Antecedents and Outcomes of Employee Brand Knowledge: a Literature Review

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature relating to employee knowledge about brands and propose a future research agenda related to this topic. The method is a qualitative literature review on previous literature investigating employee brand knowledge. The findings show that internal communication activities, internal market orientation, and leadership are antecedents of employee brand knowledge. While employee's support, commitment, and sense of ownership are the results of employee knowledge about brands. This literature review concludes that future research should identify other internal factors influencing employee brand knowledge and how employee brand knowledge is related to service quality, which had not been discussed in the reviewed literature.

Anteseden dan Hasil dari Pengetahuan Karyawan tentang Merek: Studi Literature

Abstrak

Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah untuk mereviu literatur yang berhubungan dengan merek dan mengusulkan agenda penelitian mendatang yang berkaitan dengan topik ini. Metode yang digunakan adalah reviu literatur secara kualitatif terhadap literatur terdahulu yang meneliti tentang pengetahuan pegawai tentang merek. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan komunikasi internal, orientasi pasar internal, dan kepemimpinan adalah anteseden dari pengetahuan pegawai tentang merek. Sedangkan, dukungan, komitmen, dan rasa kepemilikan oleh pegawai adalah hasil dari pengetahuan pegawai tentang merek. Studi literatur ini menyimpulkan bahwa penelitian selanjutnya dapat mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor internal lain yang mempengaruhi pengetahuan pegawai tentang merek dan juga bagaimana pengetahuan pegawai tentang merek berkaitan dengan kualitas pelayanan yang belum dibahas oleh penelitian dari literatur yang direviu.

JEL Classification: M30, M31

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INTRODUCTION

The lack of knowledge on organizational brand is one of many reasons why the service quality of frontline employees is low. Examples of public's complaints about the frontline service are unfriendly officers, slow response, not helping, service delay, unprofessional, incompetent, and so on. This event is a serious problem because employees have an important role (King et al., 2013), especially those who deal directly with customers (Xiong et al., 2019).

The important role of employees in various literature is related to their knowledge of the organization's brand. The definition of employee brand knowledge is the employee's perception and understanding of what brand and company meanings and promises are and how he can convey these meanings and promises to customers or consumers (King, 2010; Xiong et al., 2013; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Altaf et al., 2017; Mohammad et al., 2019). Employee knowledge about brands can be seen from the dimension of knowledge about the needs and expectations of customers or consumers of the services provided by the organization / company where they work (Shaari et al., 2012; Muhammad et al., 2019). Employee brand knowledge can also be defined as what employees think about the organizational identity (Terglav et al., 2016).

In practice, there are still employees who do not understand the service values owned by the organization so the organization needs to monitor the extent of employee understanding of service values or service promises that the organization has (Terglav et al., 2016). Organizations need to convince their employees about the promises offered in the service (Garas et al., 2018) and the service's contents (Dechawatanapaisal, 2019). Employees must understand service standards and behave according to these standards in providing services (King et al., 2013) to provide good service to customers (Xiong et al., 2013). Employees need to know the brand identity and have brand skills to offer brand value to customers (Xiong et al.,

2013; Hardjono & San, 2017). By having brand knowledge, employees can understand the meaning of organizational services and the values contained in them (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016; Terglav et al., 2016; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019). Before employees fulfil organizational service promises to customers, employees must have prior knowledge of what is promised by the organization (Boukis et al., 2017). Before behaving to support the organization's brand, employees must also have knowledge about what is supported and how to support it (Ngo et al., 2019).

There are various positive things related to employee knowledge about organizational brand (employee brand knowledge). The frontline employees' service performance may be improved when they know what the organization wants. The frontline employees may also serve customers better when they know how to carry out the service duties according to the organization's wishes (King et al., 2013). Through the knowledge they have about brand promises, employees can realize the promise of service provided by the organization (King et al., 2013; Xiong et al., 2013; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019), and by realizing that promise, employees can form customer perceptions of services that given organization (Ngo et al., 2019). In addition, with the knowledge they have, employees can provide positive experiences for customers who receive service (King et al., 2013). The employee's knowledge can influence his behaviour to support the organization's brand (Xiong et al., 2013; Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016; Terglav et al., 2016; Boukis et al., 2017; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019; Boukis & Christodoulides, 2020). Knowledge about the brand owned by employees can also help him overcome problems when providing services to customers (Xiong et al., 2013) and help organisations transform brand vision into brand reality (Ngo et al., 2019). An employee who understands the organization's brand will have higher brand identification and knows how to meet customer needs, he will carry out customer-oriented behavior so that his performance in serving customers is better (Ngo et al., 2019).

