

MASTER THESIS

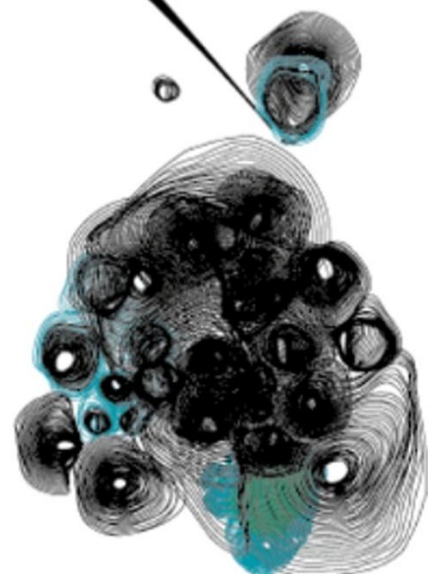
HOW TO TURN EMPLOYEES INTO BRAND AMBASSADORS?

A Conceptualization of Antecedents of
Employees' Brand Citizenship Behavior and the
Mediating Role of Organizational Identification.

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How to Turn Employees into Brand Ambassadors?

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Abstract

In their role as brand ambassadors, employees are essential for building a strong corporate brand. Due to the significant role of employees in brand communication, it is important to find new ways that motivate them to behave for the benefit of their organization's corporate brand.

This research assumes that employees' attitudinal characteristics as well as contextual variables positively affect their brand citizenship behavior (BCB). Since BCB requires extra efforts for those who engage in it, employees who identify with the organization and perceive organizations' successes as their own are expected to be more likely to perform BCB. Therefore, it is posed that the antecedents are not only affecting BCB directly, but also through the mediating variable organizational identification.

The results of an online survey among 165 German employees show that both the attitudinal variables (value congruence, perceived external prestige) and the contextual variables (participation in decision-making, leader-member exchange, internal communication quality) have a direct positive effect on employees' BCB. Moreover, organizational identification partly mediates the relationships between participation in decision-making and perceived external prestige and BCB. Implications for management and avenues for further research are discussed.

Abstract

In het vormingsproces van een krachtig merk vormen medewerkers (in hun rol als merkambassadeurs) een belangrijk onderdeel. Daarom is het voor de merkcommunicatie noodzakelijk om nieuwe manieren te vinden, die medewerkers motiveren om het merk uit te dragen.

In dit onderzoek werd ervan uitgegaan, dat de houding van de medewerkers ten opzichte van het merk en diverse contextuele variabelen het “brand citizenship behavior” (BCB; gedrag van medewerkers dat de brand identiteit versterkt) positief beïnvloeden. Van medewerkers die zich met de organisatie kunnen identificeren, werd verwacht dat ze eerder geneigd zouden zijn om BCB te tonen. Op basis daarvan werd er ook geassumeerd, dat de antecedenten niet alleen rechtstreeks door BCB beïnvloedt worden, maar ook door de identificatie met de organisatie.

De resultaten van een enquête, die door 165 Duitse medewerkers werd ingevuld, laten zien dat de houding variabelen (waardencongruentie, gepercipieerde externe waardering) en de contextuele variabelen (participatie in besluitvormingsprocessen, informatie-uitwisseling tussen leidinggevende en ondergeschikte, kwaliteit van interne communicatie) een direct positief effect hebben op BCB. Bovendien beïnvloedt de identificatie met de organisatie gedeeltelijk de relatie tussen participatie in besluitvormingsprocessen, gepercipieerde externe waardering en BCB. Tot slot worden aanbevelingen voor het management en suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek besproken.

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1 Introduction

Internal brand management has gained in importance as a powerful tool for creating and maintaining strong brands. A strong brand is characterized by evoking positive brand associations. The brand is perceived as differentiated compared to competitors, which has a positive effect on the brand's market position, its sales volume and its profit margins (Arnold, 2006). Punjaisri, Evanschitzky and Wilson (2009) state that "the objective of internal branding is to ensure that employees transform espoused brand messages into brand reality for customers and other stakeholders" (p.60). Therefore, a brand is essentially presented by an organization's employees, who transfer internal characteristics of the brand to external environments (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005).

One of the pivotal constituents of successful internal branding is the concept of brand citizenship behavior (BCB), which is considered to be a determinant for a strong brand (Burmam, Zeplin & Riley, 2009). BCB refers to employees' voluntarily brand-oriented behavior, which goes above and beyond their formal role requirements and brings the brand to live (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Despite the relevance of BCB in creating and maintaining a strong brand, insights into the antecedents of the concept are limited. Therefore, further theoretical investigation of potential drivers of BCB is urgently required.

In practice, organizations still seem to underestimate the important role of employees as ambassadors of a brand. A study of Kienbaum Communications showed that only 25% of German organizations invest in the development of their employees to become brand ambassadors (Bethkenhagen, 2012). However, the encouragement of employees' brand-related behavior should be a high priority task for organizational especially since the Web 2.0 enables customers to denounce their service experiences in social networks, communities or blogs (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

The functional quality of products and services is increasingly perceived as interchangeable (Burmam & Zeplin, 2009). As a consequence, customers no longer buy products but rather brands, whose positioning highlights the unique added values. Since brands are considered as value-creators of an organization (Arnold, 2006), it seems advantageous to build brand-centric organizations. Therefore, this study concentrates on possibilities how to align aspects on organizational-level with brand-related behavior.

It can be assumed that employees who identify with the organization behave in favor of their organization's brand in order to improve the competitive stance of their organization (Van

Dick, Grojean, Christ & Wieseke, 2006). However, until now, no study has focused on the relationship between organizational identification and BCB. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap.

To live the brand both internally and externally, it is also reasonable to assume that it is relevant for employees to share the values their organization is committed to. Consequently, value congruence could play a decisive role in whether employees perform BCB. On top of that, previous research suggested that the perceived status of an organization predicts how employees behave towards their organization (Carmeli, 2005). This study, therefore, assumes that employees who are convinced of the fact that outsiders think positively of their organization, are more likely to perform BCB as they associate themselves with their organization's successes or positive reputation. Since value congruence and perceived external prestige reflect employees' evaluation and perception, in this study, the two variables are understood as attitudinal factors (cf. Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

The present study also focuses on contextual variables which are considered to affect employees' brand-related behavior. These are leader-member exchange, perceived organizational support, internal communication quality and participation in decision-making.

BCB requires extra effort for those who engage in it. Employees may be more likely to go this extra mile when they identify with the organization and perceive organizational successes, which can be achieved by performing BCB, as their own (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Therefore, it is expected that the attitudinal and contextual factors are not only affecting BCB directly, but also through the mediating variable organizational identification.

Since this study aims to investigate the antecedents of BCB and the mediating role of organizational identification in this relationship, the following research questions are developed:

RQ: To which extent do attitudinal factors and contextual factors relate to employees' brand citizenship behavior?

What is the mediating role of organizational identification in this relationship?

2 Theoretical framework

The purpose of the study is to examine the antecedents of employees' BCB. Therefore, the following section provides the theoretical background of the concept BCB (§2.1). Furthermore, different variables are presented which are proposed to be positively associated with BCB (§2.2 – §2.5). Thereupon, the particular mediating effect of organizational identification on the relationship between these variables and BCB are discussed. This chapter closes with the presentation of the research model (§2.6).

2.1 The concept of brand citizenship behavior (BCB)

Brands are not just visual or emotional symbols. A brand is an identifiable product, company or service, including the total accumulation of what is delivered and experienced (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). To support the corporate brand, employees should exhibit a behavior which is conceptualized as brand citizenship behavior (Burmman & Zeplin, 2005). BCB refers to “an aggregate construct which describes a number of generic (brand- or industry-independent) employee behaviors that enhance the brand identity” (Burmman & Zeplin, 2005, p.282f.) In other words, BCB describes employees' voluntary behavior outside of role expectations and in favor of the brand. This includes behavior which focuses on intra-organizational topics (such as not complaining and helping co-workers without expectations of rewards (Organ, 1988)) as well as externally targeted behavior (Burmman & Zeplin, 2005).

The conceptualization of brand citizenship behavior is based on the concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Burmman & Zeplin, 2005). The latter is related to employees' behavior, which is neither part of formal role requirements nor directly rewarded by the organization (Organ, 1988). OCB is considered to have an internal focus. Due to the fact that BCB also includes behavior which is directed to external target groups, on the one hand, BCB is broader than OCB. On the other hand, BCB has a narrower focus than OCB by concentrating on the brand instead of the whole organization (Burmman & Zeplin, 2005).

Burmman and Zeplin (2005) did a first step towards the identification of the dimensions of BCB. They identified the dimensions helping behavior, brand consideration, brand enthusiasm, sportsmanship, brand endorsement, self-development and brand advancement to represent BCB. In a subsequent study, Burmman, Zeplin and Riley (2009) corrected their own work by stating that BCB consists of three dimensions. Nevertheless, they considered their study as a “first exploratory step towards the aim of providing a model of the BCB concept”

(Burmam, Zeplin & Riley, 2009, p.272) and recommended further investigation within a quantitative data set. Therefore, a large-scale quantitative validation of the dimensions was done by Shaari, Salleh and Hussin (2011). They identified four dimensions of BCB: helping behavior, sportsmanship, self-brand development and brand endorsement. Since Shaari et al.'s (2011) work represents the most current and quantitative largest investigation of BCB, this study draws on the BCB-dimensions of the authors. Table 1 provides an overview and brief explanation of their BCB-dimensions.

