

Key Determinants and Consequences of Brand Citizenship Behavior¹

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ABSTRACT

Today's competitive conditions governing the banking industry have led banks to use new tools to maintain and enhance their competitive advantage. In this regard, brands and employee behaviors are among the most critical factors in creating a competitive advantage. Meanwhile, service organizations such as banks have realized the importance of these factors in increasing competitive advantages. This study aims

to provide a model of the critical determinants and consequences of brand citizenship behavior. Brand Citizenship Behavior (BCB) is among the concepts that seek to find ways to improve a brand's position in the market, and it is defined as the voluntary behaviors of employees to achieve the goals of the organization's brand. This research's statistical population is Day Bank employees in Tehran, of which 253 were selected as samples using the Cochran formula and the cluster random sampling method. The data were collected using a standard questionnaire. In order to determine validity, structural, convergent, and divergent methods were used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability were used to investigate the reliability. Using Smart-PLS software, data analysis, and hypothesis testing were done through structural equation modeling. The results indicate that internal brand management significantly affects brand citizenship behavior. Brand citizenship behavior significantly affects brand strength, commitment, and pride. The mediating role of brand citizenship behavior in the relationship between internal brand management and brand strength was also confirmed. However, its mediating role in the relationship between internal brand management and brand commitment and the relationship between internal brand management and brand pride was not confirmed.

Keywords: Brand, Brand citizenship behavior, Internal brand management, Internal marketing

INTRODUCTION

A brand is assumed to be an essential intangible asset for an organization (Paul, 2019). With the fiercely competitive situation, competing businesses have continually provided superior service and an excellent brand to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty (Dam & Dam, 2021). During the past two decades, the brand has been the focus of many researchers as a critical factor in creating competitive advantage and long-term market survival (Balmer, 2012; Melewar et al., 2012). Due to the intangibility of services, a brand is an essential factor in the service industry (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). The nature of services, particularly the intangibility and inseparability of the production and consumption processes, requires a different approach to branding (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). That is why branding and brand management nowadays have many advocates in service marketing. Thus, in the current dynamic and competitive world, businesses pursuing a principled approach to brand and brand management in their institutional thinking would achieve positive growth and high market share (Hussain et al., 2020).

Internal brand management centers on internal stakeholders and aims to build a strong brand within an organization (Leijerholt et al., 2022). However, internal brand management is rarely discussed in the academic literature because most studies have focused on the external brand, which seeks a better understanding of customer behavior. Internal brand management is at the core of internal marketing, and through internal marketing, employees and organizations become a single set (Leijerholt et al., 2022). Internal brand management (IBM) focuses on the internal development, strengthening, and maintenance of the corporate brand among employees so that they can 'live the brand' (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). King and Grace (2012) envisioned three leverages, including brand identity, brand communication, and brand leadership, as the constituent structure of internal brand management. They argued that these levers are related to the social aspect of the brand.

By shifting focus from customer to employee as a principle in brand structure (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005) and given the importance of employee behavior in the service industry, Burmam et al. (2009) developed a comprehensive model for understanding brand behavior in which brand citizenship behavior was defined by brand acceptance dimensions, brand advertising, and brand development as brand supportive behaviors of employees (Burmam et al., 2009). Brand citizenship behavior is "voluntary behaviors of employees that go beyond their specified roles, and this is a kind of advantage for the brand." Brand citizenship behavior is also known as prosocial behavior, which an individual voluntarily does outside their role expectations. These behaviors are not directly or explicitly recognizable by the formal reward system and are often transmitted by word of mouth. They argue that brand citizenship helps brand survival and vitality (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015). Customer perception of a service brand highly depends on the behavior of employees who interact with customers directly and frequently. Therefore, customers' perceptions and experiences of the brand are often influenced by how employees behave and perform their duties (Porricelli, 2012). The success of service companies depends on enhancing employees' brand citizenship behavior by coordinating their behaviors and attitudes with the brand image in consumers' minds (Low & Lee, 2014).

The banking industry is one of the most essential infrastructure industries in countries, and a developed banking system is a significant requirement for an economy to grow hurriedly (Almahadin et al., 2021). Banks need committed employees in order to succeed in their market-driven activities. The challenge that banks face today is the overwhelming similarity of services provided by different ones, so customers cannot differentiate between bank services completely. Perhaps investing in the intangible aspects of human resources and ultimately promoting brand citizenship behaviors and

internal brand management could be one of the best ways to succeed in such a competitive environment among banks and create a competitive advantage in this industry (Adileh & Çengel, 2021). Given the importance of the brand as well as human resources in the organization's success, internal brand management and brand citizenship behavior among employees, as factors that include two competing elements of the brand and human resources, play a vital role in organizational success.

The study aims to identify the dimensions of internal brand management, as several terms are identified in the literature. Hence, in the banking industry, as an essential part of the service industry, this would be another vital finding as to which factor is the most relevant to internal brand management. Few studies have examined these factors and their consequences together. Accordingly, the present study aims to design and test a model that includes the determinants and critical consequences of brand citizenship behavior in the banking industry. Adopting strategic solutions and managerial arguments from the results of this study by senior executives of banks and their implementation by employees can uniquely attract new customers, retain former customers, and even guarantee organizations' long-term success.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: First, the current literature on research variables is examined. The subsequent section explains the conceptual framework and methodology. Finally, the findings are reported, and the paper concludes with a discussion of their implications and suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Internal Marketing

Internal marketing initially stems from the notion that employees are the internal market of the organization. This market needs information, education, training, rewards, and incentives to meet the needs and expectations of foreign customers (Papasolomou-Doukakis & Kitchen, 2004). People think of internal marketing as a philosophy in which employees are seen as the internal customers of an organization and treated as such. As a strategy, internal marketing is geared towards attracting, developing, retaining, and inter-functionally coordinating employees to enhance employee satisfaction while creating service quality and satisfaction for the external customer (Sousa et al., 2018). The essence of internal marketing is based on the employee's view as the organization's first customer. From this perspective, employment is a type of internal product that must be able to attract, develop, motivate, and satisfy employees to obtain, as a return for this satisfaction, high-quality services for external customers and, consequently, the loyalty and satisfaction of these clients (Kaurav et al., 2017). Internal marketing focuses on the proper internal relationships between people at all levels of the organization. This

creates a customer-oriented and service-oriented approach to communicating with customers (Berhane, 2021). Internal marketing uses a marketing approach to manage interactive activities within the organization, creating an efficient internal atmosphere by reinforcing the customer-oriented sense among employees (Barzoki & Ghujali, 2013). Internal marketing treats employees as internal customers, considers jobs as internal products, and aims to satisfy employee needs through internal products (Ting, 2011). Grönroos (1997) argued that due to the complexities of the service system, service marketing requires external and internal marketing.

