



Investigation of Antecedents and Outcomes of Employee Based Brand Equity in Services Sector of Pakistan

Zeeshan Rasool^{*1,2}, Muhammad Ahmad³, Muhammad Kamran⁴, and Muhammad Obaid Aslam⁵

¹Department of Business Administration, NFC-IET Multan, Pakistan

²School of Economics and Management, Shaanxi University of Science and Technology Xi'an,
China

³Department of Management & Administrative Sciences, University of Narowal, Pakistan

⁴PhD (Management Sciences) Scholar, TheIslamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan

⁵Department of Education, Riphah International University Faisalabad Campus, Faisalabad,
Pakistan

***Corresponding Authors:** *zeeshan_rasool114@hotmail.com*

Abstract

There is twofold purpose of the research; one is to empirically test the employee based brand equity (EBBE) model by integrating the major practices which include internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing practices. It provides great insight for organization how to manage employees effectively with consideration to internal brand building. Secondly this model presents more appropriate and comprehensive way to determine organizational benefits. The cross-sectional study design with development of survey questionnaire to collect the data. The data was collected from CSR department of Telecommunication companies. The results shows strong support for the model and all the hypothesis were in support except the partial mediation of one hypothesis. This means the validation of model used for this research. The study contains both theoretical and managerial implications which contribute towards its soundness. Theoretically this study provides a more comprehensive and integrated view of EBBE and its benefits. Along with this also enriches the

literature in this area of marketing. This study models the maximum practices of EBBE under one umbrella. Looking towards its managerial implications it provides help the management to analyse and understand the factors that influence the employee. This also provides a wider picture of benefits that are result of successful implementation of this model. On the basis of this model the management can make decisions and take initiatives to the employee's perception towards the branding and their positive impact in brand building. This research makes following important contributions; strengthen the EBBE literature; secondly provides more comprehensive view of EBBE; thirdly this analysis is made in services sector of developing country context; fourth incorporate the employee's perceptions towards the brand building efforts and how organizations can deal with it.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Internal Brand Management, Internal Relationship Marketing, Internal Marketing, Employee Brand Knowledge, Benefits, CSR, Services Organizations, Employee Behaviour.

Introduction

The present era is marked with hyper competition and market fragmentations. The businesses are striving for superior customer value to achieve competitive advantage. The functional and tangible benefits are insufficient to deliver superior value. Superior services and unique selling propositions are source of sustainable competitive advantage. Operant resources, skills, and knowledge base are essential to achieve aforementioned objective. The nature of competition is also changed from what is delivered to how it is delivered. For this reasons the focus of organizations is on the building and sustaining successful brands. Brand is considered to be a cluster of emotional and functional benefits.

Result of successful brand is brand equity. The return of higher brand equity is in the shape of brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand name, higher perceived quality, credibility and other related benefits. These non-financial benefits help the organization to achieve the financial benefits in the form of higher earnings, better market share, bulks of sales volume, enhanced customer base that are gauge of organizational success and brand management activities. A review of marketing literature on brand equity suggests that there is no unified and unanimous

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accepted definition or view about the brand equity. There are varieties of views and definitions exist with respect to this phenomenon. While it is generally believe that brand equity is retained by, and enhanced for, the brand owners.

There are mainly considered two approaches to measure the brand equity, one is the financial based brand equity and second is customer based brand equity. The intensive marketing literature suggests that, it is required to focus on third dimension of brand equity that is employee based brand equity. Brand equity based on employees play a vital role in delivering superior value to the customers because they are more close to organization and customers. The organizations also believe that they should act as the brand ambassadors. The research suggests that brand equity based on the employees is more sustainable as compare to other approaches of measuring brand equity. The concept of employee based brand equity is based on internal brand management, internal marketing and internal relationship marketing.

In the present hyper competitive environment, it is very difficult for the organizations to have sustainable competitive advantage only based on the tangibility. The more focus is towards the intangible resources, for example knowledge and skills and firms are striving to deliver in most competitive manner. To achieve this objective they have to focus on the employees and they are bringing the employees to the mainstream. This opens new avenues of research.