2.2 Organizational identification as antecedent of BCB

Fundamentally, someone's identity is not only determined by individual characteristics, but also by his/her belongingness to a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A specific form of identification, organizational identification, is considered to be the "perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p.103). The social identity theory proposes that individual's identification with an organization is a way to enhance self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In order to increase their self-esteem, employees try to enhance the status of the organization they belong to by supporting the organization. This suggestion is confirmed by Van Dick et al. (2006), who state that "the expected positive effect of identification on supportive behavior should be marked for forms of extra-role behaviors" (p.285), such as BCB. Also other studies obtained a significant correlation between organizational identification and OCB as a form of extra-role behavior (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Riketta, 2005). Therefore, employees who have a stronger organizational identification seem to be more likely to engage for the organization and perform beyond formal role-requirements (Riketta, 2005).

Until now, no study focused on the relationship between organizational identification and BCB as a form of extra-role behavior. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by proposing organizational identification as an antecedent of BCB.

Against this background, the following hypothesis is posed:

H1: Employees' organizational identification has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

Table 1*Four Dimensions of Brand Citizenship Behavior (cf. Shaari, Salleh & Hussin, 2011)*

BCB	Description
Helping behavior	Positive attitude, friendliness, helpfulness and empathy towards internal and external customers; taking responsibility for tasks outside of own area if necessary, for example, follow up on complains
Sportsmanship	No complaining, even if engagement for the brand causes inconvenience; willingness to engage for the brand even at high opportunity costs
Brand endorsement	Recommendation of the brand to others also in non-job-related situations, for example, to friends; passing on the brand identity to newcomers in the organization
Self- brand development	Willingness to continuously enhance brand-related skills and to make a contribution to the adaption of the brand identity concept to changing markets needs or new organizational competencies

2.3 Perceived value congruence as antecedent of BCB

The concept of value congruence refers to the similarity between organizational values and those of the organization's employee (Kristof, 1996). Therefore, value congruence is considered to be an important form of fit between a person and his or her organization (Kristof, 1996). Three different operationalizations of value congruence have been proposed; subjective, perceived and objective fit (Kristof, 1996). From different perspectives, all three categories aim to measure the congruence between individual and organizational values. Perceived value congruence refers to individuals' own perception to which extent their values are similar to those of their organization (Hoffmann & Woehr, 2006). This form of value congruence is found to be the best predictor of behaviors, such as BCB (Cable & Judge, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001).

According to Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010), employees who perceive a fit between personal and organizational values should find more importance in their work. Consequently, because of the perceived importance, they might be more likely to show extra-role behavior in the pursuit of organizational goals (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004).

All in all, values are the basis of employees' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Katrinli, Atabay & Gunay, 2006). Employees' behaviors and attitudes can often be explained by their values (Carver & Scheier, 1982). Likely, in previous studies, value congruence has been

revealed as a factor that influences employee behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1982; Meglino & Ravin, 1998; Posner & Munson, 1979; Rokeach, 1973), such as organizational citizenship behavior (Ang, Van Dyne & Begley, 2003; Farh, Hackett & Liang, 2007; Wang, Hinrichs, Prieto & Howell, 2013). This study deals with the impact of value congruence on the related concept of BCB. It is supposed that the likelihood of performing BCB increases as the congruence between employees' individual values and the organizational values increases. This assumption is supported by the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1962), which states that people feel uncomfortable if there is no consistency between their beliefs and behaviors.

Against this background, the following hypothesis is posed:

H2: Employees' value congruence has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.3.1 Perceived value congruence, organizational identification and BCB

This study suggests that perceived value congruence does not only predict BCB, but that there is also a relationship between value congruence and BCB that might be mediated by employees' identification with their organization.

To identify with the organization, employees should perceive congruence between their own values and those their organization is committed to (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Cable & De Rue, 2002; Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Kristof-Brown, Zimmermann & Johnson, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). People who share the values of their organization are more likely to define themselves in terms of the organization (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). They are also more likely to share organization's successes and failures (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Therefore, employees who identify with their organization have a higher inherent interest in performing BCB in order to support the corporate brand to achieve organizational successes (cf. §2.2).

All in all, the more an employee identifies with an organization, the more organizational interests are perceived as the own interests and organizational values are included in the own self-concept. As a consequence, employees have a higher intrinsic motivation to support the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

The following hypothesis is posed:

H3: Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their value congruence on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.4 Perceived external prestige as antecedent of BCB

Employees base their opinions about how outsiders perceive the company on the external messages they receive (Smids, Pruyn & Van Riel, 2001). This perceived status of the organization has been termed as “perceived external prestige” (Smids et al., 2001). The latter conceptualizes “individual’s evaluation of the extent to which organizational outsiders hold the firm in high regard or esteem because of the positive, socially valued characteristics of the organization” (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, Relyea & Beu, 2006, p.819).

If outsiders think positively about an organization, employees’ self-esteem increases when they are associated with this organization (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). Accordingly, previous empirical research suggested that employees’ perception about outsider beliefs about their organization may lead them to perform pro-organizational behavior (Carmeli, 2005; Fuller et al., 2006). Following these results, it seems reasonable to assume that employees, who perceive a high external prestige, are more likely to perform BCB. The reason for this is that BCB includes external targeted behavior (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). This behavior allows employees to demonstrate the external environment that they belong to the prestigious organization, which, in turn, enhances employees’ self-esteem.

Against this background, the following hypothesis is posed:

H4: Employees’ perceived external prestige of the organization has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.4.1 Perceived external prestige, organizational identification and BCB

According to Tyler and Blader’s (2003) group engagement model, it can be assumed that the more prestigious an organization is perceived, the greater is employees’ potential to enhance their self-esteem by identifying with this organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smids et al., 2001). In more concrete words: When employees perceive a positive outsider-evaluation of their organization, they tend to categorize themselves according to their organizational membership, which increases their perceived oneness with the organization. Empirical research has supported this suggestion by showing that perceived prestige is related to stronger identification with the organization (Bartels, Pruyn & De Jong, 2009; Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong & Joustra, 2007; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Carmeli, 2005; Dukerich, Golden & Shortell, 2002; Fuller et al., 2006; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; March & Simon, 1958; Smids et al., 2001).

BCB requires extra efforts for those who engage in it. The perceived external prestige of employees’ organizations may be insufficient for them to exert this extra effort. However, to

the extent that perceived external prestige increases employees' organizational identification, employees may be more likely to go the extra mile because identifiers perceive organizational successes, which can be achieved by performing this behavior, as their own (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

Against this background, this study assumes that perceived external prestige is related to BCB largely through its influence on organizational identification:

H5: Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their perceived external prestige on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.5 Contextual variables as antecedents of BCB

This paragraph provides the theoretical background of the contextual variables which are proposed to be associated with BCB. These are leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support, internal corporate communication quality and participation in decision-making. Furthermore, the mediating role of organizational identification in the relationship between the contextual variables and BCB is discussed.

2.5.1 Leader-member exchange and perceived organizational support as antecedents of BCB

Leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived organizational support (POS) are considered as two levels of social exchange (Hong Song, Kolb, Lee & Kim, 2012; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996). A relationship is based on social exchange, as it is stated that "each party must offer something the other party sees as valuable and each party must see the exchange as reasonably equitable or fair" (Graen & Scandura, 1987, p.182).

LMX is defined as "the quality of the exchange relationship between an employee and his or her supervisor" (Dienesch & Liden, 1986 in Erdogan, Kraimer & Liden, 2004, p.310). The quality of the LMX relationship becomes higher as the value of the exchanged benefits (e.g. information, resources) increases (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). In a study of Saks (2006), POS is defined as an organization's valuation of employees' contribution and its care about employees' constitution (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

In short, POS refers to the relationship between employee and organization, whereas LMX describes a relationship on a leader-follower level (Hoon Song et al., 2012). Since there is a difference in the reception of feedback of organizations and supervisors, research has confirmed that LMX and POS are distinct constructs (Herold, Liden & Leatherwood, 1987). Nonetheless, both constructs have in common to be considered as high-quality exchange

relationships, which make employees feel obligated to reciprocate by exhibiting pro-social organizational behaviors (Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996). Evidence suggests that employees, who perceive high support from their organization, tend to return the benefit by performing beyond formally articulated requirements of their jobs (Deluga, 1994; Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Research also shows that high levels of LMX increase employees' willingness to engage in pro-organizational behavior, such as spending more time and effort (Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997).

Since LMX and POS showed to lead to extra-role behavior and BCB is considered to be a form of extra-role behavior, it is reasonable to assume that LMX and POS positively affect BCB. Various findings support this assumption by confirming a positive relation between LMX or POS and organizational citizenship behavior, a construct which is strongly related to BCB (Burmman & Zeplin, 2005).

Against this background, the following hypotheses are posed:

H6: Employees' perceived LMX has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

H7: Employees' perceived POS has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

Leader-member exchange/perceived organizational support, organizational identification and BCB

Perceived organizational support is found to have a positive effect on employees' self-enhancement (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Positive feelings of self-worth, in turn, increase employees' organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Also the results of a study of Sluss, Klimchak and Holmes (2008) provide evidence that perceived organizational support is significantly associated with organizational identification. With regard to leader-member-exchange, the authors found that exchange-based interaction between employees and their leaders is related to organizational identification (Sluss et al., 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that employees who perceive a high level of support and exchange also have a higher level of overlap in how they define themselves and their organization. Given the fact that organizational identification is also associated with BCB (H1), the former is proposed to intervene between the independent variables LMX and POS and the dependent variable BCB. Therefore, to the extent that POS and LMX increase employees' organizational identification, employees may be more likely to perform BCB when they identify with the organization.