The internal marketing concept has undergone a development process consisting of three interrelated stages, including employee-focused, customer-focused, and company-focused (Kimura, 2017). The intangible nature of the product being marketed in the internal marketing context and the simultaneous production and consumption of internal services create a void for customers. Consequently, customers are compelled to search for service evidence in their engagements with service organizations and their employees (Berhane, 2021; Pomeroy, 2017).

External marketing involves describing an organization's routine activities for preparing, pricing, distributing, and promoting customer services. In contrast, internal marketing focuses on the appropriate internal relationships between people at all levels of the organization and seeks to create a service-oriented and customer-oriented approach among employees in contact with customers. On the importance of internal marketing, Ting argues that designing job products to attract and motivate the appropriate staff is the key to recruiting and retaining qualified employees in service firms (Ting, 2011). Kaurav et al. (2017) argue that internal marketing is a strategic tool for the marketing, human resources, and operations fields. In management, internal marketing also leads to nurturing motivated employees who provide high-quality services, significantly influencing customer satisfaction and organizational performance (Kanyurhi & Akonkwa, 2016).

Internal Brand Management

Companies are constantly striving to improve their performance to a high level. To this end, they need to understand and coordinate the employees. Therefore, internal brand management, as a critical process for coordinating the behaviors of employees with the organization's brand values, has great importance.

Brand management research in the past 15 years includes internal stakeholders such as employees, prompting internal brand management (IBM) as a concept for implementing the brand cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally at the employee level

(Piehler et al., 2018). Internal brand management centers on internal stakeholders and aims to build a strong brand within an organization (Leijerholt et al., 2022).

Li et al. (2008) argued that companies must develop their brands based on the internal management system to achieve long-term competitive advantage and create strong brands. The Canadian Marketing Association defines internal brand management as a set of techniques and methods to support and empower employees to deliver what customers expect (King & Grace, 2012). Internal brand management differs from external brand management in that the domain of internal brand management can extend to all employees of the organization rather than just those who directly interact with customers (Ting, 2011). Nevertheless, according to Porricelli et al. (2014), internal brand management is a subset of internal marketing focusing on developing, strengthening, and maintaining the organization's brand (Porricelli et al., 2014). Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) argued that internal brand management implies that the brand promise is realized through the employees, thereby reflecting the support of brand value. However, Davis and Dunn (2002) stated that for employees to realize brand promises, the organization should guarantee the employee's perception of brand identity and reasons for its specificity (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). In internal brand management, the organization is considered the creator of behaviors and attitudes that are expected outside the organization, and expected behaviors are culturally institutionalizing. Internal brand management is a powerful tool for creating and maintaining outstanding brands (Leijerholt et al., 2022). This vital resource is a sustainable competitive advantage that includes an organization's activities, ensuring the reflection of brand value for customers (Buil et al., 2016).

Brand Citizenship Behavior

Brand citizenship behavior is derived from organizational citizenship behavior (Porricelli, 2012). Organizational citizenship behavior can be inspiring for the definition of brand citizenship behavior (Burmam et al., 2009).

Piehler et al. (2018) defined brand citizenship behavior (BCB) as employee behaviors "that are consistent with the brand identity and promise that together they strengthen the brand."

Building a solid brand for the organization is not enough for service employees to behave in a way that lives up to the brand promise; instead, they are encouraged to make an effort beyond their primary roles for the good of the brand and customer expectations (Pornpitakpan et al., 2017). Based on this structure, each employee generally exhibits behaviors that are not within the scope of organizational tasks, which leads to the empowerment of brand identity (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Therefore, brand

citizenship behavior includes the intentions of each employee to voluntarily perform certain general behaviors outside of their role expectations system and, therefore, improve brand performance (Burmam et al., 2009). In other words, brand citizenship behavior is the internal employees' voluntary activities on generic behavior that contribute to the vitality and viability of the brand (Chen et al., 2020). Following the empirical studies performed by Burmam et al. (2009), these researchers eventually reduced the seven dimensions of brand citizenship behavior, which they had previously presented, to three dimensions: 1- the willingness to help, 2- brand enthusiasm, and 3- tendency for further development (Amireh, 2021). According to the purpose of the current study, these three dimensions are interpreted as brand acceptance, brand advertising, and brand development.

Brand acceptance refers to a positive attitude, friendship, employee sympathy, usefulness for internal and external customers, and doing things beyond their scope of responsibility. Employee's attachment to brand-related behavioral policies and reflection on the impact of their behavior prior to the talk or practical action, as well as applying an advertising approach in brand marketing with the goal of brand development by employees to internal and external customers in various situations and taking the initiative to clarify any misunderstanding about the brand, are all part of brand advertising. Also, brand development reflects employee willingness to learn and continuous improvement of knowledge and skills related to the brand (Khan et al., 2021).

In the service industry, how customers perceive a corporate brand is often based on how they interact with an employee. Brand citizenship behavior can benefit attracting and retaining customers, as doing so can distinguish the company from competitors. It may also make employees live with the brand (Safitri, 2017).

Hypotheses and Conceptual Model Development

Before talking about how to describe the relationships between variables, it is necessary to explain why variables were chosen for research in the first place. As can be deduced from the explanations provided for the variables, these variables (internal brand management and brand citizenship behavior) are in the same categories in the research literature, and the nature of the variables is somewhat close to each other. Internal brand management has recently been considered valuable for developing and sustaining strong brands. Internal brand management seems like a possible solution for sustainable competitive advantage in areas like higher market share, customer loyalty, and price premiums, which are difficult to imitate. This area is newly discovered and needs widespread concern for establishing strong brands (Khan et al., 2021). Burmam

et al. (2009) wrote about internal branding, brand citizenship, and how these things affect the strength of a brand. However, more detail is required for a more comprehensive analysis to understand the concepts and their effects better. So, internal brand management versus brand citizenship behavior are somewhat similar concepts and must be integrated into one area of research. The two prominent marketing and human resource management topics are combined in internal brand management. Studies by Burmann and Zeplin (2005) emphasize that internal brand management enables employees to fulfill the brand promise when they encounter customers and provide services to them. Because internal brand management reinforces employees' attitudes and behaviors (a sense of belonging, commitment, and loyalty to the brand), according to Khan et al. (2021), internal brand management creates brand commitment, and later, brand commitment results in brand citizenship behavior. These attitudes result in better service delivery and higher brand performance (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). In general, internal brand management seeks to realize brand promise through employees. Joseph (1996) states that internal brand management is a concept that can be used to attract employees' and customers' support for the organization and the brand. By shifting the focus from customers to employees as a principle in brand architecture (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005) and given the importance of employee behavior in the service industry, Burmann et al. (2009) developed a comprehensive model for understanding brand behavior in which brand citizenship behavior was associated with the dimensions of brand acceptance, brand advertisement, and brand development as supportive employee behavior of the brand. Brand citizenship behavior is "voluntary behaviors of employees that go beyond their specified role and are a kind of advantage for the brand." In their research, Porricelli et al. (2014) concluded that internal brand management significantly impacts brand citizenship behavior. According to the explanations presented, the first hypothesis of the research is expressed as follows:

H1: Internal brand management has a positive effect on brand citizenship behavior.

