as one-dimension construct with 4 items adapted from Boukis and Gounaris (2014).

All responses to items are measured on seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree.

4.3 Analysis Method

This study employed partial least square (PLS path modeling) using smartpls 3.0 method to analyzed the results. The technique was used as it was argued to be more appropriate for real world application and more appropriate when dealing with complex model (18). Furthermore, it was used to avoid any problem of normality that may arise in the course of the data analysis. In addition, it was considered to be more superior in assessing mediation, hence the technique is suitable in our study (33).

4.4 Common Method Variance

The data in this study were collected from one source that is the employee, and therefore this creates potential for common method variance (CMV). In accordance with Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, (2003) the study employed both procedural and statistical measures to address the problem of CMV. In particular, procedural measures eliminate item ambiguity such as double barrel questions and allowing the respondents anonymity. Furthermore, Harman's single factor as a statistical measure was also used and the result revealed that no single factor accounted for more than 50% of the variance. Hence, CMV is not a problem in our study.

5 Results

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

A total of 254 completed questionnaires from both frontline and back stage employees were used in this study. Among these employees, the demographic results revealed that 62% were customer contact staffs, while 32% had a university degree. Furthermore, majority of the respondents had quit long working experience and about 50% were contract staff. And in addition, the data obtained shows that about 27% of the respondents were from the customer relations department/unit.

5.2 Evaluation of PLS-SEM Results

Based on the suggestion made by Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser, (2014) both the outer model (measurement model) and the inner model (structural model) evaluation were conducted. All the constructs were measured with reflective measurement models, suggesting that the latent variable caused the measured variables (45). In order to assess the validity of the scales, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed, leading to some items deletions. Specifically, items with lower loadings were deleted in order to increase the composite reliability and the average variance extracted (18). Therefore, all the indicators loadings loaded above the threshold of 0.60 as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). In general, the results revealed that reliability and the validity of the measurement instrument are good. In this study composite reliability (CR) was used to evaluate internal consistency of the constructs as it is argued to be more appropriate Hair et al. (2014) and were found to be above the threshold of 0.70 this indicates that they are satisfactory. Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE) and all values are higher than the acceptable value of 0.50 (18). Specifically, in this study composite reliability (CR) ranges from 0.807 to 0.929 and average variance extracted (AVE) ranges from 0.524 to 0.819 as contain in table 1 below. Furthermore, using Fornell and Lacker (1983) criterion, the discriminant validity was found to be satisfactory; as the square roots of the AVE of all the constructs are higher than the factor correlation as shown in Table 2 below.

After achieving the measurement model, the next we evaluate the structural model (inner model) results. Specifically, the main and the mediating hypotheses were analyzed using PLS-SEM bootstrap analysis based on the arguments by researchers on its advantages over other methods of testing mediation (18, 32, 50) as shown in Figure 2 below. In this study, we followed the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2014) to assess the inner model. First we determine the path coefficient and the results revealed significant relationship between brand training and BCB at ($\beta 0.266$, $p < 0.00$), and between brand leadership and BCB at ($\beta 0.558$, $p < 0.00$). In addition, significant relationships was found between the mediator and the dependent variable at ($\beta 0.664$, $p < 0.00$). On the direct relationship between the mediator and the independent variables, brand leadership was found to have significant relationship with brand fit at ($\beta 0.615$, $p < 0.00$) while brand training was not significant with the mediator ($\beta 0.066$, $p < 0.279$). Moreover, the indirect relationship between brand training and employee BCB was not significant, and hence, employee brand fit does not mediate the relationship ($\beta 0.043$, $p < 0.279$). On the other hand, significant indirect relationship was established between brand leadership and employee's BCB ($\beta 0.408$, $p < 0.00$), hence employee brand fit mediates the relationship between brand leadership and employee BCB. This is containing in Figure 2 and Table 3 and 4 below. In addition, we determined the R^2 which was argued to predict the accuracy of a model (18). Specifically, the R-square for both direct and indirect relationships were determined. The results revealed the R^2 value of 0.42 and 0.61 for both brand fit and employee BCB and are all considered moderate in line with Chin, (1998). Moreover, using stone-Gesser criterion which assume that inner model must be able to provide evidence of predictive relevance of the endogenous variables indicators, we determined the predictive relevance Q^2 of this model (21). In this study, we used PLS-SEM blindfolding procedures to assessed the relevance of the inner model to obtain the cross-validated redundancy measure for endogenous variables (18). Based on Henseler et al. (2009) suggestion our inner model is assumed to have predictive relevance as contain in Table 5.