Against this background, the following hypotheses are posed:

H8: Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their leader-member exchange on their brand citizenship behavior.

H9: Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their perceived organizational support on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.5.2 Internal corporate communication quality as antecedent of BCB

The importance of internal communication quality as a basis for successful human interaction at work has equally been emphasized by researchers and communication experts. "Internal communication practices may be undertaken for the purposes of downward, horizontal, or upward communication and may be initiated by anyone within the organization" (Carrière & Bourque, 2009, p.31), including both formal and informal communication (Carrière & Bourque, 2009). It should be noted that this study focuses on internal and downward communication, which is initiated by the management of the organization. This decision is based on the fact that it remains the responsibility of the management to ensure that employees receive high quality information. Zaremba (2006) defined communication quality as the extent to which it is timely, clear, accurate, pertinent and credible. Based on a qualitative study, Marques (2010) added the four criteria responsibility, consciousness, professionalism and sincerity, which are relevant for both internal and external communication.

In previous studies, effective communication strategies as well as high quality internal corporate communications are associated with a higher level of employee engagement (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Bindl & Parker, 2010; Saks, 2006). McLeod and Clarke (2009) go one step further by stating that employees' performance increases by good quality internal communication. This basically reflects the assumption that successful communication helps to reinforce appropriate behavior of employees, such as employee engagement or performance. Following these findings, this study proposes that a high effective internal communication also affects BCB in a positive way:

H10: Employees' perceived quality of the internal corporate communication has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

Internal corporate communication quality, organizational identification and BCB

Employee communication may stimulate organizational identification (Cheney, 1983), because the former transports goals, values and achievements about the organization to its employees. Being well-informed about organizational issues makes the organization more

transparent for employees and easier to identify with (Smids et al., 2001). Recent research supports the assumption that open and trustful corporate communication, which satisfies employees, is relevant when it comes to organizational identification (Bartels, Douwes, De Jong & Pruyn, 2006; Bartels, Peters, De Jong & Van der Molen, 2010; Smids et al., 2001). Against this background, this study poses that internal communication quality may be an instrument to manage organizational identification. Since organizational identification is, in turn, associated with BCB (H1), it is reasonable to assume that the effects of quality communication on BCB are also mediated by organizational identification.

Against this background, the following hypothesis is posed:

H11: Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their perceived quality of the internal corporate communication on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.5.3 Participation in decision-making as antecedent of BCB

The involvement of employees into decision-making processes provides advantages for both employer and employee. A concept which refers to employees' involvement is participation in decision-making (PDM). In this study, following Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky (1995), PDM, as a communicative activity, describes the sharing of decision-making processes between supervisors and employees. With regard to the advantages of PDM, it may affect the "perceived significance of one's job because participation requires investing more of oneself in the job; having invested more of their effort and identity in a job, perhaps workers need to rationalize that investment by seeing their work as more important" (Cappelli & Rogovsky, 1998, p.640). Empirical support is also found for a positive effect of PDM on work attitudes, such as commitment, motivation and satisfaction (Guzzo, Jelle & Katzell, 1985; Mayer & Schoorman, 1998). The theoretical rationale for the relationships between PDM and attitudes is the reduced uncertainty and ambiguity of employees (Sagie & Koslowsky, 1996) and the increased transparency of decision processes (Miller & Monge, 1986), which occur through the process of PDM. In the case of a high PDM, employees showed a higher productivity (Van Yperen, Van den Berg & Willering, 1999) and higher OCB (Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt, Lengnick-Hall & Jennings, 1988). Also based on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), it can be assumed that if "employees perceive their work environment to be one in which they can share their opinions, ideas and concerns, they will in turn be more likely to demonstrate pro-organizational behavior" (Rees, Alfes & Gatenby, 2013, p.2).

The conceptual model of employee participation outlined by Hammer (1988) makes a similar point. It asserts that participation enhances both intrinsic motivation and intrinsically

motivated behavior, which is not driven by any external rewards (Cappelli & Rogovsky, 1998). Due to the fact that such behavior is conceptually similar to BCB, this study proposes that PDM is positively associated with BCB. Thus, it is expected that employees who feel involved in decision-making processes show higher levels of BCB:

H12: Employees' participation in decision-making has a positive impact on their brand citizenship behavior.

Participation in decision-making, organizational identification and BCB

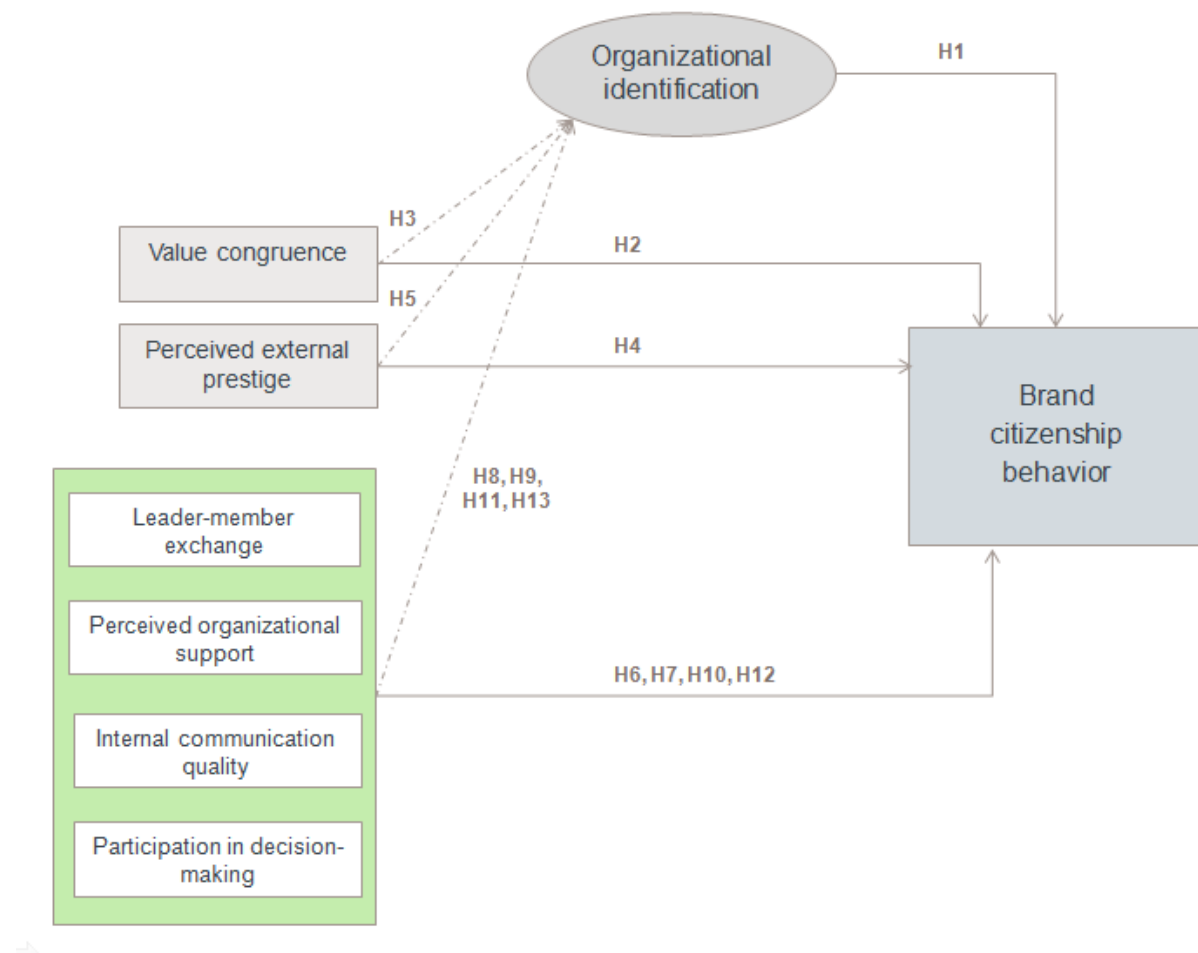
Since BCB requires extra effort for those who engage in it, participating in decision-making processes may be insufficient for employees to perform this extra-role behavior. However, employees may be more likely to go the extra mile when they identify with their organization. Therefore, this study poses a mediator-effect of organizational identification. Although there are studies which emphasize the relationship between communication climate (whereof PDM is a dimension) and organizational identification (Bartels et al., 2007), the relationship between participation in decision-making and organizational identification is underexposed. Studies considering organizational identification as a benefit of PDM are superannuated (Lewin, 1952; Tannenbaum, 1974). This study aims to generate new knowledge by assuming that variations in employees involvement into decision-making processes, account for variations in their perceived oneness with the organization, which, in turn, influence their BCB.

Against this background, the following hypothesis is posed:

H13: Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their participation in decision-making on their brand citizenship behavior.

2.6 Research Model

Figure 1 illustrates the variables which are incorporated into the study. The hypothesized relationships are depicted by the arrows.



Note. — Hypothesized direct relationships, - - - Hypothesized mediated relationships

Figure 1: Research Model

3 Methodology

To find an answer to the research questions, a quantitative online-survey was designed and conducted. The research sample and the procedure of the study are described in the first section of this chapter (§3.1). The second section discusses the research instrument by presenting the scales used to measure the concepts of this study (§3.2).