According to the Common Language in Marketing Project (2018), brand strength is "a non-monetary, point-in-time measure that seeks to capture the perceived overall attractiveness in the hearts and minds of consumers that the brand imbues with its offerings relative to that of other branded offerings." Brand strength refers to a consumer's willingness "to pay for a specific brand over and above a baseline comparison without the brand." Furthermore, the extent to which a brand can create differentiation and preference in brand-related behavior reflects brand strength (He & Calder, 2020). In this context, brand-related behavior includes not only purchasing but

also any communication and other brand-related behaviors (such as brand recommendation, brand promotion, and talking about the brand). These behaviors are related to customer behaviors, employee behaviors, and, in general, all internal and external groups associated with the brand. Customer relationship quality is one factor that increases brand strength (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Brand strength is defined based on the observations, perceptions, and behaviors of customers, which makes the brand lovely for them and forms a distinct competitive advantage (Burmam & König, 2011). Burmann and Zeplin state that brand citizenship behavior and its elements represent an approach that focuses on the importance of employees in brand development and also leads to brand empowerment. Therefore, brand citizenship behavior is one of the critical determinants of brand strength (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Brand strength shows how well a brand can excel and differentiate brand behavior. Based on these explanations, the second hypothesis is expressed as follows:

H2: Brand citizenship behavior has a positive effect on brand strength.

Burmam and Zeplin (2005) state that achieving brand strength is the aim of all brand management-related efforts in the company, both internally and externally. Reviewing the literature about brand citizenship behavior, it is well-known that it enhances and improves brand performance. Brand citizenship behavior is a set of informal behaviors of employees, and managers are interested in promoting brand citizenship behavior within their organization. Brand citizenship behavior is a set of employees' informal behaviors, and managers are directly interested in promoting brand citizenship behavior within their organization because of the beneficial impact of this behavior on brand and organization performance. Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) state that internal brand management improves employees' perception of the brand, makes them feel brand ownership, and helps them create brand traits in their organizational responsibilities. Internal brand management (i.e., brand identity and communications) is a core contributor to job satisfaction, brand commitment, and the intention to stay (Koo & Curtis, 2020). Internal brand management is functional because it creates employees' perceptions of brand values and influences their attitudes and behaviors to create a sense of integration with the brand (Azizi & Asnaashari, 2013). Therefore, the third hypothesis is expressed as follows.

H3: Brand citizenship behavior mediates the relationship between internal brand management and brand strength.

Commitment to the organization reflects employees' involvement, interference with the organizational goals, and interest in continuing their work (Ahad et al., 2021). Commitment means a sustainable desire to maintain a relationship. As such, it refers to it as the foundation for continuing and maintaining a valuable and meaningful relationship built on trust that causes some social and psychological dependence of individuals on specific persons or objects in social life. Brand commitment is defined as the mental and emotional connection with a brand. Brand commitment is the strong desire of the organization's employees to protect that brand (Medis, 2021). When one commits to a brand, one knows the brand through his or her personality and nature and goes through all the effort to protect the brand (Punjaisri et al., 2009). Brand commitment is measured by the extent of one's identity and relationship with the brand and the effort made to achieve the brand's goals. Based on the presented explanations, the fourth hypothesis is expressed as follows:

H4: Brand citizenship behavior positively affects employees' brand commitment.

Punjaisri et al. (2009) state that internal brand management significantly affects employees' attitudes and behavioral aspects of delivering the brand promise. They found that internal brand management helps managers improve their employees' sense of belonging, commitment, and loyalty to a brand and affect employee brand-related behaviors. King and Grace (2008) stated that internal brand management improves employees' knowledge about the brand (Leijerholt, 2021). Knowledge sharing enables employees to understand brand strategies and perceive the logic of decisions that managers make regarding employees, customers, and service providers, which in turn reduces the contradictions and ambiguities in work and, as a result, increases employee's commitment to the organization and brand (King & Grace, 2009). Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) investigated brand commitment based on the extent to which employees strive to achieve brand goals, which include employee's voluntary and extra-role activities to improve brand performance (Medis, 2021). Accordingly, the fifth hypothesis is expressed as follows:

H5: Brand citizenship behavior mediates the relationship between internal brand management and brand commitment.

Brand pride is one of the new branches created in academic studies. Brand pride is defined as the experienced pleasure of being associated with a brand (Helm et al., 2016). Pride is a spontaneous, nonverbal expression of emotion. Pride distinguishes itself from

other raw emotions through a more complex structure and self-evaluation (Kuppelwieser et al., 2011). Pride is associated with a sense of self-respect and condition-related emotions. Pride arises when employees are immersed in a positive, encouraging work environment and develop a sense of identification with their organization (Men & Yue, 2019). Arnett et al. (2002) state that the source of pride can be the person himself or the various situations in which one is placed.

Comparing a person's prior experiences with the different situations in which they are placed can lead to a sense of pride in them, which can also be seen in the concept of brand pride (Thomas et al., 1999). Arnett et al. (2002) argued that a sense of pride in an organization could be due to an understanding of a situation or a process. These situations and processes can increase positive attitudes toward the organization. According to (Ansari & Kashif, 2019), brand pride is an emotion and a predictor of brand-oriented workplace behaviors. Kuppelwieser et al. (2011) conducted significant research on the brand. They stated that brand pride could also be divided through the employee's trust and commitment to the organization's brand. They also argued that brand pride could be observed and perceived when evaluated more positively or better than other brands or past conditions. They also argued that brand pride could arise from an employee's meeting or organizational performance and can create a positive feeling in the person. Ahn et al. (2016) have cited brand pride as one of the essential consequences of extra-role behaviors toward the brand and concluded in their research that brand citizenship behavior had a significant effect on brand pride. So, the sixth hypothesis is as follows:

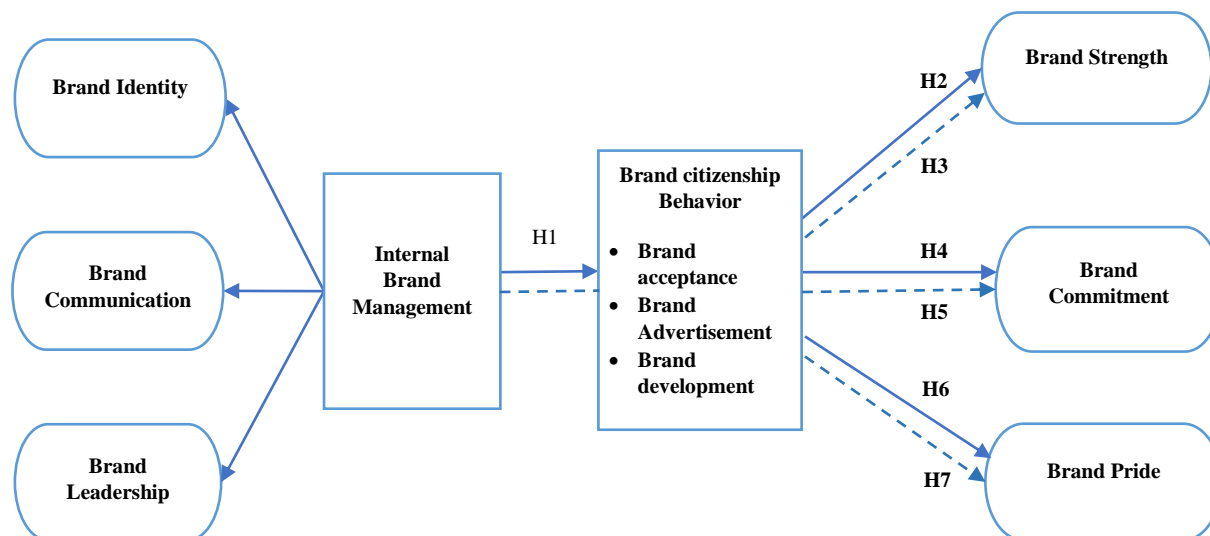
H6: Brand citizenship behavior has a positive effect on brand pride.

People with a positive attitude toward a brand ignore negative messages about that brand because their priorities are recorded. They are fanatical and proud (Chang et al., 2015). Brand pride can arise from a meeting or organizational performance of an organization employee and can create a positive feeling in the person (Porricelli, 2012). Verbeke et al. (2004) stated that pride could be associated with motivation and positive performance, and citizenship behaviors lead to positive results. Arnett et al. (2002) also state that there is a positive relationship between brand pride and positive organizational citizenship behaviors. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis is presented as follows:

H7: Brand citizenship behavior mediates internal brand management and brand pride.

Internal brand management is crucial for aligning employees' behaviors with brand values, which is at the heart of internal marketing. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argue that internal brand management enables employees to fulfill brand promises to customers when serving them. King and Grace (2009) envisioned three leverages, including brand identity, brand communication, and brand leadership, as the constituent structure of internal brand management (Khan et al., 2021). Since brand citizenship behavior is an advantage for the brand and is defined as the voluntary behaviors of employees to improve the brand's performance, internal brand management can be seen as a crucial part of employee brand citizenship behavior. Based on the model developed by Burmann et al. (2009) for understanding brand behavior, we define brand citizenship behavior as the voluntary behavior of employees in order to achieve brand goals, including dimensions of brand acceptance, brand advertisement, and brand development. Burmann et al. (2009) found that brand citizenship behavior is vital in determining brand strength. This is because brand strength measures how well a brand can create differentiation and preference in brand-related behaviors. According to the review of research literature and hypothesis development, the conceptual model of research is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Conceptual model of research*



Source: The authors

METHODOLOGY

As this research describes and studies things, it is considered descriptive survey research. In other words, in this research, the researchers try to analyze the events without interfering with their conclusions. Additionally, since the present research aims to solve a problem and its results can be applied practically, it is considered applied research.

Population and Sampling Method

The study's statistical population comprises all Day Bank employees in Tehran city. Due to the importance of the banking industry in each country's economy, this industry was selected for the research. Since governmental banks do not do much in Iran's brand and branding sector, Day Bank, one of the most famous Iranian private banks that gives particular importance to brand-related activities, was selected as the bank under study. The number of Day Bank employees in Tehran is 800. Using the Cochran formula for a limited population, the sample size was determined to be 260. Since the size of the statistical population (N) is known, using the Cochran formula (given below) and at an error level of 0.05, a sample size of 260 was obtained.

$$n = \frac{Nz^2pq}{Nd^2 + z^2pq}$$

Random cluster sampling was used to select the respondents. In this way, Day Bank branches in Tehran were initially divided into four clusters: east, west, north, and south; then, five branches were selected from each of these clusters, and after that, some employees were randomly selected from each branch and considered the primary sample for completing the questionnaire. For this purpose, 350 questionnaires were distributed among the employees at the headquarters and selected branches, of which 300 were completed and returned. By checking the collected questionnaires, in the next step, another 47 questionnaires were eliminated from the data collection process, and finally, 253 questionnaires were usable in statistical analysis.

Variables measurement

In the present study, library research and field research were used to collect data. In the first step, library research was used to investigate the theoretical literature and experimental background; hence, by referring to scientific resources, especially international databases, related studies were identified, and the theoretical and experimental frameworks of the research were formulated. In the second step, field

research was used to complete the questionnaire and collect data. The research questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part includes questions about some of the most important demographic characteristics of respondents, such as gender, age, level of education, and work experience. The second part includes technical questions to measure conceptual model variables detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 *Resources for Setting the Questions of the Questionnaire*

Variables	Number of questions	Resources
Brand identity	6	Porricelli et al. (2014); Yoo et al. (2000)
Brand communication	4	Porricelli et al. (2014)
Brand leadership	4	Porricelli et al. (2014)
brand citizenship behavior	14	Porricelli (2012)
brand strength	5	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); Mittal and Frennea (2010); Wymer et al. (2016)
Brand commitment	9	Erkmen and Hancer (2015); Nyadzayo et al. (2015); Porricelli et al. (2014); Yoo et al. (2000)
Brand pride	4	Porricelli (2012)

Given the explanations, the research questionnaire consists of 4 demographic questions and 46 questions to measure the main variables. The scale used in the questionnaire's questions is a five-point Likert scale that includes strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Accordingly, respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire's questions by selecting one of five Likert scale options.

Statistical analysis method

For data analysis, in the first step, the regular distribution of data is investigated based on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (Bruce et al., 2003). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is a nonparametric statistical test. Moreover, for distribution compliance, this test compares the cumulative probabilities of the values in the data set with the cumulative probabilities of the same values in a particular theoretical distribution. If the difference from this comparison is significant enough, the test will show that the data does not match one of the theoretical distributions. In this test, if the decision criterion (significance level) is less than 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected; this means that the data cannot follow a specific distribution, such as Normal, Poisson, Exponential, or Uniform (Hassani & Silva, 2015). The next step was to evaluate the validity and

reliability of the questionnaire. To assess the validity of the questionnaire, construct validity, divergent validity, and convergent validity were used, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha Reliability and Composite Reliability. Finally, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was used to test the research model. This method consists of two components: measurement and structural models.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) distinguishes two measurement models: the reflective and formative (Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000). In a reflective model, a latent variable is the common cause of an item or indicator behavior. The causal action flows from the latent variable to the indicators. Manipulating the latent variable via changing pressure, instruction, or therapy causes a change in indicator behavior. Contrariwise, direct manipulation of a particular indicator is not expected to have a causal effect on the latent variable. As a result of what was discussed and what was observed in the conceptual model of the research, it is clear that the research variables are reflective.

