

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND KNOWLEDGE AND BRAND REWARDS, AND EMPLOYEES' BRAND CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: THE MEDIATING ROLES OF BRAND COMMITMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the growing popularity of the concept of internal branding in aligning employees' brand behavior, little is known on the relationship between internal branding practices and employees' brand behavior. The dearth of research in this area also limit the understanding of what is the appropriate employee behavior that could enhance the organization's brand performance. Therefore, this study attempt to examine the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards on employees' brand citizenship behavior and integrating brand commitment as mediation. Twelve hotels in northern region of Malaysia were participated. A self-administered questionnaires were distributed randomly to 435 employees. However, only 288 were usable. The findings revealed that brand knowledge and brand rewards have a significant positive relationship with brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior. Brand commitment also has a strong relationship with significant relationship with brand citizenship behavior. Test of mediation revealed that brand commitment partially mediate the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards, and brand citizenship behavior. Further, detailed analyses also were discussed pertaining the relationship of dimensions of each variable understudy. The contribution as well as direction for future study also was addressed.

**Keywords:** Brand Citizenship Behavior; Brand Commitment; Internal Branding; Employee Branding

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Internal brand behavior is rarely being discussed especially in academic literatures. This is because previous studies in brand management have strictly focused on the perspective of external brand behavior which attempts to understand customers' behavior better (e.g. customers' brand awareness, preference, satisfaction and loyalty) (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Evidently, understanding of internal branding behavior (i.e. employees' brand behavior) is equally important as employees' attitude and behavior play a crucial role in overall brand success (Burmam and Zeplin, 2005). This is highlighted by Deloitte Consulting Limited Liability Partnership (DCLLP) (2008) that 41% of customers are loyal to the brand because of good employees' attitude and almost 70% customers' brand perception is actually determined by experience with employees. Gapp and Merrilees (2006) added that if employees fail to deliver the brand accordingly, thus 40% of the marketing investment money will be lost. Hence, it is importance for employee to display brand-consistent behavior to delight customers.

Employees' brand-consistent behavior is relatively crucial in service industry such as hotel. This is because, the research findings in hotel industry found that almost 72% of the employees are less passionate to represent their organization's brand (Fitzgerald, 2004) and the employees turnover rate for the industry is about 60% (Alan, Radzi, Hemdi & Othman, 2010). As such, it is hard for hotel management to ensure their employee to 'live the brand'. In Malaysia, according to the Tourism Malaysia State Director for Kedah/South Thailand, Malaysian hotels manage to provide excellent 'hardware' (good facilities) but lack in term of 'software' (such as lack of employee advancement) (as cited by Seng, 2007). The argument is supported by research findings of Lee, Huey and Othman (2008), Poon and Low (2005), Seng (2007) and Zainol and Lockwood (2009) highlighted that Malaysian hotels' employees attitude and behaviors (such as unhelpful, rude, unwelcome, unknowledgeable, unfriendly, unresponsiveness and less initiative) are among the critical factor of the overall guests' satisfaction level. These behaviors are identified as inconsistent with the desired brand image and could dilute the brand image (Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann & Hermann, 2007; Ind, 2001). Therefore, this raises the question of what are the behaviors that consider being consistent with the brand that later contribute to overall brand performance.

Despite the growing number of empirical studies in internal branding perspectives that in attempt to understand employees' brand consistent behavior (Burmam, Zeplin & Riley, 2008; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007), there is a dearth of research that systematically link the relationship between internal branding practices (such as brand knowledge and brand rewards) and employees' brand consistent behavior specifically brand citizenship behavior in Malaysia. Many of previous studies on employees' brand consistent behaviors are conceptual in nature (e.g. Ann & Herman, 2008; Ballantyne, 2003; Chong, 2007; Miles & Mangold, 2004; and Mosley, 2007) and based on qualitative studies such as in depth interviews and case studies (e.g. Bergstrom, Blumenthal & Crothers, 2002; Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; King & Grace, 2006; Miles & Mangold, 2005). According to King and Grace (2006) and Sekaran (2000), the findings of qualitative approaches such as case study have a limitation in term of generalization. Moreover, past studies also emphasized on the management and consultant perspectives (King & Grace, 2006; Lebard, Rendleman & Dolan, 2006; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). This is inconsistent with the basic premise that employees are the key ingredient for internal branding

success (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010). In addition, studies of employee's contribution to the brand performance have strictly focused on 'frontline employees' (e.g. Punjaisri, Evanschitzky & Wilson, 2009). According to Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and de Chernatony, Drury and Segal-Horn (2004), organization's brand is relevant for all members of the organization. For the purpose of present study, this study is based on quantitative approaches. The sample of this study is from 3 to 5 stars hotel's employees (include both frontline and back stage employees). Generally, this study aims to examine what is explained by brand consistent behaviors and what influenced them. Specifically, this study attempts to:

- examine the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards, and brand citizenship behavior.
- determine the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards, and brand commitment.
- examine the relationship between brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior.
- investigate the mediating role of brand commitment on the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards, and brand citizenship behavior.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *2.1. Brand Citizenship Behavior Defined*

For the purpose of the present study, employees' brand-consistent behavior will be conceptualized as 'brand citizenship behavior' (BCB) as proposed by Burmann and Zeplin (2005). BCB is selected because it clearly outlined seven characteristics or behaviors that explained employees' brand consistent behaviors. Moreover, BCB is relatively new construct that need further testing with new data (Burmann et al., 2008) to increase the superiority of the construct. Recent findings of Burmann et al. (2008) study in Germany indicated that BCB is explained by three dimensions instead of it original seven dimensions. As such, it is important to understand BCB from local context and what influenced them.

Brand citizenship behavior was originally introduced by German scholars i.e. Burmann and Zeplin (2005). It was derived from the theory of Organization Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Employees' behavior in brand building has gained attention of scholars from the Western countries such as Burmann and Zeplin, (2005), Burmann et al. (2008), King and Grace (2008), and Punjaisri and Wilson (2007). Yet, little is understood on what exactly is to be expected from employees to ensure them to represent the brand and what are actually the characteristics of employee's behavior that enhance the brand performance (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2009; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Therefore, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) had introduced seven main employee behaviors that could explain employees' brand-consistent behavior.

In essence, BCB is defined as "the employees' voluntary basis to project a number of generic employee behaviors that enhance the brand identity" (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005, p. 282). The researchers further asserted that BCB is a measure of the employee willingness to exert extra effort that goes beyond its basic functions i.e. projecting the brand-consistent behavior.

According to Burmann and Zeplin (2005), BCB is significantly different from OCB. BCB is not only a part of OCB, but also goes beyond the scope of OCB. This is because BCB also consider the externally targeted behaviors such as strengthening the quality of brand-customers relationship (satisfaction, loyalty and retention). In the other hand, OCB is rather intra-organizationally focused that is concerned more on job-related performance (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) suggested that BCB consists of seven dimensions namely (1) helping behavior, (2) brand consideration, (3) brand enthusiasm, (4) sportsmanship, (5) brand endorsement, (6) self-development, and (7) brand advancement.

Literatures suggest that employees who are committed to the brand are being able to exhibit favorable attitude and behavior towards the brand thus enhancing external customer satisfaction (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Employees with high brand citizenship spirit are willing to give 'their all' towards accomplishing self-satisfaction and the organization's objectives. For instance, these employees would demonstrate high level of helping behavior and compliance to the brand values, be brand enthusiastic, demonstrate voluntary brand commitment, seek for self-development in brand values and be able to communicate positive words regarding the brand (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2001). Such behavior also shows that employees are highly aware, satisfied, committed, and loyal to the brand (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Hence, employees with lack of such characteristics are not only dissatisfied and disloyal to the brand, they also possibly dilute the total brand performance especially in meeting the brand promise to the external customers.

Unfortunately, recent findings of Burmann et al. (2008) on 1783 employees from 14 reputable brands (products and services) in Germany revealed that BCB is explained by three main dimensions namely; helping behavior, brand enthusiasm, and brand development. Based on the findings, the researchers viewed that BCB conception seen as lacking in term of superiority as compared to OCB and need to be tested with new data. As such, the present study used the original seven dimensions of BCB as proposed earlier by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) mainly to confirm the validity of construct and to provide better understanding of what is constitute of employees' brand-consistent behavior.

## ***2.2. Brand Citizenship Behavior and Stimulus-Organism-Response-Model***

This study employed Stimulus-Organism-Response Model (SORM) as underlying theory. SORM is essentially an extension of Stimulus-Response Model (SRM) that acknowledges the 'internal factor' to the subject that might also mediate the relationship between a stimulus and a response (Cziko, 2000; Jacoby, 2002). Basically, the model showed the interaction of stimuli that influence person's response. Interestingly, the model also recognizes the mediating effect of a 'black box'/transformer, which highlights that what is inside in the people's minds may also influence their responses towards the stimuli. In addition Baron & Kenny (1986) also stated that SORM essentially relevance in understanding the mediation effect on the initial relationship. For the present study, brand knowledge and brand rewards serve as stimulus, while brand commitment act as mediator (i.e. internal processes to organism) and BCB is as response resulted from the stimulus. As such, the selection of SORM could explain the hypothesized relationship of this study. Moreover, Jacoby (2002) and Keegan, Moriarty &

Duncan (1992) highlighted that SORM is widely applied in understanding customer behavior, and little is understood on how it could explain employees' brand behavior especially BCB.