3.1 Participants and procedure

The study made use of an online questionnaire (socisurvey.de) and was conducted over eleven weeks in autumn 2013 (from September, 1th until November, 17th). The data were obtained from German employees of different companies. Invitation messages were sent to people within the researcher's network and posted in a professional network (Xing.de), requesting people to cooperate. Furthermore, receivers of the invitation were asked to forward it within their own professional network. The sampling method can therefore be explained as both convenience and snowball-sampling.

When participants clicked the link, which was included in the invitation, they first got a short description of the study. The latter discussed the topic of the study and information about the participation in it (e.g. duration; definition of a brand). Moreover, absolute anonymity was stressed and guaranteed. After the introduction, demographical questions were asked. Given that the data could not be collected from a single organization, participants were asked whether they were working for a company with official organizational values. An explanation of organizational values was given in the introduction. Participants were also asked to search on their organization's website for the values their organization is committed to. By doing so, participants were introduced into the topic and encouraged to deal with the values of their organization. Due to the fact that organizational values play an important role in this study, participants who indicated to work for an organization which is not committed to official values were directly led to the end of the survey.

In total 242 people participated in the study. 77 (32%) of them were excluded from the statistical analysis. 72 of them were excluded because they declared to work in an organization without organizational values. Due to the convenience sampling method, no reliable response rate could be defined.

Table 2
Sample Composition (n=165)

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	72	43.6
Female	93	56.4
Age		
16-25 years	56	33.9
26-35 years	59	35.8
36-45 years	19	11.5
46-55 years	21	12.7
56 years and older	10	6.1
Level of education		
Secondary school certificate (after 9 years)	4	2.4
Secondary school certificate (after 10 years)	26	15.8
University-entrance diploma	29	17.6
College degree	44	26.7
University degree	58	35.2
Conferral of a doctorate	3	1.8
Others	1	0.6
Sector		
Banking/Insurances	17	10.3
Health/Society	26	15.8
Industry	22	13.3
Media/IT	29	17.6
Public administration	11	6.7
Trade/distribution	15	9.1
Services	32	19.4
Others	13	7.9
Leading position		
Yes	41	24.8
No	124	75.2
Length of employment at organization		
Less than 1 year	29	17.6
1-3 years	62	37.6
4-6 years	34	20.6
7-10 years	17	10.3
More than 10 years	23	13.9

Table 2 provides an overview of the respondents' demographical and professional background. Of the 165 German employees eligible for the study, 56 per cent were female. The largest proportion was between 16-25 years (34%) and 26-36 years (35%). People holding a college degree (27%) or an university degree (35%) were most strongly represented in the sample. Most people were employed at their company for 1-3 years (38%) and 25 per cent of participants had a leading position in their organization. The sectors Services (19%) and Media/IT (18%) were most strongly represented in the sample. The results of the study also indicate that out of 63 respondents who voluntarily specified their organizational values in this study, more than half of them worked for an organization which was committed to the value "trust" (or strongly related values). The same applies to the value "quality".

3.2 Measures

Most responses to items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The items of the construct internal communication quality were measured by means of a semantic differential scale. The English items were translated into German. To ensure that the translation conformed to the original meaning, English and German native speakers did a backtranslation. The 48-items instrument was pretested in two sessions. In the following, the constructs are discussed in detail. In the appendix (Appendix A, B), the research instrument can be found.

3.2.1 Brand citizenship behavior

Following Shaari et al. (2011), the concept of BCB was considered to comprise four dimensions (helping behavior, sportsmanship, brand endorsement and self-brand development). To examine whether this study reproduces this conceptualization of BCB, an exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted. An inspection of the screeplot revealed a clear break after two components. The results of a parallel analysis also showed two components with eigenvalues exceeding the corresponding criterion values for a randomly generated data matrix of the same size (Appendix C). To aid in the interpretation of two components, Varimax rotation was performed. After excluding one item which was cross-loaded on both components (“To make our organization successful, I treat customers very courteous”), the two component solution explained a total of 47.71 per cent of the variance. Table 3 provides an overview over the two-factor solution of the BCB-items.

The dimensions helping behavior and self-brand development of Shaari et al. (2011) showed to form one component. This component was newly labeled as *brand strengthening*. Shaari et al.’s (2011) BCB-dimensions sportsmanship and brand endorsement showed to form the second component of BCB, which was labeled as *brand championing*. Table 4 provides the definitions of the concepts’ new components, which were formulated for the purposes of this study. In the following paragraphs, the hypotheses, which are formulated in the theoretical framework (§2), are divided into part (a) and (b). Part (a) relates to the BCB-dimension brand strengthening and part (b) states that there is a positive relationship between the respective independent variable and the BCB dimension brand championing.

Table 3*Varimax Rotation of Two Factor Solution for BCB-items*

Item	Component	
	1	2
To support my brand, I always try to develop and enhance my knowledge.	0.77	
I like to participate in trainings, workshops etc. in order to enhance my expertise.	0.72	
Even if it is not required, I am always willing to assist my colleagues.	0.66	
Through innovative ideas, I try to enhance and strengthen the brand.	0.64	
In order to enhance brand identity, I try to take customer's feedback seriously and appreciate it.	0.57	
Even if it is outside of my own area of responsibility, I will attempt to help in anyway I can.	0.53	
My attendance at work is above the necessity.	0.53	
I treat customer's problems as serious as I treat mine.	0.45	
Also in difficult circumstances I have a positive attitude towards the brand.		0.79
If someone would talk in a negative manner about my brand, I would defend it.		0.78
To support my brand, even in my free time, I am always talking about it in a positive manner.		0.77
I would always recommend this brand to friends, acquaintances or relatives.		0.74
Even in causal talks, I pass on the brand values to the customers.		0.73
I am willing to put the brand's interests ahead of my own interests.		0.60
In favor of my brand, I am now and then willing to endure uncomfortable working conditions (e.g. overtime).	0.34	0.52
% of variance explained	25.31	22.40
KMO	.82	
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	1012.03
	Df	120
	Sig.	<0.01

Note. Component 1: Brand strengthening, Component 2: Brand championing

In order to measure brand strengthening adequately, seven items of the sub-scale were based on studies of Chang, Chiang and Han (2012) and Shaari et al. (2011). On top of that, two items were developed for the purpose of this study. Based on the results of the factor analysis, one item was excluded from the study because it was cross-loaded on both components. The newly constructed eight-item scale reported a good internal consistency of $\alpha=.78$.

The BCB dimension brand championing was measured with a seven-item scale ($\alpha=.85$), which was also partly based on a study of Shaari, Salleh and Hussin (2011). Five items of the construct were developed for the purpose of this study.

Table 4*New BCB-components*

New BCB-component	Included BCB components distinguished by Shaari et al. (2011)	Definition
Brand strengthening	Helping behavior Self-brand development	Employees' voluntary and selfless behavior, aiming at strengthening and evolving the corporate brand from inside out (e.g. by further training, professional support of colleagues), without expecting rewards.
Brand championing	Sportsmanship Brand endorsement	Employees' willingness to defend and endorse the brand value in both professional and non-business situations, even at high opportunity costs.

3.2.2 Independent variables

The 29 items of the independent variables were subjected to principal component analysis. Prior to performing the analysis, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .89, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1974) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. However, the Varimax rotation revealed that the items of POS loaded substantially across factors. Consequently, the construct was excluded from analysis. The six-component solution of the remaining items explained a total of 69.21 per cent of the variance with each item loading on the appropriate construct.

Organizational identification

Four items which measured employees' organizational identification were taken from a study conducted by Mael and Ashforth (1992). One additional item was added, but the factor analysis showed that it was loaded more on value congruence, which led to a deletion of the item. Finally, the resulting five-item scale showed to have a good internal consistency ($\alpha=.79$). Examples of items are "When I talk about my organization, I usually say "we" rather than "they"" and "When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment".

Value congruence

In the present study attention is focused on *perceived* value congruence. Following Cable and Judge (1996), a four-item scale measuring the concept of value congruence was assembled for

the purpose of the study. It included items such as “My personal values match my organizations values” and “The values of my organization do not meet my personal expectations”. After one item was removed from analysis, the scale had a sufficient internal reliability of $\alpha=.75$.

Perceived external prestige

Bartels et al.’s (2007) three-item scale for perceived external prestige was used to assess employees’ perceived external prestige. The scale had a good internal consistency ($\alpha=.86$), including items such as “When talking with family and friends about my organization, they often display a positive attitude towards it”.

Leader-member exchange

LMX was measured with a five-item scale. The items were taken from studies conducted by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and Liden and Maslyn (1998) and were partly adjusted for the purpose of this study. After the elimination of one item, the scale had a good internal consistency of $\alpha=.86$ and included items such as “Due to the exchange between my supervisor and me, I usually know how satisfied he/she is with my work” and “My working relationship with my leader is effective”.

Internal corporate communication quality

This study focuses on communication practices within an organization, which are downward and formal. So far, studies have focused on qualitative dimensions of effective communication (Marques, 2010; Zaremba, 2006). Since this does not cover the whole range of effective communication, a quantitative dimension of the constructs was added. Both quantity and quality of internal corporate communication were measured by using a semantic differential scale. The measure consisted of seven bipolar adjectives separated by a 5-point scale. The resulting consistency estimated for the construct internal corporate communication quality was $\alpha=.82$, example items were “clear-unclear”, “credible-incredible” and “meager-extensive”. The items related to quantity were developed for the purpose of this study.