Before using the structural model, it is necessary to ensure the accuracy of the measurement model. In the measurement model, convergent validity, divergent validity, composite reliability, and factor loading are used to examine the relationship between latent and observed variables. After the examination of the fitting of measurement models, in the next step, the structural model is examined using R^2 and Q^2 criteria to test the relationships between the variables of the research model, and then the overall model is evaluated. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the hypothesis being confirmed or rejected. The application of PLS has many advantages. Among these critical advantages, we can mention cases such as the estimation of multiple relationships, the measurability of latent variables, the calculation of measurement error, the capability of examining collinearity, and testing spurious and unreal relationships of the model structures. We must mention that the statistical methods were implemented using SPSS and Smart PLS software.

FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The results obtained from the evaluation of the sample's demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Demographic Characteristics of Sample Members*

Demographic Characteristic	Classes	Frequency	%
Sex	Male	170	67.2 %
	Female	83	32.8 %
Age	Less than 25 years	4	1.6 %
	25-35 years	187	73.9 %
	35-45 years	50	19.8 %
	Older than 45	12	4.7 %
Education level	Associate degree	9	3.6 %
	Bachelor degree	69	27.3 %
	Master degree	157	62.1 %
	PhD	18	7.1 %
Work experience	1-5 years	83	32.8 %
	5-10 years	129	51 %
	10-20 years	29	11.5 %
	20-30 years	12	4.7 %

Table 2 shows that 67.2 % of the respondents are male, and 32.8 % are female. On the other hand, the most significant part of the sample (73.9%) consists of members aged between 25 and 35, and the lowest part (1.6%) consists of members younger than 25 years. Most sample members (62.1%) have a Master's degree, while Associate degree holders, with 3.6 %, constitute the lowest number of members. People with 1-5 years of working experience form the most significant part of the sample (32.8 %), and those with 20-30 years of working experience form the lowest part.

Testing the Normality of the Distribution of Variables

The way the variables are spread out should be taken into account when choosing the proper statistical methods for data analysis. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to test the data distribution. The results of this test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 *The Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

Variable	Test statistics	Significance level	Result
Brand identity	0.1253	0.0002	Abnormal
Brand communication	0.1312	0.0003	Abnormal
Brand leadership	0.1234	0.0001	Abnormal
Brand citizenship behavior	0.1151	0.0001	Abnormal
Brand strength	0.0963	0.0002	Abnormal
Brand commitment	0.0821	0.0003	Abnormal
Brand pride	0.1194	0.0001	Abnormal

Kolmogorov–Smirnov test assumes that the data are standard, H_0 . If the test is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), data do not follow a normal distribution, and a nonparametric test is warranted. According to Table 3, the significance level of all variables is less than 0.05, implying that the distribution of the research variables is abnormal and a non-parametric test should be used. Therefore, the partial least squares method, suitable for a normal distribution, is used to analyze the data.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The next step is to evaluate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. To assess the validity of the questionnaire, divergent and convergent validity were used, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The results of these studies are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 *Convergent Validity and Reliability Results*

latent variables	Number of questions	Cronbach's alpha coefficient (ALPH \geq 0.7)	Composite Reliability (CR \geq 0.7)	Average variance extracted (AVE \geq 0.4)	Result
Brand identity	6	0.8513	0.8903	0.5766	Confirmed
Brand communication	4	0.8626	0.9066	0.7082	Confirmed
Brand leadership	4	0.8004	0.8694	0.6248	Confirmed
Internal brand management	-	0.9023	0.8725	0.695928	Confirmed
Brand citizenship behavior	14	0.9300	0.9387	0.5236	Confirmed
Brand strength	5	0.8932	0.9210	0.7003	Confirmed
Brand commitment	9	0.9184	0.9325	0.6061	Confirmed
Brand pride	4	0.8341	0.8890	0.6673	Confirmed

Table 5 *Divergent Validity Test Results*

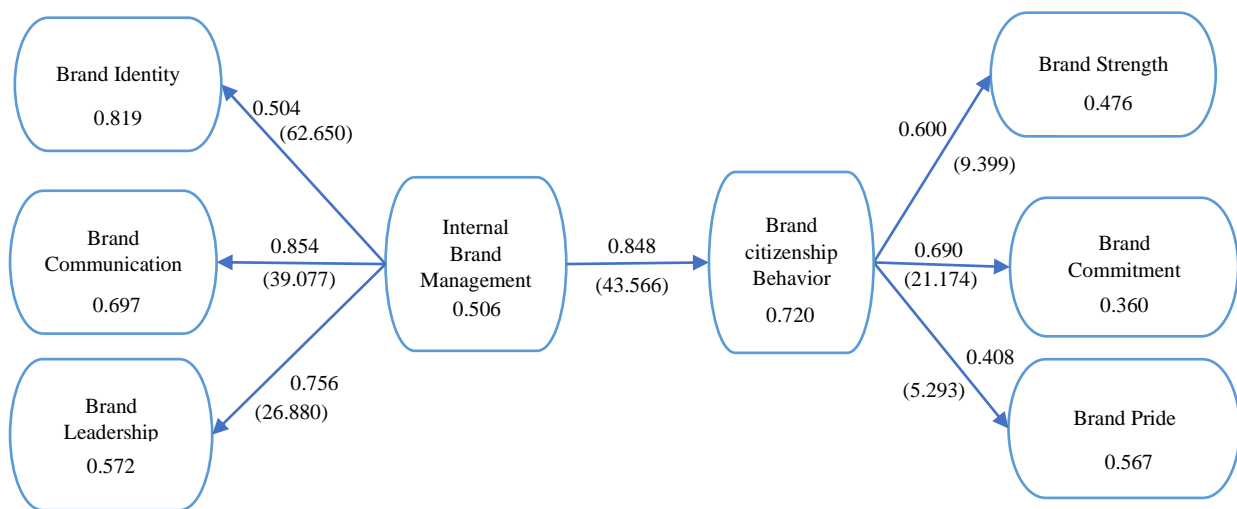
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Brand identity (1)	0.759						
Brand communication (2)	0.631	0.841					
Brand leadership (3)	0.546	0.460	0.790				
Brand citizenship behavior (4)	0.731	0.685	0.645	0.723			
Brand strength (5)	0.645	0.579	0.595	0.689	0.836		
Brand commitment (6)	0.605	0.560	0.590	0.600	0.628	0.778	
Brand pride (7)	0.393	0.348	0.479	0.408	0.507	0.760	0.816