Review of literature reveals that there is consistent need of bringing the employees in the mainstream and management accountability along with paradigm shift in the research pattern of brand equity. All of the above stated objectives can be achieved with research in newly developed area of brand equity that is employee based brand equity. There is very little research is available in this area of brand equity (King & Grace, 2010; 2012). To fill this gap this study is indeed a valuable contribution as it adopted a very comprehensive approach.

Employee based brand equity benefits can be achieved with multiple factors that are not limited to internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing. This study only focuses the above mentioned factors of employee based equity benefits. Antecedents of internal marketing, internal relationship marketing and internal brand management are restricted to the limited number of indicators that are used in this study. Internal brand management is restricted to information generation and brand identification. Internal relationship marketing is restricted to relationship orientation and the internal

marketing is limited to services training programs, internalization and internal communication. The EBBE benefits also be measured in number of ways but in the present research its composite consists on the service quality, brand citizenship behavior and employee loyalty to the respective organization. The objective of this research is to evaluate and test the antecedents of employee based brand equity.

The scheme of the study is hypothesis testing. The sequence of the study is as follow, Introduction, Literature review, Conceptual Model, hypothesis, research methodology, data results and interpretation, discussion and managerial implications.

Literature Review

Both management and academics have realized the importance of brand as the most valuable intangible asset for the organizations to achieve and sustain strategic competitiveness in the market (Keller & Lehman, 2006). Brand has ability to reduce the risk, assign responsibility to the product maker, reduce the search cost of the customer, establish a responsibility, signify quality and provide a symbolic attachment (Keller, 1998). Brands are considered beneficial in both in both economic and symbolic fronts. These advantages are valuable for the organization and help to achieve strategic objectives. The success of the brand lies in the ability to exhibit higher level of brand equity (Interbrand, 2007). The return of higher brand equity is in the shape of brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand name, higher perceived quality, credibility and other related benefits (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). These non-financial benefits help the organization to achieve the financial benefits in the form of higher earnings, better market share, bulks of sales volume, enhanced customer base that are gauge of organizational success and brand management activities (Chernatony & Cottam, 2006).

A review of marketing literature on brand equity suggests that there is no unified and unanimous accepted definition or view about the brand equity (Kim, Kim, & An, 2003). There are varieties of views and definitions exist with respect to this phenomenon. While it is generally believe that brand equity is retained by, and enhanced for, the brand owners. There are two perspectives are considered in the mainstream namely customer and financial based equity. The definition of the brand equity is articulated from either of these approaches (Atilgan, Aksoy, & Akinci, 2005). From the financial perspective brand equity is defined as “total value of a brand which is a separable asset - when it is sold or included in a balance sheet”. The supporters of this

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perspective argue that measurement and articulation of brand equity is in monetary terms. Alternate term used in this perspective is financial based brand equity (Atilgan et al., 2005). On the other hand, customer based brand equity (CBBE), views the brand equity from the customer perspective and defines it as “the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand” (Keller, 1998).

The focus of marketing practitioners and academics is towards the adaptation of multiple financial and non-financial measures in measuring the impact of brand management that is manifested in brand equity rather than single comprehensive methodology which gives collective necessary insight (Chernatony & Cottam, 2006). The marketers Believe that this multiple perspective is more beneficial and consideration is given to different stakeholders (i.e. customers, shareholders). In services brand management central consideration is to employees, the brand equity literature fall short in giving due consideration to this stakeholder, that is being employee. De Chernatony, Cottam, and Segal-Horn(2006) argue that at the time when organizations are increasingly encouraging their employees to perform the role of brand ambassadors in this regard they are essential element of building brands, the consideration needs to shift towards the employee based brand equity and research is warranted in this context. In this regard the necessary support and consideration is provided by the internal marketing, internal relationship marketing and internal brand management.