Participation in decision-making

As in a study by Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois and Callan (2004), PDM was measured by three items. The items “I am allowed to provide input on decisions regarding my job”, “At work, my ideas and opinions are valued and paid attention to” and “My supervisor seeks my input on important decisions” showed a high internal consistency ($\alpha=.86$).

4 Results

In the following chapter, the results of the statistical analysis are discussed. The first section elaborates on the correlation analysis (§4.1). In the second section of this chapter, the results of the regression analysis are reported (§4.2). This chapter closes with a presentation of the final model (§4.3).

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of all variables. It is striking that the average values of all variables are above the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale.

4.1 Correlation

A correlation analysis was conducted by using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ). This method is appropriate for the present study as it was designed for measurements with ordinal level. The correlations indicated significant relationships between nearly all variables. However, no multicollinearity was associated with the variables ($r < .7$). All correlations are reported in table 4. The strongest correlations are discussed in the following.

The BCB-dimension brand strengthening was particular strongly correlated with employees' participation in decision-making, which when squared indicated 27 per cent of shared variance. An even stronger correlation of brand strengthening can be seen with the variable perceived external prestige ($r = .62$, $p < .01$). Perceived external prestige was the only concept which correlated significantly stronger with brand strengthening than with brand championing.

With regard to the BCB-dimension brand championing, the strongest correlation can be seen between the dimension and internal corporate communication ($r = .63$, $p < .01$). Also with regard to organizational identification a strong correlation was found, which when squared indicates 44.9 per cent shared variance.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics, Inter-Correlations and Scale Reliabilities of the Study Variables (n=165)*

	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4a.	4b.	5.	6.	7.
1. Value congruence	4.02	0.7	(0.75)							
2. Organizational identification	3.77	0.78	0.28**	(0.79)						
3. Perceived external prestige	3.59	0.85	0.22**	0.46**	(0.86)					
BCB:										
4a. BCB: Brand strengthening	4.18	0.44	0.34**	0.39**	0.62**	(0.78)				
4b. BCB: Brand championing	3.58	0.68	0.31**	0.67**	0.27**	0.46**	(0.85)			
5. Internal communication quality	3.76	0.7	0.22**	0.39**	0.54**	0.17*	0.63**	(0.82)		
6. Participation in decision-making	3.6	0.94	0.20*	0.50**	0.46**	0.52**	0.56**	0.41**	(0.86)	
7. Leader-member exchange	3.86	0.78	0.12	0.45**	0.52**	0.36**	0.59**	0.53**	0.68**	(0.86)

Note. Cronbach alphas appear on the diagonal in parentheses. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Regression analysis

The research hypotheses suggest that organizational identification mediates the relationship between the independent variables and the BCB-dimensions. The process for detecting mediated relationships in regression recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to test these hypotheses. The approach includes four regression equations. Within the second and the third step, the hypothesized direct effects of the independent variables on BCB are examined as well.

In regression terms, organizational identification is suggested as a mediator when

- 1) the regression coefficients for the independent variables are significant in predicting organizational identification,
- 2) the regression coefficients for the independent variables measures are significant in predicting the dimensions of BCB,
- 3) the mediator organizational identification significantly affects the BCB dimensions and when
- 4) the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and BCB is significantly reduced after adjusting organizational identification in the equation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). If the regression coefficient becomes insignificant, there is a complete mediation.

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. The results of the regression analysis are reported in table 5. Table 6 presents an overview about the confirmed and rejected hypotheses.

Step 1: Regressing the organizational identification on the independent variables

In the first equation, organizational identification was regressed on the independent variables. The results suggested that the independent variables account for 39 per cent of the variance in organizational identification. The latter showed to be predicted by perceived external prestige, internal communication quality and PDM. No relationship between both value congruence and LMX and identification was found.

Step 2: Regressing BCB on the independent variables

This study hypothesizes a positive relationship between the independent variables and the two dimensions of BCB (H2, H4, H6, H10, H12). The proposed model explained 31 per cent of the variance in brand strengthening. PDM made the largest unique contribution ($\beta=.45$, $t(159)=4.95$, $p<.01$). But also value congruence ($\beta=.28$, $t(157)=4.02$, $p<.01$) was a significant predictor of brand strengthening. No relationship was found between the independent variables perceived external prestige, LMX and internal corporate communication quality and brand strengthening.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the independent variables made up a significant model that accounts for 63 per of the variance in brand championing. All five hypothesized antecedents showed to have a significant impact on the BCB-dimension brand championing ($\beta>.15$, $p<.05$).

Step 3: Regressing BCB on organizational identification

Research hypothesis 1 suggests a positive relationship between organizational identification and BCB. Organizational identification showed significant relationships in the predicted direction with both dimensions of BCB, confirming the first hypothesis.

Step 4: Full equation

In the fourth equation, the regression analysis was carried out between the dimensions of BCB and both the independent variables and the proposed mediator organizational identification. Following Baron and Kenny (1986), there are four conditions which must be met to confirm that organizational identification is a mediator. The first three steps already revealed insignificant relationships, which lead to a rejection of the hypotheses H3, H5a, H8 and H11a. In the following, the relationships are discussed, which already met the first three requirements for mediation.

Perceived external prestige, organizational identification and brand championing

The strength of the association between perceived external prestige and brand championing was reduced in the fourth equation, but still remained significant. This implies that organizational identification partly mediated the relationship between the variables, thereby confirming H5b. Also the calculation of the z-score of the mediated effect of organizational identification supported that the drop in variance was significant ($z=2.33$, $p=.02$).

Participation in decision-making, organizational identification and BCB

The standardized coefficient for PDM on brand strengthening decreased from .45 ($t(158)=4.95$, $p<.01$) in step two to .40 ($t(158)=4.34$, $p<.01$) in the last equation. The Sobel test revealed that the reduction of the effect was significant ($z=2.85$, $p=.02$). Therefore, H13a can be confirmed: Organizational identification partly mediated the positive impact of PDM on the BCB-dimension brand strengthening.

With regard to the effect of PDM on brand championing, the significant coefficient in the second equation ($\beta=.23$, $t(158)=3.46$, $p<.01$) decreased when organizational identification was included ($\beta=.14$, $t(158)=2.2$, $p=.03$). The z-score indicated that there was a partial mediation ($z=3.71$, $p=.02$), thereby confirming H13b.

Internal communication quality, organizational identification and brand championing

There was a decrease in the beta-weights for internal communication quality on brand championing from the second step to the fourth one. However, the reduction of the effect was not significant ($z=1.49$, $p=.61$), thereby rejecting H11b.

Table 5

Results of the Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Organizational Identification and Brand Citizenship Behavior (n=165)

Predictors	Effects on organizational identification			Effects on brand strengthening			Effects on brand championing		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Step 1									
Value congruence	0.2	0.07	0.18						
Perceived external prestige	0.2	0.07	0.22*						
Leader-member exchange	0.06	0.09	0.06						
Internal communication quality	0.15	0.1	0.13*						
Participation in decision-making	0.23	0.07	0.27**						
R ²		0.39							
F		20.42**							
Step 2									
Value congruence				0.18	0.04	0.28**	0.15	0.05	0.15**
Perceived external prestige				0.05	0.05	0.09	0.20	0.05	0.25**
Leader-member exchange				-0.02	0.06	-0.04	0.13	0.06	0.15*
Internal communication quality				-0.08	0.05	-0.12	0.28	0.06	0.29**
Participation in decision-making				0.21	0.04	0.45**	0.17	0.05	0.23**
R ²					0.31			0.63	
F					14.18**			53.22**	
Step 3									
Organizational identification				0.23	0.04	0.40**	0.61	0.05	0.70**
R ²					0.16			0.49	
F					31.29**			158.69**	
Step 4									
Organizational identification				0.10	0.05	0.18*	0.31	0.05	0.36**
Value Congruence				0.16	0.05	0.25**	0.08	0.05	0.09
Perceived external prestige				0.03	0.05	0.05	0.14	0.05	0.18**
Leader-member exchange				-0.03	0.06	-0.05	0.11	0.06	0.13*
Internal communication quality				-0.09	0.05	-0.15	2.23	0.06	0.24**
Participation in decision-making				0.19	0.04	0.40**	0.10	0.05	0.14*
R ²					0.33			0.70	
F					12.84**			62.19**	

