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Article

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BRQ Business Research Quarterly

Provided in Cooperation with:

Asociación Científica de Economía y Dirección de Empresas (ACEDE), Madrid

Suggested Citation: Buil, Isabel; Catalán, Sara; Martínez, Eva (2016) : The importance of corporate brand identity in business management: An application to the UK banking sector, BRQ Business Research Quarterly, ISSN 2340-9436, Elsevier España, Barcelona, Vol. 19, Iss. 1, pp. 3-12,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brq.2014.11.001>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/206334>

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ARTICLE

The importance of corporate brand identity in business management: An application to the UK banking sector



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Received 20 February 2014; accepted 4 November 2014

Available online 24 January 2015

JEL CLASSIFICATION M3

KEYWORDS

Corporate brand
 identity;
 Commitment;
 Performance;
 Satisfaction;
 Banking

Abstract Corporate brand identity management is a key issue for any organisation. Accordingly, its study is a research field of great interest. This paper seeks to broaden the understanding of this strategic activity and its effects. Specifically, it investigates the concept of corporate brand identity from the employees' perspective in the UK financial banking sector and analyses the link between brand identity management and employees' attitudes and behaviours. Results indicate that organisations should pay special attention to the corporate brand identity management, given its influence on employees' commitment with their organisations, as well as their brand performance and satisfaction.

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Introduction

Identity is the cornerstone of one of the most important areas of study in recent years: corporate marketing (Balmer, 2008). This term provides the foundation for numerous concepts, such as corporate brand identity (Balmer, 2012). This identity type encompasses specific values and features that,

associated to the corporate brand, represent an organisation and the products offered to the market (Balmer and Greyser, 2002).

Corporate brand identity is an effective strategic tool and an important source of sustainable competitive advantages, which provides multiple benefits to the organisations (Melewar, 2003). Its management, understood as a comprehensive view of the different dimensions that need to be internally managed and controlled by the organisation (Simões et al., 2005), is essential as corporate brand identity precedes and represents the basis for brand image. Overall, due to its growing importance, some authors have incorporated this concept as a key element

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of the new marketing paradigm (Asem and Kosteljik, 2008).

Despite the relevance of corporate identity management in recent years, there is little research that empirically explores this strategic resource (Arendt and Brettel, 2010; Simões et al., 2005). To date, previous studies have mainly focused on the definition and conceptualisation of this construct. Therefore, several authors advocate further exploration of the empirical impact of its management (Blombäck and Ramírez-Pasillas, 2012).

In addition, research on corporate brand identity management has usually focused on the opinions and perceptions of brand managers, consultants and others experts. Despite the literature has largely acknowledged the critical role of employees in brand success, few works have adopted the perspective of employees in their studies (Burmam et al., 2009; Malhotra and Mukherjee, 2004). This issue is specially important in the services sector, as employees embody the services brands and their performance brings brand promises to life (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011; Wallace et al., 2013).

Within the services sector, the study of corporate brand identity management is specially relevant in the banking sector, which has been notably damaged by the economic and financial crisis. In addition to the financial problems, the banking sector has recently faced diminishing consumer trust and confidence (Colton and Oliveira, 2009). In this sense, a survey developed in the UK showed that a high percentage of customers, around 40%, were totally disengaged with their banks, whereas a 69% asserted that there are no clear differences among the banks (McEwen, 2010). In this context, it is critical to restore customers' trust and confidence, trying to convey a positive and coherent image with the essence of the organisation. It is in this complex process where corporate brand identity management and the role played by employees are crucial.

The aim of this research is, therefore, to gain a better understanding of the effects of corporate brand identity management. To reach this objective, corporate brand identity management is explored from the employees' perspective in a sector of great interest, the UK banking sector. In addition, the research analyses the relationship between corporate brand identity management and employees' attitudes and behaviours. Specifically, it assesses the effect of identity management on employees' commitment to the organisation, as well as the impact that such commitment has on their brand performance and satisfaction.

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it extends previous research by providing empirical evidences on the study of corporate brand identity management and adopting the perspective of employees. Furthermore, the findings of this study offer useful guidelines on how to manage the corporate brand identity and provide helpful implications for banks and other organisations.

The paper is organised as follows. It opens with a brief, general discussion of the corporate brand identity concept. The next section develops the conceptual framework and the research hypotheses. This is followed by the methodology and the analysis of empirical findings. The paper then outlines the conclusions and implications of the research. Finally, it addresses the limitations of the study and identifies directions for further research.