### **2.3. Internal Branding Practices and Brand Citizenship Behavior**

Previous literatures apparently agree that the most common internal branding practices aimed to align employee's brand behavior consists of organizational strategies that originated from human resource management. For instance, MacLavery, McQuillan and Oddie (2007) suggested six core internal brand practices namely (1) internal communications, (2) training support, (3) leadership practices, (4) recruitment practices, (5) rewards and recognitions, and (6) other sustainability factors that may possibly encourage employees' brand-consistent behavior.

Evidently, internal communications and training have gained considerable attention in internal brand studies and are concluded to be the most influential factors to affect employees' brand behavior (Burmam et al., 2008; Chong, 2007; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2006). As this study focus on 'internal branding' perspectives, few practices as suggested by MacLavery et al. (2007) were omitted from this study. For instance, internal brand communication and training support is a part of employees' source for brand knowledge, and therefore grouped as brand knowledge in this study.

Previous studies also are in agreement with the importance of leaders' action or behavior in influencing employee's BCB. This is consistent with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) where people learn attitude and behaviors from the others. The studies of Burmann et al. (2008), Kimpakorn and Dimmit (2007), Morhart, Herzog and Tomczak (2009), and Solnet (2006) identified that leadership is an important factor in influencing employees' brand-consistent behavior. Based on literature the relationship between brand leadership and employees' brand-consistent behaviors seem stable, hence, is not tested in this study.

According to Schein (1988), internal branding started after employees were recruited by the organization. As such, recruitment practice is omitted from this study because based on the literature, it is more suitable for the 'employer branding' conception (Ambler & Barrow, 1996) and more appropriate to attract new employees and not to retain them. Literature suggest that the gaps that link the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards and brand citizenship behavior is still left open to be research (Burmam et al., 2008; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).

Foster et al. (2010) claims that employees as a critical source for internal brand success that could bridge the gaps between brand promise and brand delivery. As such, employees should be supplied with appropriate knowledge on how to perform their task and roles, to enable them to act and behave accordingly to the brand promise and ultimately reduce the brand performance gaps (Mosley, 2007). However, previous studies have focused more on how internal branding practices such as brand training and internal brand communication could influence employees' brand-consistent behavior (Burmam et al., 2008; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Basically, brand training and internal brand communication are recognized as a source of employee's brand knowledge (King & Grace, 2008). As a result, to determine the

effectiveness of such internal branding practices on employees' brand-consistent behavior, it is more accurate to examine brand knowledge from the employees' own perspectives and experiences.

In addition, mixed results on the relationship between brand knowledge and brand-consistent behavior have been reported. For instance, the recent finding of Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) revealed that employees' brand knowledge insignificantly influences employees' brand commitment and ultimately brand-supporting behavior. The findings were inconsistent with the basic premise that 'employees are at the highest quality for brand delivery when they are well aware and knowledgeable with the organization's brand' (Mitchell, 2002). On the other hand, Miles and Mangold (2005) suggested that brand knowledge contributes to employee brand image which later influences organization's positioning, turnover, employee and customer satisfaction, and favorable brand reputation. Therefore, it is important to examine whether employees' understanding and knowledge towards the organization's brand could enhance their BCB or vice versa. Thus, it is postulated that employees who have adequate knowledge of the brand could be able to identify and display appropriate brand-consistent behavior (i.e. BCBs). For the purpose of present study, brand knowledge is conceptualized as the extent to which employees understand their organization's brand meaning, knowledge of customers' need and expectation and employees' understanding of their responsibility to deliver the brand promise (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009).

Many have highlighted the importance of rewards as a means to induce employee's brand attitude and behavior (e.g. Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). However, when dealing with discretionary behavior, a few debates emerge on the relevancy of rewards on such voluntary behavior (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Organ, 1997). Although brand rewards are considered critical to merit employees with brand-consistent behavior from the consultants and practitioners' view, little study has been conducted to link the influence of brand rewards on employees' BCB. For instance, Goom, MacLavery, McQuillan, and Oddie (2008), MacLavery et al. (2007), Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006), and Solnet (2006) have conceptualized that brand rewards are crucial in stimulating employees' brand-consistent behaviors. Interestingly, an exploratory study of Burmann and Zeplin (2005) found that rewards are irrelevant for employees' BCB. However, the recent study of Burmann et al. (2008) revealed that an incentive structure (especially monetary rewards) is perceived as important for employees to commit and 'live the brand'. Moreover, previous studies did not measure brand rewards directly or this concept has been overlooked in academic literatures. Based on the mixed results and limited number of literatures that link brand rewards and employees' BCB, therefore a study that directly links brand rewards and employees' BCB is justified. For this study, brand rewards is refer to extent to which employee is being rewards and recognized by the organization for brand-consistent behaviors (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; Morhart et al., 2009).