Note. *p<0.05, **p<0.01

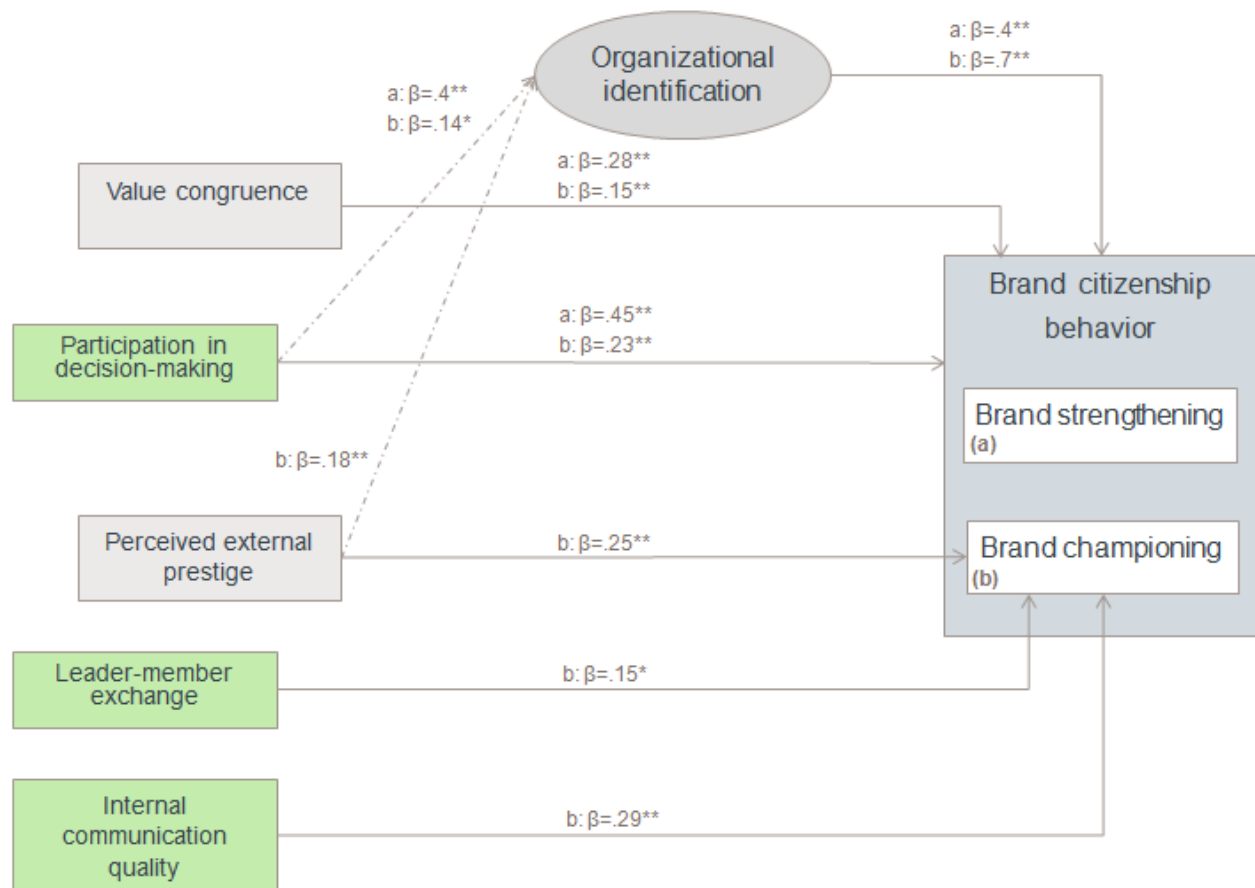
Table 6*Validity of Hypotheses*

Hypothesis	BCB-Dimension	Result
H 1 Employees' organizational identification has a positive impact on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✓ ✓
H 2 Employees' value congruence has a positive impact on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✓ ✓
H 3 Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of employees' value congruence and their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✗
H 4 Employees' perceived external prestige of the organization has a positive impact on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✓
H 5 Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their perceived external prestige of the organization on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✓ (partial mediation)
H 6 Employees' perceived LMX has a positive impact on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✓
H 8 Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their LMX on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✗
H 10 Employees' perceived quality of the internal corporate communication has a positive impact on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✓
H 11 Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their perceived quality of the internal corporate communication on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✗ ✗
H 12 Employees' participation in decision-making has a positive impact on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✓ ✓
H 13 Employees' organizational identification mediates the positive impact of their PDM on their...	... (a) brand strengthening behavior. ... (b) brand championing behavior.	✓ (partial mediation) ✓ (partial mediation)

Note. H7, H9 are excluded from analysis; ✗ Rejected hypothesis, ✓ Confirmed hypothesis

4.3 Final Model

Figure 2 illustrates the significant regressions of this study. The relationships are depicted by the arrows.



Note. ——— Direct relationships, - - - - - Mediated relationships
 a: relationship with brand strengthening, b: relationship with brand championing

Figure 2: Final Model

5 Discussion

The results of the present study allow conclusions regarding antecedents of the BCB-dimensions brand strengthening and brand championing and the mediating role of organizational identification (§5.1). Since not all hypothesized relationships could be established from the data, section §5.2 discusses the rejected hypotheses and possible explanations for their rejection. Moreover, implications for management and research (§5.3) and avenues for further research (§5.4) are presented. The chapter closes with a discussion of the restrictions of the study (§5.5) and the conclusions (§5.6).

5.1 Discussion of research hypotheses

In general, the results of the regression analysis showed that the proposed model explains a good variance in the concept BCB. It is striking that the two dimensions of BCB are predicted by different variables. Thereby, brand strengthening is predicted by fewer variables than brand championing.

Participation in decision-making has the most important influence on the dimension brand strengthening. Moreover, this relationship is partly mediated by organizational identification. The dimension brand championing is the most strongly influenced by internal communication quality and organizational identification. A more detailed explanation of the findings is presented in the following paragraphs.

5.1.1 Predicting BCB

The research results found three variables to have a direct positive effect on both BCB-dimensions: PDM, organizational identification and value congruence.

With regard to the research model, PDM makes the largest unique contribution to explaining BCB. By involving employees into decision making-processes, organizations show that they are interested in their employees' opinions. Therefore, employees who participate in decision-making processes are considered to see their work as more important and to feel more responsible for the corporate brand (cf. Capelli & Rogvsky, 1998). They are more willing to support the brand beyond formal requirements by performing BCB.

The research results reveal that employees who identify strongly with the organization also perform a high brand citizenship behavior. It can be expected that employees who identify and, along with it, "experience the organization's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael &

Ashforth, 1992, p.103), strive to strengthen the corporate brand and perform beyond formal role requirements. The current findings extend previous insights, which provided empirical evidence of the association between identification and other forms of extra-role behaviors (Van Dick et al, 2006; Riketta, 2005).

Furthermore, the results of the study show that if employees share values their organization is committed to, they are motivated to go the extra mile by living the corporate brand and its values. However, value congruence explains only a small part of the variance of brand championing.

Predicting brand championing

Internal corporate communication, LMX and perceived external prestige show to have a direct positive effect on a single BCB-dimension: brand championing.

Following earlier findings regarding connections between communication and performance (McLeod & Clarke, 2009) or communication and engagement (Bakker et al., 2011; Bindl & Parker, 2010; Saks, 2006), the results of the regression analysis support the hypothesized relationship between internal communication quality and the BCB dimension brand championing. Following organizational identification, a high quality internal corporate communication makes the largest unique contribution to explaining brand championing. It can be assumed that employees, who perceive a high quality internal communication, comprehend what the organization stands for. They are well informed about brand issues and aware of organizational processes. As a consequence, employees feel able to pass on organizational information and to defend and endorse the brand values internally and externally. LMX rather includes job-related information exchange, while high quality internal communication (on an organizational-level) prepares employees better for endorsing the whole corporate brand. That is why LMX explains a rather small variance in employees' brand championing.

This study supports the assumption that employees, who perceive a high external prestige when working for their organization, enjoy to be associated with the organization, because it could increase their self-esteem (Dutton et al., 1994). Based on the research results, it can be expected that these employees tend to show that they belong to the organization valued to others in that they defend and endorse the organization's brand value in both professional and non-business related situations. This finding ties in with earlier ones in which a connection between perceived external prestige and pro-organizational behavior was found (Carmeli, 2005; Fuller et al., 2006).

5.1.2 The mediating role of organizational identification

Organizational identification was found to partly mediate the relationship between PDM and BCB. It can be assumed that being involved into the decision-making processes of their organization makes it easier for employees to understand organizational decisions and support them. As a result, employees perceive the organizational successes as their own and identify with the corporate brand. Identifying with the organization, in turn, makes employees more likely to perform BCB.

The present findings also indicate that the relationship between external prestige and brand championing is partly mediated by organizational identification. It can be assumed that employees, who perceive a positive outsider-evaluation of their organization, tend to categorize themselves according to their organizational membership, which increases their perceived oneness with the organization. Organizational identification, in turn, makes employees more likely to perform brand championing behavior.

5.2 Discussion of rejected research hypotheses

5.2.1 Rejected direct effects on BCB

The results of the study showed that perceived external prestige does not have a positive influence on brand strengthening. A possible explanation for this finding is that employees rather endorse the brand externally (brand championing) in order to be associated with it than by evolving the corporate brand by further trainings or by supporting stakeholders (brand strengthening).

Against expectations, a positive relationship on leader-follower level (LMX) and a high quality internal corporate communication does not lead employees to perform brand strengthening behavior. This finding is surprising given the fact that previous studies appeared to show associations between LMX and OCB (Burmann & Zeplin, 2004) and between internal communication and employee behavior (Bakker et al., 2011; Bind & Parker, 2010; McLeod & Clarke, 2009). It can be assumed that rather PDM than LMX or internal communication involves employees into organizational processes which lead to a higher willingness to strengthen the corporate brand and perform brand strengthening behavior.

5.2.2 Rejected mediating role of organizational identification

This paragraph focuses on direct relationships between independent variables and BCB, which are not mediated by organizational identification.

The relationship between internal communication quality and brand championing is not mediated by organizational identification. Since the knowledge about organizational processes, which is passed on by internal communication, increases employees' ability to endorse the brand, it seems that organizational identification is no more relevant in governing the relationship between the two variables.

Since no relationship between value congruence and organizational identification was found, this study cannot provide evidence for a mediation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between value congruence and BCB. A possible explanation for the missing effect of value congruence on identification is that organizations are often committed to similar values, such as "trust" or "quality" (c.f. §3.1). Therefore, the uniqueness of employees' organization's values disappears and the values become interchangeable between different organizations.

Although a positive relationship between LMX and brand championing could be established from the data, this relationship is not mediated by organizational identification. That is because no association between LMX and organizational identification was found.