Corporate brand identity

The term identity is the basis for a great number of inter-related concepts, such as brand identity, corporate identity or organisational identity, among others (Currás, 2010). The present research focuses on the concept of brand identity, and more specifically, of the corporate brand, which is very common in the services sector.

Brand identity has been studied from a wide range of disciplines. This multidisciplinary nature has led to a variety of definitions and conceptual frameworks that reflect the complex and multidimensional character of this relevant construct. Overall, brand identity includes a set of features and dimensions that determine the brand's way of being, thinking and behaving. It is, therefore, a key concept in brand management, as brand identity defines not only the purpose and meaning of the brand, but also the directions to follow.

Table 1 shows some of the most important brand identity definitions. Several aspects can be highlighted from these definitions. On the one hand, scholars in brand management define brand identity as a unique set of aspects of the brand, as well as the idea or essential meaning associated to it. Similarly, all of them emphasise the internal nature of this construct, which emanates from the organisation. This internal vision is, however, questioned by numerous scholars. In this sense, although emanating from brand managers, brand identity is further developed by other actors, such as employees and consumers (da Silveira et al., 2013). Branding literature has also discussed the stability of brand identity over time. In this sense, although brand identity definitions mainly emphasise that brands should maintain their identity, others reconceptualise brand identity as a dynamic concept. As such, it is possible to distinguish a core identity, comprising the central and timeless essence of the brand and an extended identity, which includes other dynamic dimensions that may change in light of different contexts (Aaker, 1996; da Silveira et al., 2013).

A strong brand identity has several benefits. Brand identity is an essential construct to gain sustainable competitive advantages, and effectively differentiate and manage brands (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2004). Brand identity precedes and represents the basis for its image and reputation. A well managed brand identity may result in positive perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of different stakeholders. For instance, from the point of view of consumers, the creation of a unique, coherent and distinctive identity can add value to the company's products (Coleman et al., 2011) and increase their preference and loyalty (Johnson and Zinkhan, 1990; Simões et al., 2005). Likewise, brand identity can influence the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer. As such, brand identity can help companies to increase the motivation of the employees and attract better and more qualified applicants (Melewar, 2003), as well as greater investments (Arendt and Brettel, 2010; Van Riel, 1995).

Over the last decades, scholars and practitioners have proposed several brand identity frameworks (Aaker, 1996; Aaker and Joachisthaler, 2000; de Chernatony, 2010; Kapferer, 2004). Without being exhaustive, some of these frameworks are briefly described next (see Table 1).

Table 1 Brand identity definitions and dimensions of the main conceptual frameworks.

| Author | Definition | Dimensions |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Aaker (1996) | A unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain | Twelve dimensions organised around four perspectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brand as a product (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, user, country of origin) - Brand as a person (brand personality, brand–customer relationships) - Brand as an organisation (organisational attributes, local vs. global) - Brand as a symbol (visual imagery/metaphors, brand heritage) |
| Kapferer (2004) | A brand’s meaning as put forward by the firm | Brand identity prism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physique: set of the brand’s physical features evoked in people’s minds - Relationship: between the consumer and the brand - Reflection: it makes reference to the stereotypical user of the brand - Self image: the way consumers see themselves when they buy or use a brand - Culture: system of values, source of inspiration and brand energy - Personality: reflects the set of human characteristics associated with a brand |
| de Chernatony (2010) | The distinctive or central idea of a brand and how the brand communicates this idea to different stakeholders | Five components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision: provides a clear sense of direction - Culture: determinant factor to achieve the vision - Positioning: manifestation of the brand’s functional values - Personality: it brings the brand’s emotional values to life - Relationships with different stakeholders: staff, customers and other stakeholders |

According to Aaker’s framework (1996), one of the most referenced in the academic literature, brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organised around four perspectives: the brand as a product, the brand as a person, the brand as an organisation and the brand as a symbol. Kapferer (2004), on the other hand, offers an alternative proposal. Specifically, this author develops a brand identity prism with six interrelated facets. These six facets are: physique, relationship, reflection, self-image, culture and personality. Another interesting brand identity framework has been developed by de Chernatony (2010), who conceives brand identity in terms of five components: vision, culture, positioning, personality and relationships with different stakeholders.

Despite their interest, these brand identity frameworks are now without limitations. As such, although widely referenced in the academic literature, these proposals are conceptual in nature and have not been subject to empirical investigation (Coleman et al., 2011).