#### ***2.4. The Mediation Role of Brand Commitment***

Internal branding practices alone are insufficient to align employees' brand behavior. Theories in organizational commitment, organizational identification and social identity could enhance employees to fulfill organization's strategic interest (in this case BCB) (Foster et al., 2010). Thus, the more committed employees are and the more they identify with the organization's

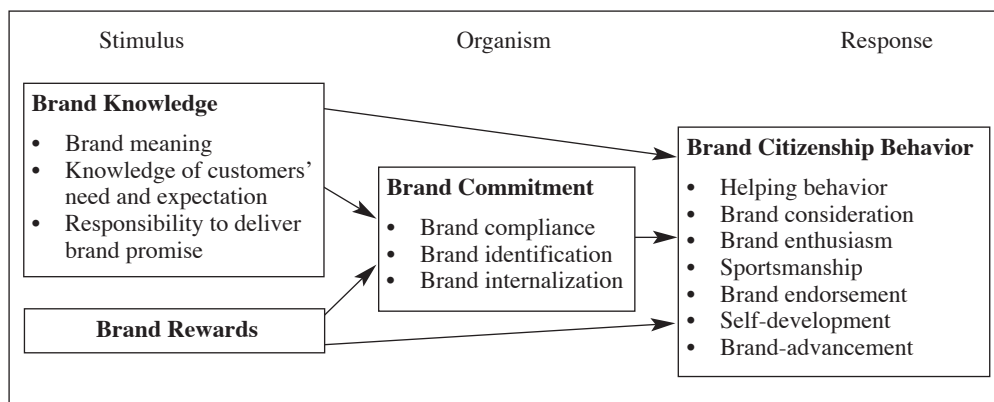


brand, the higher the tendency for them to engage in BCB. As such, Burmann and Zeplin (2005) suggested that brand commitment and BCB are key ingredients in the overall identity-based brand management. Building up on Stimulus-Organism-Response Model (SORM) that acknowledges that the 'internal factor' to organism (i.e. employees) may also influence stimuli on the response, brand commitment is put forward in this study to mediate the relationship between internal branding practices (i.e. stimuli) and BCB (i.e response).

Despite numerous studies have attempted to examine the mediating role of employees' brand commitment on the relationship between internal branding and employees' brand behaviors, there is still no consensus of the term 'brand commitment'. A few scholars (e.g. Punjaisri et al., 2009) have conceptualized brand commitment as a part of the employees' brand attitude dimension, whereas other researchers (e.g. Burmann et al., 2008; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009) argue that brand commitment is a unique construct with either one dimension or multiple dimensions. Although Burmann et al. (2008) attempted to identify the multiple dimensionality of brand commitment (namely brand compliance, brand identification and internalization) in consistence with researchers in organizational studies who argue that employees' commitment could be best explained as a multidimensional construct (Allen & Grisaffe, 2001), Burmann et al. (2008) failed to demonstrate the multidimensionality of brand commitment. Because of the complexity and comprehensiveness of BCBs, it is postulated that employees may also not easily be attached with the organizations' brand based on a single dimension of brand commitment. Hence, it is suggested that employees' brand commitment would be best explained and tested as having three dimensions namely brand compliance, brand identification, and brand internalization. These three dimensions of brand commitment are consistent with the Hierarchy of Employees' Brand Engagement Model (HEBEM) suggested by Nelson (2005). In this study, brand commitment refers to the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005).

Based on the preceding discussion, the following Figure 1 exhibits the research framework:

**Figure 1: Research Framework**



Based on the Figure 1, the main hypothesized relationships are as follows:

- H1: brand knowledge and brand rewards have a significant relationship with brand citizenship behavior.
- H2: brand knowledge and brand rewards have a significant relationship with brand commitment.
- H3: brand commitment has a significant relationship with brand citizenship behavior.
- H4: brand commitment mediates the relationship between brand knowledge and brand reward, and brand citizenship behavior.

Beside, the test of sub-hypotheses for each dimensions also were performed. The sub-hypotheses were performed to understand the interaction between the dimensions of each variable. For instance, brand knowledge consists of three main dimensions, brand commitment consists of three dimensions and BCB consists of seven dimensions. The understanding of what specific brand knowledge dimension and brand commitment dimension on different dimension of BCB could provide better insight of stimulus for BCB. This is because, according to Burmann et al. (2008) revealed that different characteristics of BCB (i.e. different dimensions) could be influenced by different predictors.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is cross-sectional study and based on non-contrived setting. A self-administered questionnaire were distributed to 12 hotels (consist of three to five star rating) in northern region of Malaysia namely in Perlis, Kedah and Penang. A total 435 questionnaire were randomly distributed to the employees with the assistance of hotels' representative. However, only 314 were returned and only 288 were usable. The remaining questionnaires were rejected or could not be used due to technical errors such as too many missing answer or incomplete. According to Sekaran (2000), a sample size between 30 to 500 is appropriate for most research. As such, the sample size is considered sufficient enough for advance statistical techniques.