The concept of internal marketing was introduced in 1976 in marketing literature and defined as “marketing concerned with making available internal products (jobs) that satisfy the needs of a vital internal market (employees) while satisfying the objectives of the organization” (Berry, Hense, & Burke, 1976). Internal marketing is an ongoing process rather once communication and its purpose is offering employees with clear vision and organizational values that are worth pursuing (Berry & Parasiiraman, 1992). Internal marketing is strategic tool to overhaul the face of the organization and it help the employees to understand the core corporate values, employee commitment, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, this is mainly reported with case studies and anecdotal accounts (Sartain, 2005).

There is little empirical research in internal marketing that focus on the employees and the previous research in this field of marketing concluded three important themes. First it is crucial for organizational success that its employees are well aware to its mission, goals, strategies and

whole organizational system (Gummesson, 1987). Second, internal helps to constitute a collective mind or the corporate identity (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002). Third, internal marketing need to adopt strategic marketing training programs and go beyond the short-term marketing training to bring the employees into mainstream of organizational thinking and they should continuously encourage and their roles should be clear (Berry, Hense, & Burke, 1976). The marketing concepts are brought into the internal marketing has twofold objectives. One, it enrich the marketing literature. Second, it helps the academicians and practitioners to advance the application of internal marketing.

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Key Findings of Literature

Construct	Findings	Source
Relationship Orientation	Relationship orientation is positively associated with brand commitment.	King and Grace(2012)
Internal Branding	Internal brand play significant role in brand building. It has potential to support corporate brand. It also holds distinctive position in the literature.	Foster, Punjaisri, and Chen (2010)
internal corporate communication (ICC message effectiveness), Training	Internal corporate communication positively enhance communication satisfaction. It also promotes brand identification. It built loyalty and commitment among the employees.	Sharma and Kamalanabhan(2012)
Brand Identification, Commitment, Internal Branding	Attitudinal and behavioral aspects of employees are positively associated with internal branding. It is source of brand identification and drives brand commitment. It is connected to loyalty of employees.	Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, and Wilson(2009)
Training Programs	Training programs are strongly associated with service quality. It is found no relation between performance incentives to service quality.	Tsaia and Tang(2009)
Information Generation	Information Generation has the positive impact on the employee commitment	Lings and Greenley (2005)
----- -----	Internal marketing is defined as relationship development strategy for renewal of knowledge Attitudes and behaviors of employees arepositively affected with internal marketing activities. It helps to improve decision-making and internal marketing activities.	Ballantyne(2000) Yang (2010)
EBBE Benefits	Employee based brand equity is the result of internal branding and internal marketing antecedents.	King and Grace (2010)
Internalization	Internalization Helps to improve the employee self-empowerment	Aurand, Gorchels, and Bishop (2005)