Conceptual framework and hypotheses

As mentioned before, most of the operationalisations and conceptual frameworks of corporate brand identity proposed in the literature are of a conceptual nature. Thus, in the last few years some researchers have tried to fill this gap by developing and validating measurement scales. The present research adopts the proposal developed by Coleman et al. (2011). After an extensive literature review, these authors conceptualise brand identity as a multidimensional construct comprised of five dimensions. The first dimension, employee and client focus, highlights the importance of understanding and attending the customers’ needs, but also of appreciating the critical role played by employees within the organisation. Corporate visual identity is the second dimension. It refers to the set of visual cues such as the brand name, logo and slogan that make the organisation recognisable. These features also allow the transfer of meanings to the different stakeholders. The third dimension, brand personality, is a salient facet of

different brand identity frameworks. It represents the set of human personality traits that are applicable to a brand. The fourth dimension refers to consistent communications, that is, the need for coordination and consistency in marketing communications. Finally, the fifth dimension, human resource initiatives, emphasises the central role played by employees as well as the training programmes designed for them.

The present research focuses on three relevant consequences of corporate brand identity management on employees' attitudes and behaviours. Specifically, the constructs explored are: employees' commitment to the organisation, employees' brand performance and employees' satisfaction.

Commitment to the organisation is an important variable from a managerial perspective, given its influence on employees' attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, one of the central questions that guide this research is to analyse to what extent a well managed corporate brand identity can increase employees' commitment.

A lack of consensus exists on the definition of commitment. This is mainly due to the different theoretical approaches, as well as the numerous ways to conceptualise and measure this concept. From a general perspective, Meyer et al. (2006) define commitment as a force that binds an individual to a target (e.g. an organisation), and to a course of action of relevance to that target. Most definitions of this term consider it as a link or bond between the individual and the organisation (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). As such, they mainly refer to the affective dimension of commitment, which is the focus of this study. This emotional attachment is considered as the main determinant of employees' attitudes and behaviours (Bloemer and Odekerken-Schröder, 2006).

Extant research on internal brand management posits that an appropriate management can increase employees' brand knowledge. This, in turn, can enhance the understanding of the brand strategies and decisions, as well as the values and promises associated to the brand (King and Grace, 2010). This mutual understanding of the brand, as a consequence of an internal brand management approach, can enhance the intellectual and emotional commitment to the organisation (Aurand et al., 2005; Thomson et al., 1999). In addition, employees who have a positive perception of the corporate brand identity and its management are more likely to develop a strong link or bond with the organisation, as well as a sense of pride and belonging to the company (Dukerich et al., 2002).

The different dimensions that underlie the brand identity construct can influence on employees' commitment to the organisation. For instance, Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) emphasise the positive effect that the initiatives related to the human resources or the communications have on employees' commitment. Other authors, such as Arendt and Brettel (2010), find that dimensions such as visual identity help employees internalise the brand, fostering the identification and commitment to it. Therefore, we can expect that in the search for greater trust and employee engagement, internal brand management and corporate brand identity are crucial elements to leverage employees' commitment (Burmans and Zeplin, 2005; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011). Consequently, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 1. Corporate brand identity management has a positive effect on employees' commitment to the organisation.

The following hypotheses refer to the effect of employees' commitment on brand performance and employees' satisfaction.

Brand performance has been operationalised in a variety of ways, such as the brand market share or sales growth. In this research, this variable refers to the extent to which an employee performs his/her role, including the brand promise delivery, based on the brand standards (Punjaisri et al., 2009).

Results of previous research show a positive but moderate correlation between these two constructs (Riketta, 2002). Punjaisri and Wilson's (2011) work is one of the few studies that have empirically analysed the influence of commitment on brand performance. However, they could not find support for this relationship. Thus, more research is needed to shed additional light on this issue.

Contextual factors, such as the lack of access to some resources, and personal factors, such as employees' skills and abilities, could explain the weaknesses of this relationship. In this sense, these factors can reduce employee's performance, thus preventing the effect of commitment on brand performance (Porter et al., 2005). Despite of this, according to previous research, it is expected that the greater the employees' commitment to the organisation, the greater the efforts made by employees to perform their functions and deliver the brand promise (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003). As such, it is traditionally assumed that employees who feel attached to their organisation and highly identify with their companies will have a higher performance. Committed employees are more likely to live the brand, reinforcing their sense of belonging the brand message (Boyd and Sutherland, 2006). Likewise, previous research has shown that high levels of affective commitment result in numerous benefits related to employees' performance. For instance, employees' commitment can increase the willingness to develop behaviours that benefit to the organisation (Strauss et al., 2009). Similarly commitment positively relates with service quality and service recovery performance (Malhotra and Mukherjee, 2004). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2. Employees' commitment to the organisation has a positive effect on their brand performance.