Discussion of employee knowledge about organizational brands in both the public and private sectors is generally part of research related to internal branding (Terglav et al., 2016; Du Preez et al., 2017; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019). In addition, according to King (2010), the amount of research that discusses how employee knowledge from a brand perspective in the service sector is still limited. Therefore, to improve understanding of antecedents and the results of employee knowledge of brands, it is necessary to conduct a review of the existing literature. The purpose of this paper is to review the literature related to employee brand knowledge and propose a future research agenda.

METHOD

The author reviews the literature to identify previous research or studies that discuss the factors that drive employee knowledge about the organization's brand (antecedents) and the impact or outcome of employee knowledge (outcome). To find related literature, the authors use the Scopus database. The literature used is journal articles published until 2019. The earliest articles were those published in 2010.

The author searches for keywords on Scopus based on the title, abstract and keywords of the existing article. Scopus' database is selected because it has large database of peer-reviewed journals in top-level subject fields. The keywords used to search literature are "employee brand knowledge"; "Internal branding" and "brand knowledge"; "Brand knowledge"; and "internal branding" and "knowledge". Especially for the keyword "brand knowledge", from the results obtained search for the keyword "employee".

To assess the suitability of document search with the aim of reviewing the literature to see the antecedents and results of employee brand knowledge, the authors chose articles based on: (1) articles using English, (2) in the form of empirical articles, (3) subjects chosen were Business, Management and Accounting,

and (4) the availability of the article for download. The author also only chooses articles whose discussion relates to "employee brand knowledge", although it is not discussed in the construction of the research model in the referenced article. If the research findings are related to antecedents and the results of employee knowledge about the brand, the authors considers the literature relevant to the topic to be reviewed.

The results of the keyword "employee brand knowledge" found as many as six articles. The results of the keywords "internal branding" and "brand knowledge" found a total of 15 articles. After these results are subtracted from the results of the keyword "employee brand knowledge" and irrelevant articles, the articles used are as many as five articles. The results of the keyword "brand knowledge" selected based on the keyword "employee" found 39 articles. These results are then deducted from the duplicate results from previous keywords and irrelevant articles, so the articles used are seven articles. The results of the keywords "internal branding" and "knowledge" were found as many as 28 articles. However, after subtracting from similar articles from previous keywords and articles that did not discuss employee knowledge, the articles used were four articles. The number of articles used for literature review based on searches in the Scopus database is 22 articles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Articles produced through the above method were published between 2010 and 2019 as shown in Figure 1. Articles that discussed the most employee brand knowledge were published in 2019 are 5 articles. However, in 2011 and 2015, there were no articles in the Scopus database that discussed employee knowledge about brands based on keywords used by the author and relevance to the topics to be discussed.

The articles selected as reference for this paper is displayed in Table 1. We can infer from journal title in Table 1 that five journals on marketing, two journals on brands, four journals on service and hospitality, and the remaining four journals
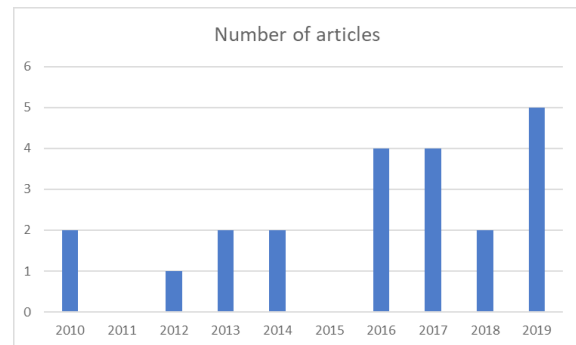
discuss various topics such as banking, commercial training, benchmarks, and distribution.

The empirical context discussed in the 22 articles reviewed is quite diverse as summarized in Table 2. This table shows that research on employee brand knowledge is mostly carried out in companies engaged in services such as banking and hospitality where employees are the main factors that determine service quality.