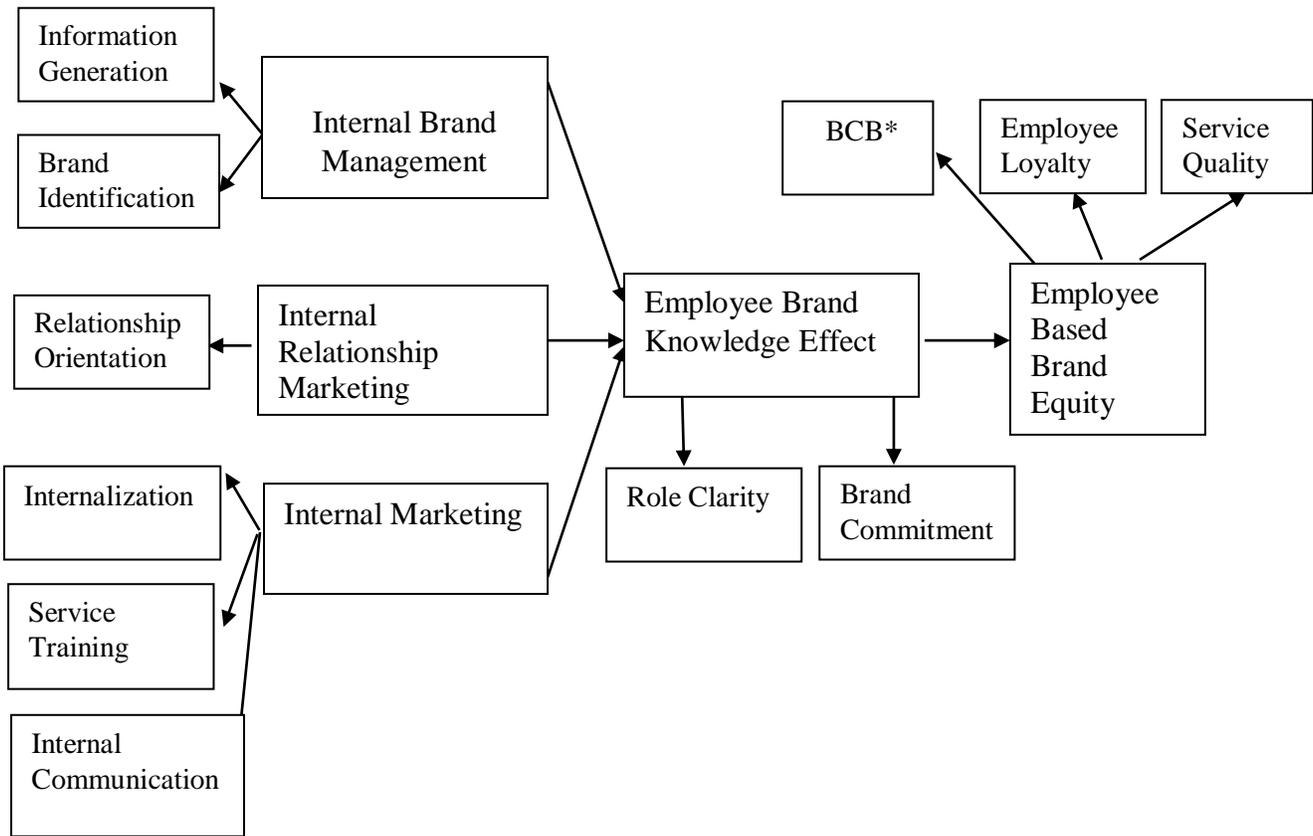


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Theoretical Underpinnings

Conceptual model was developed by consolidating synthesizing internal brand management, internal relationship marketing, and internal marketing theoretical reflection. The model proposes four key constructs that establish the employee based brand equity benefits. The indicators for the internal brand management are information generation and brand identification; for internal relationship marketing is relationship orientation; for the internal marketing are internalization, service training programs and internal communication; for employee brand knowledge are role clarity and brand commitment; for EBBE Benefits are brand citizenship behaviour, and employee service quality.

Research Methodology

An adapted research methodology used for this study was based on the development of survey questionnaire and hypothetical testing including regression method mediation using (Baron &

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Kenny, 1986) that enabled the assessment of employee perceptions, attitudes and behavior with respect to internal brand management, internal relationship marketing, internal marketing and employee brand knowledge practices in developing EBBE Benefits. All of these constructs are pertinent for the EBBE Benefits that is dependent construct. The questionnaire was developed by conducting a thorough review of literature and it was discussed with seasoned professionals of telecommunication sector and financial sector of Pakistan. These professional belongs to different telecommunication organizations which are listed in the later part of research methodology. The all the items of survey questionnaire were discussed in brief and necessary changes were made with respect to their clarity and language. After this rigorous process of discussions the pool of 72 items (number of items for each construct are listed in table one (1) are used for the data collection.

The unit of analysis was the individual. The objective of the study is to analyse EBBE Benefits on the basis of organizational initiatives of internal brand management, internal relationship marketing, internal marketing and employee brand knowledge creation.