The last relationship analysed in the model refers to the influence of employees' commitment on their satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values" (Locke, 1969, p. 316). Its measurement and analysis is particularly interesting, as it can serve as a diagnostic tool to explore the situation of the employees in the organisation and identify problems or causes of dissatisfaction.

From the field of organisational psychology, it is postulated that the links and bonds developed by employees towards the organisation influence the way they think, feel and behave in the workplace (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Haslam et al., 2003). In this sense, several works have found

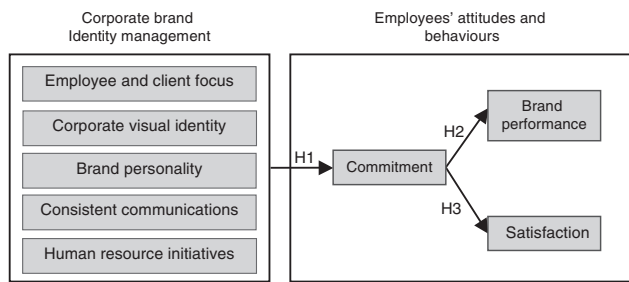


Figure 1 Conceptual model.

a positive relationship between employees commitment to the organisation and their level of satisfaction (Jones et al., 2003; King and Grace, 2010).

When employees identify themselves with an organisation, and are committed to the company, they tend to feel better about both themselves and their work. Consequently, it is more likely that committed employees feel more satisfied and motivated to perform their work (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Wheeler et al., 2006). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3. Employees' commitment to the organisation has a positive effect on their satisfaction.

Fig. 1 presents the relationships proposed in this study. As can be seen in the figure, corporate brand identity is a multidimensional construct comprised of five dimensions influencing employees' attitudes and behaviours.

Method

Sample and procedure

To test the hypotheses, a study was undertaken during January and February 2013 with employees of the main banks in the United Kingdom. Data was collected by an international market research company using an online questionnaire. In total, 297 valid questionnaires were obtained.

Males represent 46.8% of the sample and females 53.2%. 7.1% of respondents are between 18 and 24 years old; 35% between 25 and 24 years old; 34% between 35 and 44 years old, and 23.9% between 44 and 67 years old. Finally, in terms of employment history, 41% of respondents have been working in the bank between 1 and 5 years, 21% 6–10 years, 20% 11–20 years, and 18% more than 20 years.

Measures

A literature review was undertaken to select the most appropriate way to measure each variable. In all cases, 7-point Likert-type questions were used with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Items proposed by Coleman et al. (2011) were used to measure corporate brand identity. According to these authors, brand identity is a multidimensional construct comprised of five dimensions: employee and client focus, visual identity, brand personality, consistent communications, and human resource initiatives. Organisational commitment was measured using the items proposed

by King and Grace (2010). Brand performance was assessed following Punjaisri and Wilson (2011). Finally, based on King and Grace (2010), four items were used to measure employee satisfaction. A list of the items used to measure each construct is provided in Table 2.

Analyses and results

Hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM). The data was analysed using EQS 6.2 and the robust maximum-likelihood estimation. First, the psychometric properties of the scales were examined. Then, the structural model was evaluated by testing the hypotheses.

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for all the variables included in the study.

Scales validation

To assess the initial reliability of the measures, Cronbach's alpha and the item-total correlation for all scales were used. Cronbach's alpha for all the constructs was above 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Furthermore, the item-to-total correlations were all above the threshold of 0.30 (Nurosis, 1993). There was only one exception. The Cronbach's alpha for the human resource initiatives scale ($\alpha = 0.672$). We then performed exploratory factor analyses using principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Results suggested that the corresponding items of each scale clustered into a single factor with significant factor loadings. The explained variance exceeded 60% in each case.

To attempt to identify potential problems with common method variance, basing on the procedure recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003), Harman's one-factor test was used. The results of the factor analyses revealed that more than a single factor emerged with no single factor accounting for the majority of variance. Thus, there is no evidence to suggest the presence of common method bias.