5.3 Implications for management and research

The purpose of the study is to gain insights into the antecedents of BCB and the mediating role of organizational identification. The results of this study make the following important contributions to management and research.

First, this study offers new insights into the multidimensionality of BCB. It presents new components, definitions and items. With regard to the development of the latter, the central intention was to illustrate employees' absolutely voluntary devotion for the organization, even outside the organizational context. The scales showed to have a sufficient internal consistency and could therefore serve as a basis for further research.

Following earlier studies (Burmahn & Zeplin, 2004; Shaari, Salleh & Hussin, 2011), the results of the present study show that both researchers and practitioners should take the multidimensionality of BCB into account when engaging in this field. That is because the antecedents relate differently to the two dimensions of BCB. Consequently, the concept can hardly be captured in one single construct. Practitioners, who consider BCB as a multidimensional construct, can focus their attention to individual dimensions and its relevant antecedents. More specific questions can be answered, like: How can the brand strengthening behavior of our

employees be improved? How can we support our employees in order to reach a higher level of brand championing behavior?

Second, the study provides new insights into the antecedents of BCB. Next to the direct relationships, organizational identification appears to play a mediating role in fostering employees' BCB. Since this study is the first which investigated these relationships, the results fill a research gap. Regarding management implications, the study provides some clues how internal practices can be used to turn employees into brand ambassadors.

Employees' organizational identification is relevant for their BCB and consequently, in the long term, for creating and maintaining a strong brand. Therefore, the support and encouragement of the development of employees' organizational identification should be a high priority task for organizations. The study shows that both internal and external implications are necessary to reach this goal. Internally, the involvement of employees plays a decisive role for fostering employees' organizational identification. Externally, organizations should attach importance to their reputation management in order to develop and maintain a high external prestige.

On top of that, it is advisable for organizations to emphasize a high quality internal corporate communication. Employees need this information to be informed about organizational issues and to be able to confidentially defend and endorse the brand value in both professional and non-business situations.

However, internal communication, which focuses on downward information flow, is not enough to turn employees into brand ambassadors. The sharing of decision-making processes between management and employees is the best way to improve employees' brand strengthening behavior. If employees feel involved into organizational processes, they perform extra-role behavior aiming at strengthening and evolving the corporate brand. On top of it, the exchange between leader and employee should also be intensive. While internal corporate communication informs employees on organizational-level, LMX contribute to their knowledge about more specific issues and job-related questions.

All in all, the study demonstrates that organizations can enhance their influence on employees BCB, directly and mediated by organizational identification, by investing in internal and external practices. Therefore, organizations should critically analyze which dimensions of BCB are not sufficiently developed in their organization and identify the practices which need to be implemented in order to change this situation. Communication practices which increase the quality of exchange and the perceived involvement of employees could for example be project meetings (so-called *Jours Fixes*) or strategy workshops with the top management team.

Finally, in an increasingly complex world, employees appreciate guidance. Both practitioners and academicians consider values as such guidance for acceptable employee behavior. The present study confirms this by demonstrating that value congruence significantly affects BCB. However, the majority of employees participated in the study either worked for an organization which is not committed to organizational values or in which the values are rarely differentiated compared to those of competitors. Given the importance of values, this paper strongly recommends organizations to provide clear answers to questions like “Which attitudes and values guide the operations in the organization?” or “Which principles should be followed?”. In an iterative dialogical process, organizations should define individual values, which differentiate the organization from competitors. Today, values and its clear definition seem to be essential for organizations to speak with one voice and should therefore be included in every mission statement.

5.4 Avenues for further research

Previous studies found various factors that should be considered in explaining BCB (e.g. brand psychological ownership, brand-centered HR practices, brand commitment). In the future, the findings of the present study could be expanded and connected with previous ones. By doing so, a greater deal of variance could be explained in BCB. The items which were developed to measure BCB in this study could serve as a basis for further research.

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) suggest that, because the two concepts are based on the same behaviors, insights about OCB can also be transferred to BCB. Further research could aim at verifying this suggestion by replicating this study with OCB as the dependent variable.

As this study is the first which investigates the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between the antecedents and BCB, it would be interesting to substantiate this relationship on a larger empirical footing. A distinction could also be made between different types of brands and organizations. It seems possible that product, service or business brands create divergent results regarding employees’ organizational identification or their willingness to endorse the corporate brand.

On top of that, the size of the organization and the ownership structure could have an effect on the results. Small-size family businesses could find employees identification easier to establish than global players. It seems useful to conduct the study within one organization. On the one hand, the relations between the variables could be substantiated. On the other hand, the survey could serve as an employee attitude survey in order to evaluate employees’ satisfaction with the organization.

More conclusions could be made about employees' evaluation of organization's communication practices or about their acceptance of official organizational values.

An organization should be chosen for conducting the study, in which a dialogical identity project was carried out. It seems possible that employees, who are working for such an organization, are more sensitive and involved into the issue. As a consequence, it is reasonable to assume that in this case a relationship between value congruence and identification would occur.

5.5 Restrictions of the study

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical method that allows performing multilevel regression. As a confirmatory technique, SEM could also offer valuable insights into the validity of the proposed research model. However, the method demands a large sample size of more than 200 observations (Garver & Mentzer, 1999). Therefore, for this study, the procedure for testing for mediated offered by Baron and Kenny (1986) was considered to be the most appropriate measure.

Following Shaari et al. (2011), for the development of the research instrument, BCB was treated as a four-dimensional construct. In this study, BCB was identified as a two-dimensional construct. It is possible that additional dimensions would add to the explanatory power of the construct, which remained out of the scope of the present study.

Moreover, many variables are included in the research model of the present study. It is therefore reasonable to assume that some insignificant relationships between variables could become significant when replicating the study using a less complex research model.

The variables of the study were measured by means of a convenience sample. Consequently, a sampling bias is possible. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this study, data was collected at one specific point of time. Therefore, causal interpretations should be undertaken with caution. On top of that, the Likert scale which was used in this study was answered by employees' self-assessment. Therefore, the results of the BCB-scale can be compromised due to the social desirability. However, the data-collection by means of self-reports was necessary, because subjective evaluations of employees were relevant to find an answer to the research question. In order to avoid social desirable answers, respondents were asked to be honest and not to seek to put themselves in a too positive light. On top of that, absolute anonymity was stressed.

Moreover, the underlying qualitative reasons for employees' behavior remained outside the scope of this study. Possible explanations for mechanisms behind the relationships between the variables were given in this chapter. However, further research could include qualitative measures in order to substantiate these assumptions.

5.6 Conclusions

This study contributed to the present state of knowledge regarding antecedents of employees' brand citizenship behavior. The results indicate that the two dimensions brand strengthening and brand championing showed to represent BCB adequately. The findings suggest that participation in decision-making explains the largest variance in employees' brand strengthening behavior. Furthermore, internal corporate communication quality showed to play the most important role in achieving employees' brand championing behavior. In order to support employees' organizational identification, which, in turn, positively affects their BCB, organizations should internally involve employees into decision-making processes and externally attach importance to their reputation management in order to develop a high external prestige.

Taking these findings into account allows organizations to positively affect their employees' brand citizenship behavior. Since the employees, in turn, influence the brand perceptions of organization's stakeholders, brand ambassadors play a decisive role in building a strong brand and, in long-term, determining a sustainable competitive advantage.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Research instrument

Brand championing

In favor of my brand, I am now and then willing to endure uncomfortable working conditions (e.g overtime).

Also in difficult circumstances I have a positive attitude towards the brand.

I am willing to put the brand's interests ahead of my own interests.

If someone would talk in a negative manner about my brand, I would defend it.

To support my brand, even in my free time, I am always talking about it in a positive manner.

Even in causal talks, I pass on the brand values to the customers.

I would always recommend this brand to friends, acquaintances or relatives.

Brand strengthening

~~To make our brand successful, I treat customers very courteous.~~

I treat customer's problems as serious as I treat mine.

Even if it is outside of my own area of responsibility, I will attempt to help in anyway I can.

Even if it is not required, I am always willing to assist my colleagues.

My attendance at work is above the necessity.

In order to enhance brand identity, I try to take customer's feedback seriously and appreciate it.

Through innovative ideas, I try to enhance and strengthen the brand.

I like to participate in trainings, workshops, etc. in order to enhance my expertise.

To support my brand, I always try to develop and enhance my knowledge.

Organizational identification

When I talk about my organization, I usually say "we" rather than "they".

The organization's successes are my successes.

When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment.

When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like personal critique.

~~I can identify with the values of my organization.~~

Value congruence

My personal values match my organization's values.

~~My values match those of current employees in my organization.~~

My organization's values fits with the things that I value in life.

The values of my organization do not meet my personal expectations.

Perceived external prestige

In my community, my organization has a good reputation.

In my community, my organization is regarded as pleasant to work for.

When talking with family and friends about my organization, they often display a positive attitude towards it.

Leader-member exchange

My working relationship with my leader is effective.

I enjoy working with my supervisor.

Due to the exchange between my supervisor and me, I usually know how satisfied he/she is with my work.

~~I respect my supervisor's knowledge of and competence on the job.~~

I am willing to support my supervisor best possible.

Internal corporate communication quality

Timely – tardy

Accurate – inaccurate

Extensive - meager

Clear – unclear

Pertinent – irrelevant

Credible – noncredible

Up-to-date – not up-to-date

Participation in decision-making

I am allowed to provide input on decisions regarding my job.