In the partial least squares method, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability are used to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicates the questions' ability to explain their dimensions adequately. The composite reliability coefficient indicates that the correlation of questions in one dimension to measure the model is fitting. The minimum value required to confirm the reliability is 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 4, the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by two criteria Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed using two convergent and divergent validity criteria specified for structural equation modeling. Convergent validity means that the question and the primary variable are strongly linked. Divergent validity means that items of each structure will finally provide a proper separation in terms of measurement as compared to other structures of the model (Hulland, 1999). Convergent validity is measured using the average variance extracted index. Constructs with AVE values greater than 0.4 are said to have convergent validity or unidimensionality (Magner et al., 1996). As shown in Table 3, all values related to average variance extracted for structures represent numbers more significant than 0.4, indicating an acceptable level of convergent validity of the questionnaire. The divergent validity of the latent variables based on the Fornell and Larcker (1981) rules is presented in Table 5. As can be seen in the matrix of Table 5, The values of the primary matrix diameter (root coefficients of AVE of each structure) are more significant than the values below the diameter (the correlation coefficient of each structure with other structures), indicating the acceptable divergent validity of the structures.

Results of Research Model Testing

The research model test was performed using the partial least squares method. Figure 2 shows the research model and the latent and observed variables in the form of reflective measurement models with path coefficients between variables and a coefficient of determination and t-student statistics.

Figure 2 Values of *t*-statistic (Numbers in Parentheses), Path Coefficients, and Values of the Coefficient of Determination



To confirm the relationship between variables at a 95% confidence level, the *t*-student statistic value must be greater than 1.96. The results shown in Figure 2 indicate that the *t*-test exceeds the value of 1.96 for all latent variables. Therefore, all hypotheses were confirmed at a 95% confidence level. In the Partial Least Squares method, the fitting of the structural model is examined in the next step after examining the fitting of measurement models. Two main criteria for examining the fitting of the structural model are R² and Q². R² is a criterion that shows the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable, whose value is only calculated for endogenous constructs of the model. As for endogenous constructs, the value of this criterion is zero. Three values (0.19, 0.33, 0.67) are considered as a criterion for R²'s weak, medium, and strong values, respectively (Chin, 1998). Values of the R² criterion are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Values of R^2 CRITERION

Structures	brand citizenship behavior	brand strength	brand commitment	brand pride
R²	0.720	0.476	0.360	0.160
Result	strong	medium	medium	weak

According to Table 6, the value of R^2 for brand citizenship behavior is at a strong level, for brand strength and brand commitment is at a medium level, and for brand pride is at a weak level. The other criterion used to evaluate the fit of the structural model is the Q^2 criterion, which determines the model's predictive power. The Q^2 criterion is calculated only for endogenous structures. If the value of this criterion for a structure is zero or less than zero, it indicates that the relationships between that structure and other structures in the model are not well established, and the model needs modification. Values of the Q^2 criterion for endogenous variables are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Values of Q^2 Criterion

Structures	Brand identity	Brand communication	Brand leadership	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand strength	Brand commitment	Brand pride
Q²	0.4703	0.5116	0.3624	0.3321	0.3269	0.2117	0.1101
Result	strong	strong	strong	medium	medium	medium	medium

Henseler et al. (2009) determined three values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for model prediction power, indicating weak, medium, and firm predictions. Based on this criterion, the predictive power of the structural model of the research is acceptable. Finally, the GOF criterion is used to evaluate the fit of the overall research model. This criterion was developed by Tenenhaus et al. (2005) and is calculated according to the following formula:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\overline{Communalities}} \times \overline{R^2}$$

So that $\overline{Communalities}$ represents the average of all AVE values and $\overline{R^2}$ represents the average of all R^2 for model endogenous structures.

Wetzels et al. (2009) have introduced three values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 as weak, medium, and strong values for GOF. So, the fit of the overall model in the study is at a strong level of 0.511. This means that the relationship between the structures is well thought out.

Results of testing hypotheses

After examining the measurement and structural models, this section tests the hypotheses. Hypotheses are tested based on two criteria, including t-statistic (which indicates the significance level of the relationships) and path coefficient (which determines the strength of the relationships). The results of direct hypothesis testing are presented in Table 8.

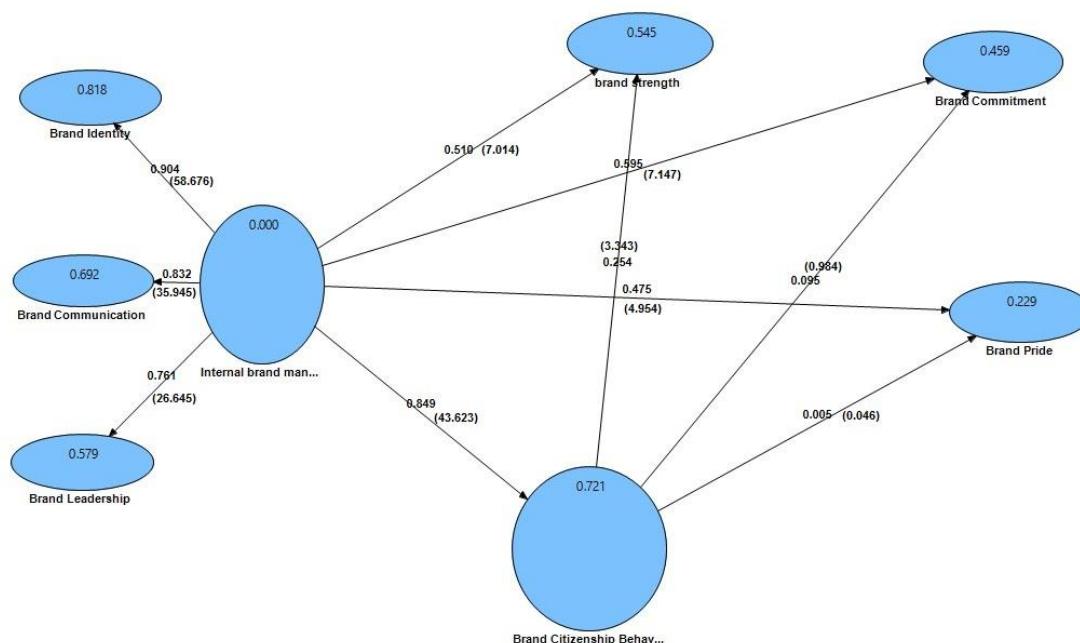
Table 8 *Results of testing the direct hypothesis*

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Path coefficient	t-statistic	Result
H1	Internal Brand Management	Brand citizenship behavior	0.848	43.566	Confirmed
H2	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand strength	0.600	9.399	Confirmed
H4	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand commitment	0.690	21.174	Confirmed
H6	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand pride	0.408	5.293	Confirmed

In the first hypothesis, the t-statistic value is 43.56, indicating that the effect of internal brand management on brand citizenship behavior is significant. According to the path coefficient of 0.848, it is concluded that this effect has a positive direction. The t-statistic value of the second hypothesis is 9.399, and it can be confirmed that the effect of brand citizenship behavior on brand strength is significant. According to the path coefficient of 0.6, this effect is positive. In the relationship between brand citizenship behavior and brand commitment, the t-statistic value is 21.174, indicating that brand citizenship behavior significantly affects brand commitment. The path coefficient value of 0.69 indicates a positive relationship between the two variables.