Table 1: Convergent Validity

Variables	Items	Loading	AVE	CR
BHB	BCB2	0.725	0.641	0.877
	BCB6	0.845		
	BCB7	0.774		
	BCB8	0.852		
S-P	BCB9	0.793	0.677	0.807
	BCB10	0.851		
	BCB11	0.900		
B-E	BCB13	0.910	0.819	0.901
	BCB14A	0.838		
S-D	BCB14B	0.731	0.524	0.814
	BCB14D	0.655		
	BCB14E	0.658		
TSF	TSF1	0.700	0.545	0.929
	TSF2	0.830		
	TSF3	0.702		
	TSF9	0.741		
	TSF11	0.734		
	TSF12	0.845		
	TSF13	0.738		
	TSF14	0.781		
	TSF16	0.693		
	TSF17	0.667		
	TSF20	0.830		
	TSL5	0.729		
	TSL6	0.865		
	TSL7	0.735		
TSL	TSL8	0.842	0.568	0.886
	TSL9	0.644		
	TSL10	0.681		
	BT1	0.822		
	BT2	0.883		
BT	BT3	0.825	0.716	0.910
	BT4	0.853		

Note: (B-E=brand endorsement, BF=brand fit, BHB=brand helping behavior, BT=brand training, S-D=brand self-development, SP=sportsmanship, TSF=transformational brand leadership, TSL=transactional brand leadership).

Table 2: Latent Variable Correlation (Discriminant Validity)

Construct	B-E	BF	BHB	BT	S-D	SP	TSF	TSL
B-E	0.905*							
BF	0.422	0.813*						
BHB	0.467	0.65	0.801*					
BT	0.26	0.386	0.602	0.847*				
S-D	0.513	0.527	0.679	0.481	0.723*			
SP	0.617	0.487	0.586	0.293	0.425	0.823*		
TSF	0.463	0.636	0.581	0.44	0.528	0.361	0.738*	
TSL	0.359	0.528	0.523	0.517	0.325	0.413	0.56	0.754*

Note: *Square root of AVE explained (B-E=brand endorsement, BF=brand fit, BHB=brand helping behavior, BT=brand training, S-D=brand self-development, SP=sportsmanship, TSF=transformational brand leadership, TSL=transactional brand leadership)

Table 3: Path Coefficient (Direct relationship)

Hypotheses/Path	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T (O/STDEV)	Statistics P Values	Decision
BT -> BCB	0.246	0.039	6.276	0	Supported
BL -> BCB	0.346	0.054	6.4	0	Supported
BL -> BF	0.614	0.051	12.039	0	Supported
BT -> BF	0.062	0.058	1.07	0.285	Not supported
BF -> BCB	0.344	0.05	6.912	0	Supported

Note *significant at 0.01

Table 4: Mediation Results (Indirect relationship)

Hypotheses/Path	Original (O)	Sample Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T ((O/STDEV))	Statistics	P Values	Decision
BL ->BF ->BCB	0.211	0.041	5.194		0	Supported
BT ->BF ->BCB	0.021	0.02	1.071		0.285	Not supported

Table 5: Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Construct	SSO	SSE	Q^2
BCB	3,048.00	2,363.14	0.225
BF	1,016.00	760.228	0.252