A self-administrated survey was conducted. The data was collected from the customer services relations department in the telecommunication sector of Pakistan. Data was collected from the three major cities of Pakistan which are Gujrat, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The population frame was the CSR department employees of all the telecommunication organizations. Here the employee is treated as the single entity. A total of one hundred seventy five (175) questionnaires were distributed and one hundred thirty six (136) were received with a response rate of 77.71%. Among the one hundred thirty six (136) questionnaires one hundred and six (106) were found fully filled and use for the further analysis. So the active response rate was 60.57%. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-17) is used for the statistical Analysis. The descriptive information of the respondents is presented in table 2. The management position of the respondents was CSR officers or the CSR Manager. The sampling technique used for this study is convenience sampling. According to sekaran (2003) sample of above thirty and less than five hundred is considered good for these types of research studies in business management.

In regression analysis the linear regression was carried out. As there is the mediator in the theoretical model; to test the mediation Baron and Kenny method was used. The Baron and Kenny method is considered one the best method to test the mediation. Before the mediation test,

overall significant of the model was test. For the purpose stated above; independent variables were regress on the dependent variable. In this specific case the independent variables are, Internal brand management, Internal relationship marketing and internal marketing practices and the dependent variable is EBBE benefits. The results are presented in table 5 (I). According to results the model is significant as the p value is less than 0.05 and F statistics is greater than two. Individual parameters are also significant as t value is greater than two and p values are less than 0.05. R square value is .472 which means that Independentvariable explains the 47% of dependent variable that is EBBE benefits.

Table 5(II) presents the values of individual parameters when they are regressed on the mediating variable employee brand knowledge; here this mediating variable is dependent variable. According to these results all the individual parameter are significant as they were individually regressed on the employee brand knowledge. The p values are less than 0.05 and the R square ranges between 0.594 to 0.721.

Table 5(III) shows the results of individual parameters when they were regressed on the EBBE benefits.

Table 2: Demographic Information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	64.2
Female	38	35.8
Age (Years)		
20-25	37	34.9
26-30	46	43.4
31-35	10	9.4
36-40	11	10.4
40 and above	02	01.9
Qualification		
Intermediate	13	12.3
Graduate	54	50.9
Master	31	29.2
Above Master	08	07.5
Organization		
PTCL	15	14.2
Ufone	15	14.2
Mobilink	15	14.2
Zong	22	20.8
Telenor	16	15.1
Warid	14	13.2
Others	09	08.5

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Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Internal Brand Management	1.83	4.80	3.68	.57261	.804	1.47
Internal Relationship Marketing	1.97	4.89	3.74	.58749	-.627	1.07
Internal Marketing	1.56	4.95	3.59	.69009	.784	1.43
Employee Brand Knowledge	1.85	4.95	3.64	.57244	-.771	.47
EBBE Benefits	1.94	4.85	3.66	.62992	-.629	.29

Table 4: Correlations Analysis

	Internal Brand Management	Internal Relationship Marketing	Internal Marketing	Employee Brand knowledge	EBBE Benefits
Internal Brand Management	1				
Internal Relationship Marketing	.438**	1			
Internal Marketing	.248*	.549**	1		
Employee Brand Knowledge	.384**	.374*	.447**	1	
EBBE Benefits	.392**	.572**	.528*	.439**	1

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

Dependent Variable: Employee Based Brand Equity Benefits (EBBE)

Table 5: Regression (I)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Internal Brand Management	.351	6.10	0.000		
Internal Relationship Marketing	.492	3.93	0.019	.472	1.72
Internal Marketing	.513	5.21	0.000		

Dependent Variable: EBBE Benefits

(F, 30.434 sig, 0.000)

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \beta_2 Y_2 + \beta_3 Y_3 + \epsilon$$

EBBE Benefits: $1.91 + .351 * \text{internal brand management} + .492 * \text{internal relationship marketing} + .513 * \text{internal marketing} + \epsilon$

Table 5: Regression (II)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Internal Brand Management	.565	12.7	0.000	.696	1.69
Internal Relationship Marketing	.487	11.4	0.000	.594	1.47
Internal Marketing	.679	14.8	0.000	.721	1.59