There are several terms used in the literature that are reviewed to describe the employee's knowledge of the brand. Employee knowledge about brands is referred to as brand knowledge (Matthiesen & Phau, 2010; Shaari et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2014; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Altaf et al., 2017; Boukis et al., 2017; Du Preez et al., 2017; Garas et al., 2018; Piehler, 2018; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019; Muhammad et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019), internal brand knowledge (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016; Morokane et al., 2016), knowledge of desired brand (Natarajan et al., 2017), employee brand knowledge (Terglav et al., 2016; Ngo et al., 2019), product and brand knowledge (Sangtani & Murshed, 2017), employee perceived brand knowledge (Xiong et al., 2013) and perceived brand knowledge (Xiong et al., 2019).

Figure 1. The Frequency of Articles Published Per Year

Research conducted by the literature on employee brand knowledge provides several findings of antecedents and employee knowledge about brands. The following is the presentation of research findings from the literature used related to antecedents and the results of employee knowledge about brands.

Antecedents of Employee Brand Knowledge

Based on the literature findings discussed, several antecedents influence employee knowledge about brands in the organization. The construct used as an antecedent of employee knowledge about brands in the research model of the reviewed literature is internal

Table 1. Number of Publications per Journal

Journal	Number of publications
Banks and Bank System	1
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1
Journal of Product & Brand Management	4
Journal of Services Marketing	1
Industrial and Commercial Training	1
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	1
International Journal of Hospitality Management	4
Journal of Service Research	1
Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	1
Journal of Brand Management	2
Benchmarking	1
Australasian Marketing Journal	1
Marketing Intelligence and Planning	1
International Journal of Business and Society	1
Journal of Distribution Science	1
Total	**22**

Table 2. Articles Reviewed Based on Empirical Context

Empirical Context	Author
Bank	Altaf et al. (2017); Garas et al. (2018); Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014); Morokane et al. (2016); Muhammad et al. (2019)
Hospitality industry	Xiong et al. (2013); Baker et al. (2014); Nguyen et al. (2019)
Industrial company	Biedenbach and Manzhynski (2016); Dechawatanapaisal (2019)
Service industry (bank, hotel, restaurant, travel agency, airline)	Boukis et al. (2017); Ngo et al. (2019)
Financial service, telecommunication company, and grocery chain	Du Preez et al. (2017)
Hotel	Shaari et al. (2012); King et al. (2013); Terglav et al. (2016)
Tourism and hospitality	King (2010)
Retail	Matthiesen and Phau (2010)
Airline	Natarajan et al. (2017)
Tourism	Piehler (2018)
Automotive industry	Sangtani and Murshed (2017)
Hotel and restaurant	Xiong et al. (2019)

brand commitment (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016), internal branding (Nguyen et al., 2019), brand communication (Muhammad et al., 2019), internal market orientation (Boukis et al., 2017), brand leadership (Nguyen et al., 2019), and brand-oriented leadership (Terglav et al., 2016). Other literature findings also discuss matters that encourage employee knowledge about brands in the organization although not as a construct in the research model (King, 2010; Matthiesen & Phau, 2010; King et al., 2013; Xiong et al., 2013; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Baker et al., 2014; Morokane et al., 2016; Natarajan et al., 2017; Du Preez et al., 2017; Garas et al., 2018; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019; Xiong et al., 2019).

Internal communication activities regarding brands carried out on employees are described in the literature as internal brand commitment, internal branding, and brand communication. Internal communication activities about this brand become an antecedent that strengthens employee knowledge about the brand (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016;

Nguyen et al., 2019; Muhammad et al., 2019). Communication activities undertaken to build an organization's brand internally can make employees able to identify the brand (Dechawatanapaisal, 2019), help employees to identify and understand organizational values (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016), and employees know whether the values these values are consistent with him (Baker et al., 2014). Information dissemination activities about brands within the organization can help employees to understand how to carry out their duties better (Garas et al., 2018) and employees become aware of what the organization expects from it (King, 2010). Dissemination of information about brand values owned by the organization can encourage employees to believe these values (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014) and through internal socialization, employees gain knowledge about what are the superiority of the products and services that the organization has (Morokane et al., 2016). However, the activity of delivering brand information internally needs to be adjusted to the conditions of the employees and

their work so that employees get the meaning and relevance of the brand information they receive (Xiong et al., 2013). According to Baker et al. (2014), conveying information about brands through internal branding does not mean that employees' skills in providing services to customers are better so there needs to be other efforts to improve employee skills.