The value of the t-statistic in hypothesis 6 is 5.293, confirming that brand citizenship behavior significantly affects brand pride. The path coefficient of 0.408 indicates a positive relationship between these two variables. Testing the mediating role of variables is necessary to investigate the indirect effects of variables on each other and their direct effects. For this purpose, the brand citizenship behavior variable should be considered a mediator variable, and in order to investigate these hypotheses, the indirect effect must also be calculated in addition to the direct effect. Figure 3 depicts the t-statistic and path coefficients of the model with the mediating role of brand citizenship behavior.

Figure 3 Values of *t*-statistic (Numbers in Parentheses) and Path Coefficients for Indirect Effects of the Structural Model



As can be seen in Figure 3, after entering the brand citizenship behavior as a mediator variable in the structural model, all relationships, except for the relationship between brand citizenship behavior and brand commitment and also the relationship between brand citizenship behavior and brand pride, are significant and confirmed again. The results of testing the mediating hypothesis are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Results of Testing the Mediating Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Mediator variable	Dependent variable	Between independent and mediator variable		Between mediator and dependent variable		amount of independent variable effect on the dependent variable		Confidence level	Result
				β	t-values	β	t-values	Direct	Indirect		
H3	Internal Brand Management	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand strength	0.849	43.623	0.254	3.343	0.510	0.215	0.95	Confirmed
H5	Internal Brand Management	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand commitment	0.849	43.623	0.095	0.984	0.595	0.083	0.95	Rejected
H7	Internal Brand Management	Brand citizenship behavior	Brand pride	0.849	43.623	0.005	0.046	0.475	0.004	0.95	Rejected

As shown in Figure 3, the third hypothesis, with t-values of 43.62 (between the independent and mediator variables) and 3.43 (between the mediator and dependent variables), as well as with direct path coefficients of 0.51 and indirect 0.221, is confirmed. In this hypothesis, the indirect path coefficient is obtained by multiplying 0.849 (path coefficient between the independent and mediator variable) with 0.254 (path coefficient between the mediator and dependent variable). Since internal brand management directly and significantly impacts brand strength, the mediating type of brand citizenship behavior is partial. However, since the statistical value between the mediator and dependent variables for hypotheses 5 and 7 is less than 1.96, these hypotheses are not confirmed. Therefore, brand citizenship behavior has only a direct effect on brand commitment and brand pride.

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

This paper aims to offer and investigate a model to identify some determinants and consequences of brand citizenship behavior. The model explains how brand communication, brand identity, and brand leadership may increase the occurrence of brand citizenship behaviors in organizations. On the one hand, the model examines the effect brand citizenship behaviors can have on brand strength, commitment, and pride. Compared to previous studies, this study has more comprehensively examined the dimensions of the determinants and consequences of brand citizenship behavior. On the other hand, the present study has investigated the consequences of brand citizenship behavior on employees, while in most previous studies, such as Khan et al. (2021), customers have considered the consequences.

Based on the results of the data analysis, the first hypothesis, which implies a significant effect of internal brand management on brand citizenship behavior, is confirmed. Accordingly, implementing internal brand management within the organization leads to brand citizenship behavior from employees. Based on the internal brand management approach, employees perceive the brand goals, work toward brand value, and meet those goals (Porricelli, 2012). The result is consistent with the findings of Sepahvand and Sepahvand (2013), Shaari (2012), Chang et al. (2015), and Porricelli et al. (2014), who have investigated the relationship between internal brand management and brand citizenship behavior. The second hypothesis of the research on the impact of brand citizenship behavior on brand strength is also confirmed. Confirmation of the second hypothesis indicates that employees' extra-role behaviors lead to a kind of brand differentiation and preference, which makes the brand stronger (Burmam & König, 2011). In addition, the results of the third hypothesis indicate that

brand citizenship behavior plays a mediating role in the relationship between internal brand management and brand strength, and internal brand management, whose ultimate goal of its implementation is to create and maintain a strong brand, has a direct effect on brand strength. These results are consistent with the findings of Burmann and König (2011), Burmann and Zeplin (2005), and Molaei et al. (2018). The fourth hypothesis indicates that if employees perform extra-role activities to improve brand performance and brand value, they will somehow be committed to the brand and have an emotional and psychological connection with it (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015). However, the result of the fifth hypothesis indicates that brand citizenship behavior cannot mediate the relationship between internal brand management and brand commitment. Accordingly, brand citizenship behavior only directly affects an employee's commitment to the brand. These results are consistent with the findings of Sepahvand and Sepahvand (2013), Shaari (2012), Chang et al. (2015), Jin et al. (2015), Erkmen and Hancer (2015), and Porricelli et al. (2014). The sixth hypothesis indicates that brand citizenship behavior causes employees to take pride in the brand. Employees who do voluntary and extra-role activities to improve brand performance have a positive attitude towards the brand and ignore negative information about it, as well as being proud of their membership in the organization and the efforts they make to achieve brand goals (Rahimnia & Sadeghi, 2016). This result is consistent with the findings of Porricelli et al. (2014). The results of hypotheses 5 and 7 indicate that internal brand management significantly affects brand citizenship behavior, but brand citizenship behavior as a mediating variable has no significant effect on brand pride or brand commitment. Such a result depicts that brand commitment and pride in the brand among employees are the direct results of internal brand management activities.

Practical Implications

Given the significant positive effect of internal brand management on brand citizenship behavior, managers should use internal brand management levers to promote brand citizenship behavior in organizations. Accordingly, it is recommended that managers view employees as the most crucial success factor in service organizations, enhance employees' sense of commitment and loyalty to the company brand, and base a significant portion of employees' work identities based on such brand perceptions. Managers should enhance the brand identity of their employees by employing internal marketing strategies such as designing corporate careers in a manner commensurate with the abilities and physical and psychological traits of employees, using appropriate recruitment policies to attract employees aligned with brand value,

and designing an appropriate reward system to encourage employees to deliver brand promises so that employees strive for brand goals.