Scales were then evaluated using confirmatory techniques to assess reliability, dimensionality and validity. Results suggested the deletion of item HR2, as its R^2 was below 0.5. After this deletion, fit indices were above the suggested 0.90 cutoff point, thus providing evidence that the final measurement model fit the data appropriately. Further, the RMSEA index was below the 0.05 cutoff point (Hair et al., 2006) (see Table 4).

All factor loadings were above 0.5 and statistically significant which suggested the convergent validity of the scales (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1991). Likewise, the coefficients had a clear relation with their underlying factors ($R^2 > 0.5$). Constructs were shown to possess high internal validity. As such, the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) values were greater than 0.5 and 0.7 respectively (Hair et al., 2006).

Discriminant validity was also supported. As such, none of the confidence intervals around the correlation estimate between any two factors contained a value of one (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). In addition, as can be seen in Table 3, the AVE for any two constructs was always greater than the square of the correlation estimate (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 2 Scales items included in the questionnaire.

Brand corporate identity management (Coleman et al., 2011)

Employee and client focus

- ECF1. Our top management is committed to providing quality service
 ECF2. Our bank treats every employee as an essential part of the organisation
 ECF 3. Our employees will help clients in a responsive manner
 ECF 4. Our bank makes an effort to discover our clients, needs
 ECF 5. Our bank responds to our clients' needs

Corporate visual identity

- CVI1. The corporate visual identity is helpful in making our bank recognisable
 CVI2. The font we use is an important part of our visual identity
 CVI3. Our logo is an important part of who we are

Brand personality

- BP1. The associations making up our brand personality are extremely positive
 BP2. Our clients have no difficulty describing our brand personality
 BP3. Our brand personality has favourable associations

Consistent communications

- CC1. The people managing the communications programme for our bank have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of all major marketing communications tools
 CC2. Our bank's advertising, PR and sales promotion all present the same clear consistent message to our stakeholders

Human resource initiatives

- HRI1. Our employee training programmes are designed to develop skills required for acquiring and deepening client relationships
 HRI2. Our bank regularly monitors employees' performance

Commitment (King and Grace, 2010)

- COM1. I am proud to be part of this bank
 COM2. I really care about the fate of this bank
 COM3. I feel like I really fit in this bank

Brand performance (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011)

- PER1. I can successfully fulfil responsibilities specified in my job descriptions
 PER2. The quality of the work I do matches brand standards of my bank
 PER3. I deliver the promise that my bank's brand has with customers
 PER4. I always deliver the required level of service in response to customers' specific requests

Satisfaction (King and Grace, 2010)

- SAT1. I feel reasonably satisfied with my job
 SAT2. I feel a great sense of satisfaction from my job
 SAT3. I am satisfied with my overall job

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and correlations.

| | Mean | S.D. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Employee and client focus | 5.37 | 1.34 | 0.764 | | | | | | | |
| 2. Corporate visual identity | 5.58 | 1.24 | 0.496 | 0.697 | | | | | | |
| 3. Brand personality | 5.22 | 1.33 | 0.587 | 0.498 | 0.755 | | | | | |
| 4. Consistent communications | 5.25 | 1.30 | 0.498 | 0.352 | 0.542 | 0.795 | | | | |
| 5. Human resource initiatives | 5.16 | 1.60 | 0.436 | 0.220 | 0.440 | 0.537 | 0.850 | | | |
| 6. Commitment | 5.12 | 1.62 | 0.504 | 0.238 | 0.473 | 0.462 | 0.496 | 0.850 | | |
| 7. Brand performance | 5.93 | 1.06 | 0.394 | 0.375 | 0.314 | 0.397 | 0.303 | 0.354 | 0.744 | |
| 8. Satisfaction | 5.00 | 1.69 | 0.342 | 0.179 | 0.379 | 0.334 | 0.429 | 0.776 | 0.338 | 0.909 |

Note: Means and standard deviations are based on summated scale averages. Items deleted in the validation process are not included. Squared correlations are below the diagonal and AVE estimates are presented on the diagonal.