The questionnaire consisted of several sections mainly to gain information regarding employees' perception on their brand attitude and behaviors as well as how they perceived the internal branding practices implemented at their organization. Most measure were either adapted from previous studies or developed specifically for this research. The measure of BCB and brand commitment is adopted from Burmann et al. (2008) with 21 items and 12 items respectively. The measure of brand knowledge is adopted from Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) with 9 items. Brand rewards measurement was specifically developed for this study by combining the scale of Burmann et al. (2008), Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) and Morhart et al. (2009) with 5 items. All of the questions are in 6-point Likert Scale ranging from '1' "strongly disagree" to '6' "strongly agree". The reason for a 6-point Likert scale is to make sure that the respondents did not simply check the "indifference" choice, as commonly happen with a five-point scale. According to Garland (1991), the presence of a 5-point Likert scale with a middle point of '3' "neither agree nor disagree" will interfere with the findings of the study. In addition, Birkett (1986) also suggested that in order to increase the reliability, it is



best to apply six response categories in questionnaires. Dichotomous scale was used to gain information pertaining to the background of the respondents.

Pre-test also was performed. This is because a set of new research instrument was specifically developed in this study, it is important to test whether it is appropriate in measuring the variables and the content would be understood by the potential respondents. For the purpose of testing the appropriateness of the questions and the respondent's understandability, 30 questionnaires were distributed to selected employees in The University Inn of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and employees of UUM i.e. Centre for Professional and Continuing Education (PACE). Based on the pre-test result, few terms and sentences were rephrased to increase respondent's understandability. Beside, cover letter with a brief note on key definition of key terms used in the question also attached together with the questionnaires' set to increase the respondents' understandability.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 summarized the respondent's profile of this study.

**Table 1:** Respondent's Profile

No.	Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	132	45.8
	Female	156	54.2
2.	Ethnicity		
	Malay	204	70.8
	Chinese	36	12.5
	Indian	33	11.5
	Other	15	5.2
3.	Academic Attainment		
	Primary	10	3.5
	Secondary	178	61.8
	College/University	98	34.0
	Other	2	0.7
4.	Hotel Star Rating		
	Three star	139	48.2
	Four star	67	23.3
	Five star	82	28.5
5.	Customer-Contact		
	Front-line employees	187	64.9
	Back-stage employees	101	35.1

**Table 1:** Respondent's Profile (*cont*)

No.	Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
6.	Department		
	Reception/Counter	48	16.7
	Restaurant/Food & Beverages	47	16.3
	Housekeeping	52	18.1
	Support Services/Maintenance	16	5.6
	Human Resource/Admin	32	11.1
	Account/Finance	28	9.7
	Sale & Marketing	31	10.8
	Other	34	11.8
7.	Organization Tenure		
	Less than 1 year	62	21.5
	1 to 3 years	94	32.6
	4 to 6 years	60	20.8
	7 to 9 years	29	10.1
	10 and above	43	14.9
8.	Monthly Salary		
	Below RM500	35	12.2
	RM501 to RM1000	136	47.2
	RM1001 to RM1500	51	17.7
	RM1501 to RM2000	39	13.5
	RM2001 to RM2500	20	6.9
	RM2501 and above	7	2.4

Table 1 summarized the demographic profiles of the respondents such as gender, ethnicity as well as their background with regards to their organization (such as customer contact, department and tenure). In order to answer the research hypotheses, factor analysis and reliability test first were performed. Principle component analysis was performed to identify the number of latent constructs and underlying factor structure of a set variable (Child, 1990). According to Hair et al. (2006) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), for factor analysis, Barlett's test of sphericity should be significant ( $p < .05$ ), measure of sampling adequacy must exceed .50 and difference value between one factor to another should be at least .01 to avoid cross loading, Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin should be greater than .60 and Eigenvalue should be greater than 1. As a result, a principle component analysis with Varimax rotation of BCB items revealed four factors namely; helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development (overlapping of dimension of self-development and brand advancement) and brand endorsement explaining 69.55% of the variance. Two items with low loading factors were deleted. The KMO score for BCB is .908. 12 items of brand commitment extracted as two factors namely brand compliance (47.09%) and overlapping of brand identification and internalization which then labeled as brand engagement explained 13.8% of variance with KMO score is .916. Brand

knowledge extracted as three factors namely; brand meaning (30.31%), understanding of customers' need and expectation (26.04%) and responsibility to deliver brand promise (20.93%). The KMO score for brand knowledge is .932. Lastly, for brand rewards, five items revealed only one factor explaining 68.1% with KMO score .856. All the factor loadings (i.e. measure of sampling adequacy for both overall test and each individual variable) except two items of BCB were greater than .50. The following Table 2 summarized the reliability test:

**Table 2:** Reliability of Key Variables

Variables	No. of items	Alpha Value
Brand knowledge	9	.926
Brand rewards	5	.882
Brand commitment	12	.878
Brand citizenship behavior	18	.911

#### **4.1. Relationship between Brand Knowledge, Brand Rewards, Brand Commitment and Brand Citizenship Behavior**

Regression analysis applying Enter method was used to test the hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. Regression assumptions as suggested by Hair et al. (2006) was fulfilled namely; linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and independent of error term. Beside, outliers issue also was addressed. As a result, two cases were deleted based on case wise diagnostics from SPSS program. To address the issue of multicollinearity, collinearity test (i.e. variance inflator factor-VIF and tolerance) based on SPSS program were utilized. The VIF value should not exceed 10 and tolerance should close to zero which indicate multicollinearity is not a problem. Based on regression analysis, both collinearity statistics showed no multicollinearity is present.

The results for regression are shown in the Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5. The main findings generally confirm that, brand knowledge (.456,  $p < .01$ ) and brand rewards (.458,  $p < .01$ ) have a significant positive relationship with employees' brand citizenship behavior with 53.3%

**Table 3:** Relationship between Brand Knowledge, Brand Rewards and Brand Citizenship Behavior

Independent Variables:	Dependent Variable: Brand Citizenship Behavior
Brand knowledge	.456**
Brand rewards	.458**
<i>F</i> Value	161.57
$R^2$	.533
Adjusted $R^2$	.530

**Notes:** \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 4:** Relationship between Brand Knowledge, Brand Rewards and Brand Commitment

	<b>Dependent Variable: Brand Commitment</b>
Independent Variables:	
Brand knowledge	.352**
Brand rewards	.516**
<i>F</i> Value	136.17
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.490
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.487

**Notes:** \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01

**Table 5:** Relationship between Brand Commitment and Brand Citizenship Behavior

	<b>Dependent Variable Brand Citizenship Behavior</b>
Independent Variables:	
Brand commitment	.821**
<i>F</i> Value	587.17
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.674
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.673

**Notes:** \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01

variance explained. Brand knowledge (.352, *p*<.01) and brand rewards (.516, *p*<.01) also have a significant positive relationship with brand commitment with variance explained of 49%. In addition, brand commitment (.821, *p*<.01) also found to have significant positive relationship with brand citizenship behavior. The variance explained is 67.4%. Hence, H1, H2 and H3 were supported.

These findings were consistent with previous study of Mitchell (2002) and Miles and Mangold (2005) that suggested employees' knowledge pertaining their organizations' brand would influence brand-consistent behavior such as in this case i.e. brand citizenship behavior. Interestingly, consistent with consultants and practitioners' view (e.g. Goom et al., 2008; MacLaverly et al., 2007), this finding suggests that brand rewards has a significant positive relationship with brand citizenship behavior. This is contradicted with the argument of Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Organ (1997) that suggested rewards irrelevant for such voluntary behavior. However this study had proved element of rewards (include monetary and non-monetary rewards) play a crucial roles in stimulating employees' brand citizenship behavior. Beside, the positive relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards, and brand commitment also found supported in this study and consistent with previous study of Burmann et al. (2008) and Punjaisri et al. (2009). The relationship between brand commitment

and brand citizenship behavior also consistent with previous findings of Burmann et al.'s (2008) and Kimpakorn and Tocquer's (2009).

Present study also revealed that BCB consists of four main dimensions namely: helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development and brand endorsement. Brand knowledge extracted as three dimensions namely; brand meaning, knowledge of customers' need and expectation and responsibility to deliver brand promise while brand commitment extracted as two dimensions namely; brand compliance and brand engagement. As such, detailed analyses for sub-hypotheses were conducted to examine relationship between each dimension for each variable.

For helping behavior, only brand meaning (.225,  $p < .01$ ), responsibility to deliver brand promise (.400,  $p < .01$ ) and brand rewards (.248,  $p < .01$ ) found to have significant positive relationship with 48.1% variance explained. Only brand rewards (.358,  $p < .01$ ) has a significant relationship with sportsmanship. However, variance explained is relatively weak i.e. only 12.9%. For self-brand-development, 48.2% variance is explained by brand meaning (.325,  $p < .01$ ), responsibility to deliver brand promise (.269,  $p < .01$ ) and brand rewards (.306,  $p < .01$ ). Finally, for brand endorsement, only brand meaning (.197,  $p < .05$ ) and brand rewards (.432,  $p < .01$ ) with 26.8% variance explained. Interestingly, contrary to previous study of Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) that stated none of brand knowledge dimensions influence brand-consistent behavior, this study found support that brand meaning and responsibility to deliver brand promise play a major roles in stimulating brand citizenship behavior. Surprisingly, employees' knowledge of customers' need and expectation found insignificant in all hypothesized relationships. This finding rises the question of whether or not employees really understand their customers' need and expectation? However, this finding could be hold true considering the findings of Seng (2007) and Zainol and Lockwood (2009) highlighted the same issue pertaining performance of hotel employees in their brand roles especially in understanding customers' need and expectation.