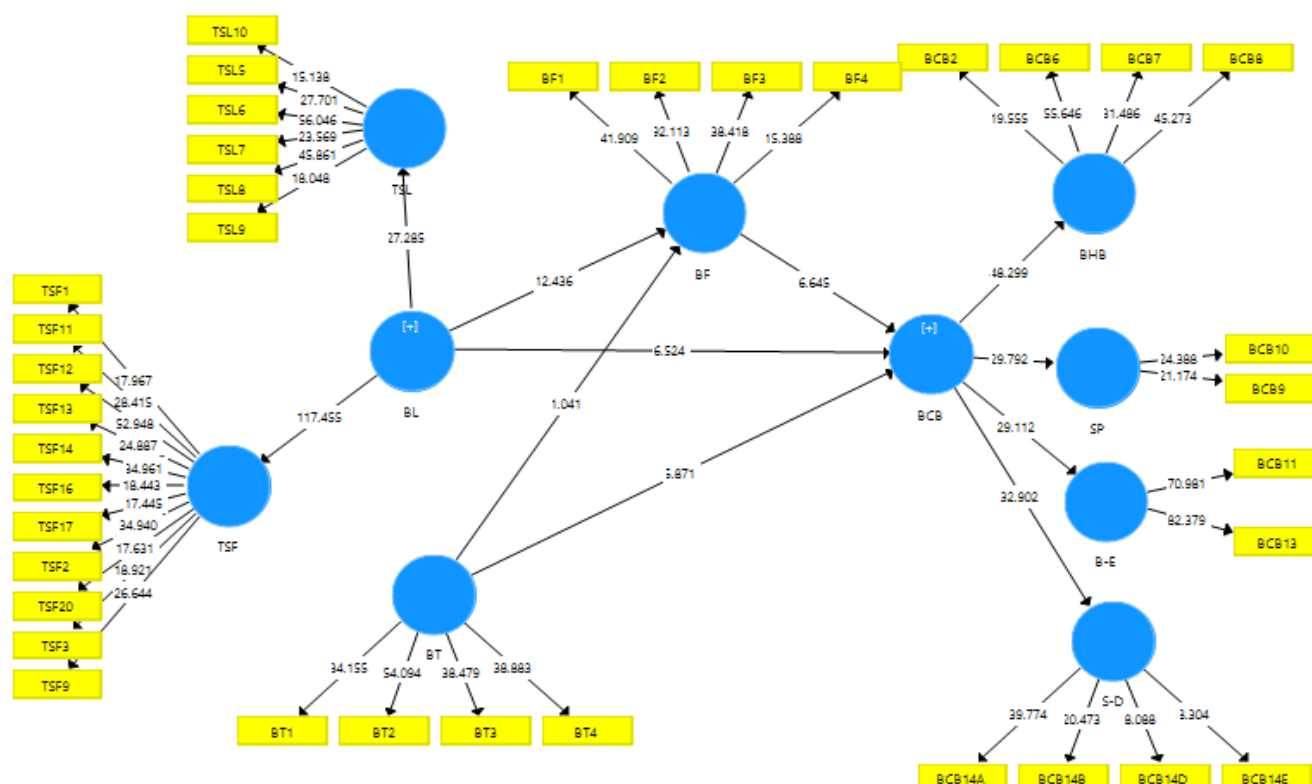


Figure 2: Structural Model Results

6 Discussion

Existing literatures has suggested the effect of internal branding practices such as brand training and brand leadership on employee's BCB (9, 29, 44, 10). This study has further redefined the existing literatures by investigating how internal branding practices such as brand training and brand leadership influence employee's BCB through the mediating effect of employee brand fit. In addition, the study has provided the empirical support to the impact of brand leadership on employee brand fit as other studies are basically augments (8, 46). Moreover, the study has assessed the model from both frontline and back stage employees' perspectives.

This study provides empirical support on the impact of internal branding practices towards employee's BCB. The result has shown that the organization can use internal brand building to trigger employees to exhibit extra role behavior in order to achieve brand goals. In particular, brand training was found to have a great impact on employee's BCB. This provides further support to previous studies that argued that

brand training exerts certain degree of impact on employee's BCB (10, 13, 14). However, our findings contradicted the empirical finding of King and So, (2013) which revealed insignificant impact of brand training on employee brand-building behavior. This study has further provided empirical support on the impact of brand leadership towards employee's BCB. This is also in line with findings of previous studies (44, 29). Moreover, this study has found insignificant impact of employee brand training on employee brand fit. Our finding has contradicted the finding of Matanda and Ndubisi, (2013). However the result is in line with the finding of Chatman, (1991), that is training was found to have insignificant impact on organization fit. Furthermore, the findings of this study have revealed significant effect of brand leadership on employee brand fit. Previously, the impact of brand leadership on brand fit was not empirically tested, but rather it was conceptually argued to have impact on brand fit (46). Therefore, our study has provided empirical support to the arguments of previous studies.

In addition, in line with previous studies (19, 7), this study has further provided empirical support on the influence of brand fit towards employee's BCB. This has revealed that employees that are fit with the brand are more likely to exhibit BCB that may strengthen brand values. Similarly, the finding of this study has revealed that employee brand fit does not mediate the relationship between brand training and employee BCB. Hence, the result provides inverse empirical support to equity theory; that is the employees perceive that there is imbalance between their inputs and corresponding outputs, which demotivate them to exhibit BCB. On the other hand, brand fit was found to mediate the relationship between brand leadership and employee's BCB. This has empirically supported the equity theory by Adams, (1963) which assume that as employee perceive balance between their inputs and corresponding outputs such employee will be motivated to exhibit BCB.

7 Managerial Implications

The implication of this study to the management is that it is important that internal branding be used to encourage positive brand behavior. Therefore, this study has revealed the importance of internal branding for employee's outcome such as brand fit and BCB. As such, management should attempt to use internal branding to enhance employee's BCB. Furthermore, internal brand building can also be used to enhance employee's brand fit which in turn will motivate employees to exhibit BCB. Hence, it is important for the management to be informed that appropriate brand leadership and brand training programs need to be conducted. This is to ensure that employees are provided with better skills and understanding of brand roles and their responsibilities so that they will behave as expected particularly during service encounters.

8 Directions for Future Research

The present study adds to the current knowledge that internal branding has great impact on employee's BCB. While most of the existing studies focused on only customer contact employees, this study has considered both frontline and backstage employees who are considered to play important role towards achieving competitive advantage. The study has also provided the empirical evidence by showing the link between internal branding practices and employee's BCB through the mediating effect of employee brand fit. Furthermore, this provided empirical support to the link between brand leadership and employee brand fit, which was previously based on the assumption that leaders exert great influence on employees behaviors.

Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that this study only focused on the telecommunication industry, which is one out of many industries in the service sector. This has limited the generalization of the study's findings as other industries may have specific natures that are not shared by others. Therefore, future research may consider other industries within the service sector. Similarly, the study is cross-sectional and hence ignores time-lag effects. As such, longitudinal data may improve the empirical findings and the understanding of the mechanism through which employee's BCB can be enhanced. Furthermore, it is suggested that future studies should consider other determinants of employee's BCB such brand reward, brand communication and brand recruitment.

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