Table 4 Confirmatory factor analysis results.

| Factor | Items | λ | R^2 | CR | AVE |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Employee and client focus | ECF1. | 0.800 | 0.641 | 0.941 | 0.764 |
| | ECF2. | 0.779 | 0.606 | | |
| | ECF3. | 0.896 | 0.803 | | |
| | ECF4. | 0.939 | 0.882 | | |
| | ECF5. | 0.942 | 0.887 | | |
| Corporate visual identity | CVI1. | 0.886 | 0.785 | 0.873 | 0.697 |
| | CVI2. | 0.770 | 0.593 | | |
| | CVI3. | 0.845 | 0.714 | | |
| Brand personality | BP1. | 0.882 | 0.777 | 0.902 | 0.755 |
| | BP2. | 0.868 | 0.753 | | |
| | BP3. | 0.856 | 0.732 | | |
| Consistent communications | CC1. | 0.861 | 0.741 | 0.886 | 0.795 |
| | CC2. | 0.921 | 0.848 | | |
| Human resource initiatives | HRI1.* | 0.922 | 0.850 | 0.850 | 0.850 |
| Commitment | COM1. | 0.930 | 0.865 | 0.944 | 0.850 |
| | COM2. | 0.886 | 0.785 | | |
| | COM3. | 0.949 | 0.901 | | |
| Brand performance | PER1. | 0.835 | 0.697 | 0.921 | 0.744 |
| | PER2. | 0.905 | 0.819 | | |
| | PER3. | 0.896 | 0.803 | | |
| | PER4. | 0.811 | 0.658 | | |
| Satisfaction | SAT1. | 0.946 | 0.895 | 0.968 | 0.909 |
| | SAT2. | 0.956 | 0.915 | | |
| | SAT3. | 0.958 | 0.917 | | |

Fit indices

S-B χ^2 (df, p) = 360.78 (225, p < 0.001); RMSEA = 0.045
 NNFI = 0.942; CFI = 0.953; IFI = 0.954

Note: λ , standardised factor loadings; R^2 , regression coefficients; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; S-B χ^2 , Satorra–Bentler scaled chi-square; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; NNFI, non-normed fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; IFI, incremental fit index. *Reliability for the single item measure was fixed at 85% (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993).

Structural model

Once the psychometric properties of the scales were examined, the structural model was tested. As a multidimensional construct, first the average of the items within each of the five corporate brand identity dimensions was calculated. These averaged items were then used as manifest indicators of the global corporate brand identity construct (Baldauf et al., 2009; Santos and Álvarez, 2008).

The analysis yielded a good overall fit, as shown in Fig. 2. As proposed in Hypothesis 1, corporate brand identity management proved a significant predictor for employees’ commitment ($\beta = 0.822$; t -value = 15.525). Therefore, employees’ commitment will increase when organisations focus their efforts on the management of its corporate brand identity.

As can be seen in Fig. 2, Hypothesis 2, testing the relationship between employees’ commitment and brand performance, received statistical support ($\beta = 0.624$;

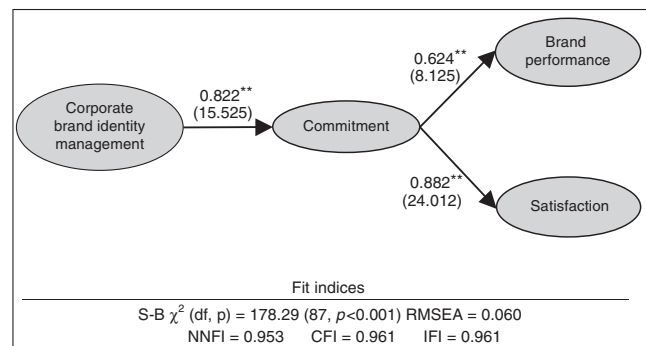


Figure 2 Structural model results.

Note: ** P < 0.05

t -value = 8.125). Therefore **Hypothesis 2** was supported, indicating that employees' commitment will favour employees' performance on their jobs and tasks.

In addition, results show that employees' commitment was positively associated with their level of satisfaction on the job. As such, commitment had a positive and significant effect on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.882$; t -value = 24.012). Therefore, the last hypothesis was also supported.

Finally, results reveal that corporate brand identity management had a significant indirect positive effect on employees' brand performance ($z = 7.23$, $p < 0.001$) as well as on the level of employees' satisfaction on the job ($z = 12.98$, $p < 0.001$), according to Sobel's test results.

Conclusions, implications and directions for further research

The purpose of the present study was to gain a deeper understanding of the corporate brand identity concept by analysing the effect that its management has on employees' attitudes and behaviours. The findings confirm the relevance of this construct, given its ability to increase employees' commitment, which in turn influences their brand performance and satisfaction with their jobs.