Managers can also use internal communication tools to manage the internal brand. Such tools include great management team interviews, group meetings with employees, publishing internal journals, sending advertising emails, printing brand booklets, creating an intimate environment and an effective presence in cyberspace, creating a virtual brand community, and communicating with employees through producing content in cyberspace. Such solutions will give employees a greater sense of belonging and awareness of the bank brand, and as a result, it will enable them to strive to achieve the brand goals, and thereby the bank will be able to achieve a sustainable competitive position in the market. Managers can use techniques such as the following to enhance brand identity: internalizing brand identity for employees and regulating their behavior in line with the formulated identity; training employees to provide services in accordance with the functional characteristics stated in the company brand identity; aligning employee coverage with the characteristics of the brand identity; and using social events as organizing opportunities with charitable goals.

Besides, according to the positive impact of brand citizenship behavior on brand strength, brand commitment, and brand pride, it is suggested that managers use existing tools to create a strong brand as well as create brand commitment and pride in their employees. The suggestions made to managers in this regard can generally be divided into four categories: 1. Selection and Recruitment, in order to motivate employees to increase their productivity and boost their motivation, human resource managers must pay close attention to the hiring process, observe and follow the recruitment guidelines. They should also encourage employees to socialize with one another in order to increase their productivity and boost employee motivation, which encourages employees to engage in activities outside of work. If managers pay attention to such behaviors of employees and value them, brand citizenship behaviors in employees will increase, leading to their commitment to the bank brand. Some scholars believe that people who exhibit good citizenship symptoms in their personal lives equally desire to display citizenship behaviors in their career brand. Accordingly, human resources managers should design their recruitment process in a way that individuals with the appropriate level of citizenship behavior can be recruited. 2- Training and Development: Planning and implementing training courses regularly and permanently is one of the ways in which managers can develop brand value in the organization and create a good perception of it among employees. By holding such courses, managers should strive to create a proper mental image of the corporate brand in employees' minds and develop employee attitudes and behaviors consistent with customer promise. In addition,

managers need to teach their employees the essential skills for effective service delivery so that they offer good performance in dealing with customers and create a good mental image of the corporate brand amongst customers and other stakeholders. 3- Informal systems: In addition to formal organizational performances that are effective in enhancing citizenship behavior, there are also informal processes that organizations can take to develop citizenship behavior further. For this reason, developing informal mechanisms like participatory culture or intimate relationships with employees is essential for enhancing brand citizenship behavior in the workplace. 4- Performance evaluation and compensation: If some employees exhibit extra-role behaviors, managers should identify them quickly and compensate for their actions. In a communicational environment, managers must react to employees' actions beyond their job requirements for brand performance improvement. Managers can appreciate employees who exhibit proper extra-role behaviors by presenting gifts and even formal gratitude; in this case, employees will always understand that they are the focus of the manager's attention.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Future researchers are suggested to re-test the model and hypotheses of this research using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and participant observation. In addition, researchers, in their future research, can examine the impact of brand citizenship behavior on brand performance indicators from an outside organization perspective, such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer trust, and so on. Another noteworthy point is that the nature of behavioral concepts is such that the relationship between variables usually has to be conceptualized and tested as a complex system of variables. Accordingly, other variables may also be involved in brand citizenship behavior. Thus, future researchers are suggested to examine the mediating or moderating role of other variables such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, and whatnot in their future research.

Due to the complexity of human behavior, research in the humanities has always had some limitations. In general, no study is without limitations, and there are limitations in this study. The lack of a comprehensive internal model in the field of brand and, consequently, the necessity of applying models used in foreign research are among the limitations that can distort the results of this research. Besides, in the present study, the required information was collected through questionnaires by the respondents themselves, without the direct participation of the researcher, so the respondents' misinterpretation of the questions may have led to incorrect answers.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire of Research:

Row	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The mission and vision of the Day bank are well understood by the employees.					
2	The identity of the bank is well understood by the employees.					
3	Bank employees are well trained to perform their duties.					
4	The description of the position and objectives of Day Bank is understandable.					
5	The description of the position and objectives of Day Bank is easily memorized.					
6	The description of the position and objectives of Day bank is convincing.					
7	I think I have enough information about how to manage Day Bank.					
8	I often talk to other colleagues about Day Bank's status.					
9	There are stories and descriptions about the Day Bank brand that show what the bank goals are.					
10	I get motivated when I read the news about Day Bank.					
11	I am aware of the brand personality of Day bank.					
12	I am aware of the brand value of Day bank.					
13	I collaborate with other employees to increase the brand value of Day Bank.					
14	I know how to behave with customers to create a positive image of the bank brand for them.					
15	Coworkers have a positive attitude towards customers and other colleagues.					

Row	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	Coworkers are always friendly and supportive towards customers and other colleagues.					
17	Coworkers always try to put themselves in the shoes of clients or other co-workers to understand them well.					
18	Coworkers are responsible for their work even outside of working hours and feel obligated to the bank.					
19	Coworkers keep their word and always consider the interests of the bank.					
20	Coworkers always work according to the bank's defined values, even if they know no one controls them.					
21	Coworkers take care of their work activities and check the quality of work, and also they want to have a positive impact on the bank through their work.					
22	Coworkers accept overtime (completion of a customer request) to have a positive impact on the bank.					
23	Coworkers always recommend Day bank to their friends and try to acquaint other acquaintances with this brand.					
24	Coworkers are always looking for feedback on how to do their organizational activities.					
25	Coworkers are trying to expand their technical knowledge about the bank and connect with other information sources.					
26	Coworkers have initiative in their work and participate in training.					
27	Coworkers are always trying to convey customer feedback to the relevant person and recount internal problems to solve.					
28	Coworkers use new methods and innovative ideas at work and seek to improve services.					
29	I trust the Day Bank brand.					
30	Day Bank brand has a high reputation.					
31	I have a positive mental image of the Day Bank brand.					
32	I can describe Day Bank to others.					
33	No bank performs its activities better than Day Bank.					

Row	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
34	I am proud to work for Day Bank.					
35	The future of Day Bank is vital for me.					
36	My values are similar to the values of Day Bank.					
37	Day Bank is very important for me.					
38	I recommend Day Bank to my friends for employment.					
39	I want to go beyond expectations for the success of Day Bank.					
40	My commitment to Day Bank comes with increasing my knowledge of this bank.					
41	I am committed to meeting the brand promises of Day Bank.					
42	I am emotionally attached to Day Bank.					
43	I believe that Day Bank offers better services than its competitors in the past and the future.					
44	I believe that Day Bank can always fulfill its promises better than its competitors.					
45	I have a positive attitude toward the people who work with Day Bank.					
46	Sometimes my friends and family become delighted that I am so proud of talking about Day Bank.					

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