Internal market orientation or orientation to market the values, identities and promises contained in the brand to members of the organization to be an antecedent that can strengthen employee knowledge about the brand and ensure that employees understand and adhere to brand promises owned by the organization to be given to customers (Boukis et al., 2017; Natarajan et al., 2017; Xiong et al., 2019). Organizations that understand the needs and desires of employees through various marketing activities carried out internally will help increase employee knowledge (Boukis et al., 2017). Employees who feel their wants and needs are considered by the organization, then they will feel there is a match between themselves and the place of work (Boukis et al., 2017). The orientation to market the brand to members of the organization can also increase employee knowledge about the brand if it is delivered in the form of brand value and image communication through various internal communication channels (Matthiesen & Phau, 2010; Du Preez et al., 2017).

The way organizational leaders provide examples of how to carry out the values and promises of organizational brands is described in the literature as brand leadership or brand oriented leadership and this is one of the findings in the literature as an antecedent of employee knowledge about brands. Brand leadership or examples of leaders who carry out the values contained in the brand will help employees understand how to fulfill brand promises to the customers they serve (Nguyen et al., 2019; Terglav et al., 2016). Employee knowledge about the brand is also obtained from the interaction of employees with leaders in the place of work (Nguyen et al., 2019). In addition, in addition to having brand-oriented leadership, service-oriented organizations or service brand orientation become antecedents that can help employees to know and apply organizational values (King et al., 2013). Service brand orientation that is owned by the organization will be implemented in a number of activities whose results can provide information to employees about the brand and encourage employees to identify brands owned by the organization where they work (King et al., 2013).

Outcomes of Employee Brand Knowledge

The findings from the reviewed literature describe the existence of several results that organizations can obtain from employee knowledge about brands. The constructs used as a result of employee knowledge about brands in the research model of the reviewed literature are employee brand equity (Xiong et al., 2013; Altaf et al., 2017), brand consistent behavior (Altaf et al., 2017), brand endorsement (Altaf et al., 2017; Piehler, 2018), brand allegiance (Altaf et al., 2017), organizational identification (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014), brand compliance (Piehler, 2018), brand development (Piehler, 2018), brand citizenship behavior (Shaari et al., 2012; Piehler, 2018; Ngo et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019), brand commitment (Shaari et al., 2012; Terglav et al., 2016; Piehler, 2018; Muhammad et al., 2019), employee propensity to endorse (Morokane et al., 2016), internal brand commitment (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016), employee brand commitment (Xiong et al., 2013), brand enactment (Boukis et al., 2017), employee brand identification (Ngo et al., 2019), customer-oriented behavior (Ngo et al., 2019), employee performance (Ngo et al., 2019), salesperson performance (Sangtani & Murshed, 2017), psychological brand ownership (Xiong et al., 2019), and voice behavior (Xiong et al., 2019). Other literature findings also discuss the results obtained if employees have knowledge of the brand in the organization even though not as a construct in the research model (King, 2010; Baker et al., 2014).

The author groups the constructs of the results obtained by the organization based on employee knowledge about the brand into

three following parts. First, the results of employee brand knowledge are employee behavior to support the brand values and promises of the organization in the form of carrying out tasks to provide services to customers, compliance and efforts to develop the brand values and promises (employee brand equity, brand consistent behaviour, brand endorsement, brand citizenship behaviour, employee propensity to endorse, brand engagement, customer-oriented behaviour, voice behaviour, brand allegiance, brand compliance, brand development). Second, the results of employee brand knowledge are employee commitment to support the brand (brand commitment, internal brand commitment, employee brand commitment). And third, the results of employee brand knowledge are identification, sense of employee ownership of the organizational brand and employee performance in carrying out tasks (organizational identification, employee brand identification and psychological brand ownership, employee performance, salesperson performance).