For brand compliance, only brand rewards (.402,  $p < .01$ ) has a significant positive relationship with variance explained of 18.6%. Meanwhile, brand meaning (.227,  $p < .01$ ), responsibility to deliver brand promise (.188,  $p < .01$ ) and brand rewards (.410,  $p < .01$ ) have a significant positive relationship with brand engagement with variance explained of 46.6%. As this is the first study (to the knowledge of the researcher) that attempted to link brand rewards with brand commitment, the finding adds to the internal branding literatures. Brand compliance was conceptualized as the adoption of relevant behaviors by employees that conform to the organization's brand positioning in order to gain rewards and avoid penalties. Hence, brand rewards were expected to influence brand compliance. This finding is consistent with Punjaisri et al.'s (2009) finding that revealed the positive impact of internal branding such as training and orientation and internal communication on brand identification. According to King and Grace (2008), training and internal communication are actually sources of brand knowledge that aim to enhance employee understanding of the brand and increase role-clarity and brand commitment. While the present study found understanding of brand meaning and responsibility to deliver brand promise to be significant, Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) found that none of the brand knowledge dimensions influence brand commitment.

For the relationship between dimension of brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior, the findings revealed that both brand compliance and brand engagement have significant positive relationships to helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development, and brand endorsement, but the effect of brand engagement was found to be higher than that of brand compliance on BCB. The results showed that the more hotel employees feel a sense of attachment to the brand, the more willing they are to engage in brand-consistent behavior such as helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development, and brand endorsement. This finding is in line with that reported by Burmann et al. (2008), King and Grace (2008), and Punjaisri et al. (2009). Specifically, this study revealed that brand compliance was found to influence sportsmanship the most (.481,  $p < .01$ ), while brand engagement influences brand endorsement the most (.706,  $p < .01$ ). Hence, in order to encourage hotel employees to engage in BCBs, hoteliers must enhance their level of brand commitment by eliciting the sense of belonging and feeling of attachment towards the brand.

#### **4.2. The Mediation Role of Brand Commitment**

For H4, Baron and Kenny (1986) test of mediation procedures was followed. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), in order to mediation effect play its role, three main assumptions must be met. Firstly, it must be shown that the independent variables (namely internal branding practices) are correlated with the dependent variable (i.e. BCBs). Secondly, it must be shown that the independent variables (namely internal branding practices) significantly influence the mediator variable (i.e. brand commitment). Thirdly, there must be a significant relationship between predictors (namely internal branding practices and brand commitment) and BCB. At the same time, the mediator variable (brand commitment) must also significantly influences BCB. Lastly, the mediator (brand commitment) is said to fully mediate the original relationship when the effect of the independent variables (internal branding practices) on the dependent variable (BCB) is zero, after the mediator is controlled. Partial mediation occurs when only the first three steps are met and the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables is still significant.

The following Table 6 summarized the result of mediation effect of brand commitment on BCB following Baron and Kenny (1986) procedures. In short, the result suggests that brand commitment partially mediate the relationship between brand knowledge and brand rewards on BCB. This means that the higher the employees' brand commitment, the lower the effect of brand knowledge and brand rewards on BCB. Hence, this finding is in line with SORM that stresses the importance of the mediating effect of a 'transformer' i.e. what is inside one's mind (attitude) in influencing behavior. This study revealed that brand commitment could mediate the stimulus (brand knowledge and brand rewards) on response (BCB).

In details, based on Baron and Kenny (1986) procedures, brand compliance found to partially mediate the relationship between brand rewards and sportsmanship. Meanwhile, brand engagement partially mediates the following relationship between:

- responsibility to deliver brand promise and helping behavior.
- brand rewards and sportsmanship.



**Table 6:** The Mediation Effect of Brand Commitment on Brand Citizenship Behavior

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Brand Citizenship Behavior		
	Without Mediator	With Mediator	Result
Brand Knowledge	.456**	.239**	Partial Mediation
Brand Rewards	.458**	.139**	Partial Mediation
Brand Commitment		.618**	
$R^2$	.533	.727	
Adj. $R^2$	.530	.725	
$F$ value	161.57	250.87	

*Notes:* \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

- brand meaning, responsibility to deliver brand promise and brand rewards, and self-brand-development.
- brand rewards and brand endorsement.