My supervisor seeks my input on important decisions.

At work, my ideas and opinions are valued and paid attention to.

Appendix B: Online Survey (German)

Sehr geehrte Teilnehmerin, sehr geehrter Teilnehmer,

vielen Dank, dass Sie sich die Zeit nehmen an der Studie zum Thema „Markenengagement im Unternehmen“ teilzunehmen. Die Studie ist Teil meiner Masterarbeit für den Studiengang „Communication Studies“, den ich an der niederländischen University of Twente absolviere.

Die Studie beschäftigt sich mit Gründen, warum sich Mitarbeiter für Ihre Unternehmensmarke engagieren. Die Unternehmensmarke illustriert die Eigenschaften eines Unternehmens, Produkts oder Service. Sie ist mehr als nur Logo, Design und Slogan – die Marke bietet Orientierung, bezieht Stellung und schafft Vertrauen.

Auch Unternehmenswerte spielen bei der Befragung eine wichtige Rolle:

Gemeinsame Werte dienen als Leitplanken für das Handeln in einem Unternehmen. Daimler verpflichtet sich beispielsweise den Werten Begeisterung, Disziplin, Wertschätzung und Integrität. Siemens gibt die Werte verantwortungsvoll, exzellent und innovativ vor.

Wenn es im Fragebogen um (Unternehmens)werte geht, denken Sie bitte an die definierten Werte, die Ihr Unternehmen auszeichnet.

Tipp: Auf Unternehmens-Websites sind die Werte oft unter „Werte & Vision“ zusammengefasst.

Seien Sie beim Ausfüllen des Bogens bitte so ehrlich und genau wie möglich, so tragen Sie zu einer guten Qualität der Ergebnisse bei. Ihre Antworten werden anonymisiert, sodass keine Rückschlüsse auf Ihre Person gezogen werden können.

Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Umfrage nimmt ca. 10 Minuten in Anspruch.

Ich bedanke mich herzlich für Ihre Mitarbeit und stehe Ihnen bei Fragen jederzeit gerne zur Verfügung!

Jeanette Meier

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Angaben zur Person

Welches Geschlecht haben Sie?

- ☐ Männlich
- ☐ Weiblich

Welcher Altersgruppe gehören Sie an?

- ☐ 16-25 Jahre
- ☐ 26-35 Jahre
- ☐ 36-45 Jahre
- ☐ 46-55 Jahre
- ☐ 56 Jahre oder älter

Was ist ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss?

- ☐ Hauptschulabschluss
- ☐ Realschulabschluss
- ☐ Abitur
- ☐ Fachhochschulabschluss
- ☐ Hochschulabschluss
- ☐ Promotion
- ☐ Sonstiges

In welcher Branche sind Sie tätig?

- ☐ Banken/Versicherungen
- ☐ Dienstleistungen
- ☐ Gesundheit/Soziales
- ☐ Handel/Vertrieb
- ☐ Industrie
- ☐ Medien/IT
- ☐ Verwaltung/öffentlicher Dienst
- ☐ Anders, und zwar _____

Haben Sie eine leitende Position in Ihrem Unternehmen?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nein

Wie lange sind Sie bereits für ihr Unternehmen tätig?

- ☐ Weniger als ein Jahr
- ☐ 1- 3 Jahre
- ☐ 4- 6 Jahre
- ☐ 7- 10 Jahre
- ☐ Länger als 10 Jahre

Kennen Sie die Werte, denen sich Ihr Unternehmen verpflichtet hat?

☐ Ja

☐ Nein

☐ Wir haben keine Unternehmenswerte

ENDE

Teil 1 von 3

OPTIONAL

Wenn Sie möchten, geben Sie hier Ihre Unternehmenswerte an:

Bitte lesen Sie die folgenden Aussagen sorgfältig durch und geben Sie entsprechend der Skala an, inwiefern Sie den Aussagen zustimmen.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll zu
Meine persönlichen Werte passen zu den Werten meines Unternehmens.					
Die Werte in meinem Unternehmen passen gut zu den Dingen, die ich persönlich wertschätze.					
Die Werte die in meinem Unternehmen im Mittelpunkt stehen, entsprechen nicht meinen persönlichen Vorstellungen.					
Meine Wertvorstellungen gehen einher mit den Wertvorstellungen meiner Kollegen.					
Wenn ich über mein Unternehmen spreche, sage ich eher "WIR" als "SIE".					
Die Erfolge meines Unternehmens sind auch meine Erfolge.					
Wenn jemand mein Unternehmen lobt, fühlt es sich an wie ein persönliches Kompliment.					
Wenn jemand mein Unternehmen kritisiert, fühlt es sich an wie persönliche Kritik.					
Mit den Werten in meinem Unternehmen kann ich mich identifizieren.					
In meinem Bekanntenkreis genießt mein Unternehmen einen guten Ruf.					
In meinem Bekanntenkreis wird mein Unternehmen als ein Arbeitgeber					

gesehen, für den es Spaß macht zu arbeiten.					
Wenn ich mit Freunden oder Familie über mein Unternehmen spreche, bemerke ich bei ihnen eine positive Einstellung zu meinem Arbeitgeber.					

Teil 2 von 3

Im folgenden Abschnitt wird um eine Einschätzung Ihres Mitarbeiterverhaltens gebeten. Bitte wählen Sie die Antwortmöglichkeiten, die Ihr **tatsächliches** Verhalten am besten wiedergeben.

Seien Sie dabei so ehrlich und genau wie möglich – **bitte geben Sie nicht an**, wie oft Sie das Verhalten zeigen möchten oder was Sie selbst für die beste Antwort halten.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll zu
Für den Erfolg meiner Unternehmensmarke, behandle ich Kunden sehr zuvorkommend.					
Ich behandle die Probleme der Kunden mit der Ernsthaftigkeit als wären es meine eigenen.					
Falls nötig, übernehme ich auch außerhalb meines eigenen Verantwortungsbereiches Aufgaben.					
Auch wenn es nicht von mir verlangt wird, bin ich jederzeit bereit meine Kollegen zu unterstützen.					
Meine Hilfsbereitschaft bei der Arbeit geht über das Notwendige hinaus.					

Zu Gunsten meiner Unternehmensmarke bin ich bereit, hin und wieder Unannehmlichkeiten (z.B. Überstunden) auf mich zu nehmen.					
Auch unter schwierigen Umständen habe ich eine positive Einstellung zu meiner Unternehmensmarke.					
Ich bin bereit, die Interessen der Marke meines Unternehmens unter Umständen vor meine eigenen zu stellen.					

Ich würde die Marke meines Unternehmens jederzeit an Freunde, Familie und Bekannte weiterempfehlen.					
Um meine Unternehmensmarke zu unterstützen, spreche ich in privaten Unterhaltungen ausschließlich positiv über meinen Arbeitgeber.					

Auch in informellen Gesprächen gebe ich die Markenwerte mit Überzeugung an den Kunden weiter.					
Wenn ich hören würde, dass Leute schlecht über meine die Marke meines Unternehmens sprechen, würde ich sie verteidigen.					

Um die Marke meines Unternehmens zu festigen, nehme ich Kundenkritik sehr ernst und versuche ihr zu begegnen.					
Durch innovative Ideen versuche ich meine Unternehmensmarke zu stärken und voran zu bringen.					
Um mein Fachwissen zu verbessern, nehme ich gerne an Fortbildungen, Workshops etc. teil.					
Um meine Unternehmensmarke zu stärken, versuche ich meine Kenntnisse und Fähigkeiten ständig zu erweitern.					

Teil 3 von 3

Die Informationen, die Sie von Ihrem Unternehmen erhalten, sind...

pünktlich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unpünktlich
deutlich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	undeutlich
fehlerfrei	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	fehlerhaft
relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	irrelevant
glaubwürdig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unglaubwürdig
regelmäßig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unregelmäßig
aktuell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	inaktuell

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll zu
Wenn ich mich über etwas beschwere, wird das von meinem Arbeitgeber ernst genommen.					
Meinem Unternehmen ist es wichtig, dass ich zufrieden mit meiner Arbeit bin.					
Wenn ich ein berufliches Problem habe, kann ich auf die Unterstützung von meinem Unternehmen zählen.					

Mein Arbeitgeber sorgt sich mehr um Profit als um seine Mitarbeiter.					
Ich kann mich an Entscheidungen, die meine Arbeit betreffen, beteiligen.					
Wenn es um Entscheidungen geht, fragen meine Vorgesetzten nach meiner Meinung.					
Bei der Arbeit wird Wert auf meine Meinungen und Ideen gelegt.					
Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen mir und meinem Vorgesetzten ist effektiv.					
Die Zusammenarbeit mit meinen Vorgesetzten macht mir Spaß.					
Ich möchte meinen Vorgesetzten bestmöglich unterstützen.					
Ich habe Respekt vor dem Wissen und der Kompetenz meines Vorgesetzten.					
Durch den Austausch mit meinem Vorgesetzten weiß ich für gewöhnlich, wie zufrieden er/sie mit meiner Arbeit ist.					

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung!

Bei Fragen stehe ich Ihnen gerne zur Verfügung.
Jeanette Meier
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Appendix C

Comparison of Eigenvalues from Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and the Corresponding Criterion Values Obtained from Parallel Analysis

Component number	Actual eigenvalue from PCA	Criterion value from parallel analysis	Decision
1	5.37	1.58	Accepted
2	2.09	1.45	Accepted
3	1.27	1.35	Rejected
4	1.16	1.27	Rejected