Knowledge that employees have about brands will strengthen their behavior when serving customers in carrying out their routine tasks or in-role supporting behavior (King, 2010; Altaf et al., 2017). What employees know about brands influences their behavior in carrying out their duties if they feel that they are in conformity with the brand or brand-congruent behavior so that it encourages them to participate in brand development activities (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014) and carry out tasks with due regard to customer or customer-oriented needs behavior (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Ngo et al., 2019). Different from Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014), according to (Piehler, 2018), employee knowledge about brands does not encourage them to participate in brand development activities because employees feel that if they already know about brands, then they do not need to participate in their development activities.

Employee knowledge about brands significantly influences employee brand equity (Xiong et al., 2013) when employees have a high level of confidence in the brand or brand confidence (Altaf et al., 2017). Organizations that have employee brand equity means employees who work in it have the behavior to support the brand in the form of consistent brand behavior, brand endorsement and brand allegiance (Altaf et al., 2017). Brand enactment or behavior that consistently supports a brand is influenced by employee knowledge of the brand (Boukis et al., 2017). Employees can support the fulfillment of organizational promises to customers if employees know what the contents of these promises are and how to carry them out (Boukis et al., 2017). Employee knowledge about brands obtained from internal branding activities can encourage it to behave in favor of brands that go beyond just carrying out routine tasks or brand citizenship behavior (Shaari et., 2012; Baker et al., 2014; Piehler, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019), as well as the ability to provide better services to customers or service abilities (Baker et al., 2014).

A high level of employee knowledge about the brand will encourage him to tell positive things about the organization to friends and family outside of work in his office environment (Morokane et al., 2016). Brand citizenship behavior consists of various behaviors such as helping others, sportsmanship, individual brand development and brand endorsement (Shaari et al., 2012). Employee knowledge about brands affects employee compliance with the values contained in the brand or brand compliance and employee support for the brand or brand endorsement (Piehler, 2018). Employee's knowledge of the brand affects the willingness to provide advice and input to the organization or voice behavior (Xiong et al., 2019). Employee knowledge about the brand will encourage him to provide input for improvement to the brand development process, but this does not mean that employees will increase their sense of ownership of the brand (Xiong et al., 2019).

Employee knowledge about brands has an influence on employee commitment to brand or

brand commitment (Shaari et al., 2012; Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016; Terglav et al., 2016; Piehler, 2018; Muhammad et al., 2019). Employee commitment about this brand will in turn encourage employees to behave in support of the brand when carrying out their duties (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016; King, 2010). However, in research conducted by Xiong et al. (2013), employee knowledge about brands does not significantly affect employee commitments about brands. Employees may carry out tasks assigned by the organization, but that does not mean they have a commitment to carry out these tasks (Xiong et al., 2013).

Employee knowledge about the brand affects the employee's identification of the brand (Ngo et al., 2019) and towards the organization (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014). Brand identification will encourage employees to have brand citizenship behavior and customer-oriented behaviour (Ngo et al., 2019). Employee knowledge about the brand ultimately also affects employee performance (Sangtani & Murshed, 2017). Employee knowledge about the brand positively influences employee performance even though it is not too significant (Ngo et al., 2019). However, employee knowledge about brands will affect employee performance by mediating brand citizenship behaviour and customer-oriented behaviour (Ngo et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper concludes that organization internal activities and communication influence employee brand knowledge. Employees with solid brand knowledge will be beneficial for organization because they will show behavior, commitment and support the organizational brand. Employees who have knowledge on brand will also improve their service performance.

This review paper is expected to have a theoretical contribution in understanding factors influencing employee brand knowledge. It is also expected to have practical managerial implication for organizations who wish to increase employee understanding of the value and promise of organizational service brands. It can be inferred that when employees know their brand's value and commitment, they can serve the customer better or increase customer satisfaction.

For future agendas, it is necessary to research whether the antecedents that affect consumer brand knowledge also affect employee brand knowledge such as brand literacy, brand experience, and knowledge transfer. Future research also needs to look at whether employee knowledge about brands affects employee interactions with customers. For example, it is associated with consumer satisfaction and consumer brand experience. Finally, given the antecedents and the results of employee knowledge about brands scattered in several studies, in the future there needs to be research that combines antecedents and the results of employee knowledge about brands derived from some of the literature reviewed in this paper.

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