The several partial mediations especially between brand commitment and helping behavior and self-brand- development, support the findings by Burmann and Zeplin (2005). To a certain extent, brand commitment mediates the initial relationship between internal branding practices (namely brand knowledge and brand rewards) and BCB. In addition, brand engagement was found to be a stronger mediator than brand compliance.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Generally, this study extend the boundaries of knowledge in internal branding by linking the relationship between brand knowledge, brand rewards and brand citizenship behavior and integrating brand commitment as mediation variable especially based on employees' perspective. Specifically, this study was guided by the SORM. The findings of the study gave support to the proposition that perception, belief and attitude (specifically brand commitment) could reduce the effect of stimulus (internal branding practices) on their behaviors (BCB). In other words, the stimulus does not only determine one's behavior and/or response but is also determined by one's perception, in this case of BCB. In this study, the stimulus, which referred to internal branding practices such as brand knowledge and brand rewards (and all their dimensions), not only directly influence the response (BCB) of hotel employees, but the employees' attitudes (employees' brand commitment namely brand compliance and brand engagement) also determine their willingness to engage in BCB.

Generally, the results are in line with the underlying theory in which brand compliance and brand engagement were found to mediate several relationships between internal branding practices and BCB. But more importantly, this study has contributed to the growing the literature and expand the boundary of knowledge of internal branding by (1) linking internal branding practices (brand knowledge and brand rewards), with brand commitment, and BCB, (2) demonstrating the multidimensionality of brand commitment; brand compliance and brand

engagement as opposed to the proposed unidimensionality by previous studies (e.g. Burmann et al., 2008; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2009), (3) indicating the multiple dimensions of BCB as helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand-development, brand endorsement; and (4) utilizing the quantitative approach. Because previous studies were qualitative and conceptual in nature, this study has provided empirical evidence on the relationship between internal branding practices and employees' BCB in the Malaysian context.

The present study has also contributed to the understanding that brand rewards are the key ingredients in internal branding formulation to elicit employees' brand commitment and BCB. This finding appears to contradict the proposition that rewards are not relevant in voluntary behavior such as OCB (Organ, 1997). Instead, this study has empirically shown that brand rewards are also perceived by employees as being important in enabling them to engage in extra-role brand behavior.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Despite the interesting results found, they should be interpreted with caution considering several limitations of this study. This study only (1) focused on employees in hotels in the northern region of Malaysia and (2) was a cross-sectional study. As such, the conclusions made from this study only hold true for specific sample as well as a specific period of time, and may not be generalizable to a larger population and in different contextual settings.

However, despite the small number of respondents, it is considered adequate to understand BCB in the Malaysian context. The small sample was due to time and resource constraint as well as the reluctance of many hotels to participate in this study. The small sample thus did not allow the researcher to make comparison of BCBs by hotel ratings and brands. Therefore, future research should consider a larger sample and brands in other industries. A comparative study on employees' BCB among different hotels also needs to be carried out as different hotels of different star rating possibly commit to different levels of internal brand investment. As such, this could make a difference in the employees' BCB.

Brand commitment, as a new concept, is subject for further testing and conceptualization, as the present study revealed that brand commitment consist of two dimensions namely brand compliance and brand engagement. The overlapping of brand identification and brand internalization needs further research as literatures previously indicated that they are two different concepts. Brand engagement, suggested to representing the overlapping concepts, is also a relatively new concept and still debatable (Buckingham, 2008). Indeed, the concept of employee engagement that serves as the basis for brand engagement is also still unclear (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Hence, brand engagement or brand identification/internalization still needs further testing with a new data set to increase the validity of the overall concept of brand commitment. Similarly, BCB conception also needs further exploration mainly to increase the validity of the construct. This study has also revealed the importance of non-monetary rewards such as empowerment in eliciting brand consistent behavior. Hence non-monetary rewards like empowerment should be taken into consideration in understanding BCB in future works.

In conclusion, this study has extended the literatures in linking the relationship between internal branding practices (namely brand knowledge and brand rewards) and employees' brand commitment, and subsequently BCBs. This study has revealed that brand knowledge and brand rewards have significant relationships to BCB. In addition, brand commitment plays a crucial role in explaining BCB. Tests of mediation highlighted the significant interaction of brand commitment on the initial relationship between internal branding practices and employees' BCB. Thus, the findings are consistent with the SORM that acknowledges the effect of a mediating factor between stimulus and response.

Even though only one dimension of brand knowledge namely employees' knowledge of customers' need and expectation was found insignificant in determining brand commitment and BCBs, the hotel management could not simply ignore its importance in influencing customers' brand satisfaction. Moreover, fulfilling the customers' need and want or expectation is essentially the main objective of market offering and a basic ingredient of brand promise.

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