Dependent Variable: Employee Brand Knowledge

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \epsilon$$

- I. Employee Brand Knowledge = $.410 + 0.565 * \text{internal brand management} + \epsilon$
- II. Employee Brand Knowledge = $.631 + 0.487 * \text{internal relationship marketing} + \epsilon$
- III. Employee Brand Knowledge = $.739 + 0.679 * \text{internal marketing} + \epsilon$

Table 5: Regression (III)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Internal Brand Management	.464	17.4	0.000	.569	1.44
Internal Relationship Marketing	.692	14.7	0.000	.629	1.36
Internal Marketing	.747	15.4	0.000	.679	1.69

Dependent variable: EBBE Benefits

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \epsilon$$

- I. EBBE Benefits = $.729 + .464 * \text{internal brand management} + \epsilon$
- II. EBBE Benefits = $.487 + .692 * \text{internal relationship marketing} + \epsilon$
- III. EBBE Benefits = $.972 + .747 * \text{internal marketing} + \epsilon$

Table 4: Regression (IV)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Employee Brand Equity	.585	16.4	0.000	.598	1.69

Dependent Variable: EBBE Benefits

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \epsilon$$

EBBE Benefits: $.548 + .585 * \text{employee brand knowledge} + \epsilon$

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Table 5: Regression (V)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Internal Brand Management	.246	3.723	0.000	.589	1.69
Employee Brand Knowledge	.197	2.920	0.000		
					Table: 5 (V)

Dependent Variable: EBBE Benefits

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \beta_2 Y_2 + \epsilon$$

$$\text{EBBE Benefits} = .373 + .246 * \text{internal brand management} + .197 * \text{employee brand knowledge} + \epsilon$$

Table 6: Regression (VI)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Internal Relationship Marketing	.220	3.935	0.000	.620	1.72
Employee Brand Knowledge	.380	14.120	0.000		

Dependent Variable: EBBE Benefits

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \beta_2 Y_2 + \epsilon$$

$$\text{EBBE Benefits} = .374 + .220 * \text{internal relationship marketing} + .380 * \text{employee brand knowledge} + \epsilon$$

Table 5: Regression (VII)

Variable	Coefficient	t	p	R ²	D.W
Internal Marketing	.455	7.54	0.000	.420	1.81
Employee Brand Knowledge	.341	5.24	0.000		

Dependent Variable: EBBE Benefits

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_1 + \beta_2 Y_2 + \epsilon$$

$$\text{EBBE Benefits} = .59 + .455 * \text{internal marketing} + .341 * \text{employee brand knowledge} + \epsilon$$

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Results		Employee Based Brand Equity	
H ₁	Internal Brand Management has a significant positive effect on the EBBE Benefits	Supported	
H ₂	Internal Relationship Marketing has a significant positive effect on the EBBE Benefits	Supported	

H ₃	Internal Marketing has a significant positive effect on the EBBE Benefits	Supported	
H ₄	Employee Brand Knowledge has a significant positive effect on the EBBE Benefits	Supported	
H ₅	Internal Brand Management mediates via Employee brand Knowledge to EBBE Benefits	Supported	
H ₆	Internal Relationship Marketing mediates via Employee Brand Knowledge to EBBE Benefits	Rejected	
H ₇	Internal Marketing mediates via Employee Brand Knowledge to EBBE Benefits	Supported	

Discussion

The theoretical model presented in this study is empirically validated that strengthen the base of theory in the area of employee based brand equity in the marketing. The results shows that receptivity of employee regarding branding and organizational efforts to create and disseminate awareness of brand among the employees is equally important and are not the separate functions; this requires a coordination and integration. This is simply a communication function that only be effectively performed when the both parties (employees and organizations) are willing to achieve this and the common goals are set. These functions create a positive perception among the employees about the particular organization. These independent functions (Internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing) are the keys determinants to empower the employees and felt them sense of ownership.

As there is lesser empirical research is available on the employee based brand equity this study not only enriches the literature in this newly developed field of marketing but also validate the concepts; as illustrated in the earlier part of the paper the concept of internal brand management and relationships are borrowed from the consumer branding marketing. This particular study expands the knowledge base in this particular area of marketing. This study brought the marketing regarding the internal customers to the main stream studies of marketing. This study also integrates the different poles regarding the marketing concern about the employees including internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing under the one umbrella. This is the main contribution of this study. The previous studies focus on the some areas of employee based brand equity benefits but in contrast of those this study adopted an integrated approach.

In this study it is observed that through the internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing practices the organizations achieve employee brand knowledge

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that is measured with employee brand commitment and employee role clarity. Employee brand knowledge leads to the employee based brand equity benefits that are the main concern of the organizations in the present era. EBBE benefits are illustrated and measured as the services quality (as the focus of the study is in the services area), brand citizenship behavior and employee loyalty. These benefits depict the positive employee intentions to be loyal with organization in the long run and positive employee actions that results the superior customer value. This will also provide strategic benefits to the organization including the superior delivery mechanism of the services.

The results of the study are consistent with literature available in the area of EBBE benefits in general and particularly internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing practices. The practices of internal brand management, internal marketing and internal relationship marketing leads to the employee brand knowledge that is mediator variable of the study and that results EBBE benefits.

The statistical results as explained in the data analysis and results part verify the overall significance of the model and mediation. The values of R square of overall model including all independent variables is .472 that means that this model explain the 47% of the overall impact with these IV'S. The results of individual IV's and mediation are also significant except the mediation of internal relationship marketing who does not mediate and the principle reasons are the cultural barriers and varying acceptance of relationship in the culture.

Implications

There are two broad implications of the study:

- Theoretical
- Managerial

Theoretical Implications

There was no paradigm shift in brand management practices with respect to pace of research in the field of brand equity from the both perspectives; the consumer and financial (Kim, Kim, & An, 2003). Due to increase in the application of internal brand management demands the expansion of brand equity literature. Brand management activities increase with the comprehensive approach realized through brand equity (Atilgan, Aksoy, & Akinci, 2005). There is also increase pressure of management accountability; this objective also achieved with

employee based brand equity(Srinivasan, Park, & Chang, 2005).

By testing empirically EBBE model considered important to canvas the opinions of employees. This study is comprehensive in nature that includes the internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing practices to motivate and align the employee's behavior towards the brand. This makes great sense and seems logical to gauge the employee's perspective regarding the brand and brand related behavior. In the end it is good contribution to literature in all its fronts.

Practical:

EBBE model help the management to analyze and understand the factors that influence the employee. This also provides a wider picture of benefits that are result of successful implementation of this model. On the basis of this model the management can make decisions and take initiatives to the employee's perception towards the branding and their positive impact in brand building.

This model provides a source to the marketing managers who advocate the internal brand management, internal relationship marketing and internal marketing practices. This also provide basis to the managers to develop the key performance in general and particularly in services sector. The manager can take the following practical steps on the basis of this study:

- Training and development of employees
- Helps to create the supportive culture with internal relationships practices to achieve goals
- Helps to set rewards
- Importance to provide right information to employees
- Employees evaluation
- Technical brand related information is sent to employees
- Benefits that results from this model are really measurable and doable by the management

Limitations and Future Research:

Putting plethora of constructs in one model or attaches indicators to the constructs don't means end of research and having no limitations. As the most of the researches this research also has limitations. As this study is survey based, so the first limitation is the response behavior and

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validation with respect to the respondents. This type of method most of the times have the limitations. The study only focuses to one services sector. The data was collected only from the CSR department of the telecommunication services. Only limited number of respondents was targeted. The sampling method was convenience so it can lead to biased results. The time was too short for this type of comprehensive study.

The future research can be done by adapting the same model to other sectors. This study was cross sectional the longitudinal may leads to different findings. The indicators identified in the literature was intentionally left in this study, in future by accommodating those indicators more robust research should be done.

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