Following the proposal of [Coleman et al. \(2011\)](#), corporate brand identity management is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprised by five dimensions: employee and client focus, corporate visual identity, brand personality, consistent communications and human resource initiatives.

Findings suggest that corporate brand identity management encourages the commitment of the employees to the organisation. Previous works have highlighted the importance of the degree of employees' commitment as a key driver of success and differentiation for both the brand and the organisation itself ([Balmer, 2001](#)). A high level of commitment can be achieved through different ways. However, the strength of the causal relationship found in this study confirms that corporate brand identity management is an important antecedent to create this bond between the employee and the organisation.

The research also reveals some interesting findings regarding the relationship between employees' commitment and brand performance and employee satisfaction. First, contrary to other studies, which found a weak or nonexistent relationship between employees' commitment and brand performance (e.g. [Punjaisri and Wilson, 2011](#)), this research corroborates that commitment influences the way an employee performs his/her role based on the brand standards. In addition, the results indicate that commitment positively affects employee satisfaction. Based on these findings, it is possible to state that managers should foster employees' commitment to the organisation.

Finally, it should be noted that corporate brand identity management has an indirect effect on both brand performance and employee satisfaction, through a higher employees' commitment.

These findings have implications for both scholars and managers. From a theoretical perspective, the present study enriches corporate brand identity research addressing some of the limitations regarding other brand identity studies. As

such, from the employees' point of view, it adopts an empirical perspective, which complements the theoretical works developed to date. As earlier explained, this fact is specially relevant since for a long time the role of the employees has been largely ignored, despite their importance in the creation and communication of the corporate brand identity.

The research findings have also several managerial implications. First, we highlight the relevance of the corporate brand identity to the organisation, as well as the operationalisation of this construct. Traditionally, brand image management has been the main concern of many managers. The interdependent relationship between both brand image and brand identity, and the benefits derived from a suitable identity management, advise, however, that managers take into account this relevant concept. This recommendation is even more important in the financial services sector. As such, given the low level of differentiation among financial products and services ([Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996](#)), and the global economic crisis, which has contributed to the creation of a climate of uncertainty and distrust, it is needed to emphasise the importance of a well brand identity management ([de Chernatony and Cottam, 2006](#)).

The creation and management of the corporate brand identity requires, however, understanding the dimensions that underlie this construct. In many cases, corporate brand identity is exclusively associated with some of its dimensions, such as the visual identity, ignoring its complexity and multiple facets. This research provides a guide for managers seeking to identify the key dimensions in which they should focus. Findings suggest that not only tangible aspects of brand identity, such as visual identity, or dimensions that are most directly related to the employees, such as the human resources initiatives, are relevant. By contrast, it is also important that organisations pay attention to both the customers' and employees' needs. In addition, it is essential to create training programmes designed to develop the skills required for deepening client relationships. Furthermore, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that a brand or an organisation without personality lack of identity. Therefore, organisations should focus on those favourable associations and attributes, which will let them differentiate from others. Finally, it is very important that the organisation sets up a coherent and controlled process of its corporate communication. This process will imply the definition of the specific marketing communications tools to be used (e.g. advertising, public relations, etc.) and the kind of information related to the brand and the company that will be communicated.

Employees' attitudes and behaviours play a key role in achieving a high level of customer satisfaction. Accordingly, banks and organisations in general, should pay special attention to the facets that are part of the corporate brand identity (employee and client focus, corporate visual identity, brand personality, consistent communications and human resource initiatives). This will foster the bonds between the employees and the organisation, and as a consequence, their performance and satisfaction.

There are several limitations to this study that suggest directions for further research. First, the study was conducted in the UK banking sector. This sector has special

characteristics not shared by other organisations in others sectors. Thus, the generalisability of the results is limited to this context. Further research should, therefore, consider the applicability of findings in other sectors, countries and cultures.

Furthermore, future research could examine additional antecedents of corporate identity brand management, such as the level of brand orientation within the organisation (Urde et al., 2013), or other variables of interest, such as organisational values. Likewise, future studies could include additional outcomes related to the attitudes and behaviours of the employees and other stakeholders. In this sense, a possible extension would be to adopt a dyadic perspective that includes both employees and customers. Undertaking this research could be helpful to reach a better understanding of the corporate brand identity management and its consequences.

Finally, the present study used cross-sectional data, that is, data were obtained at one point in time. Consequently, a longitudinal framework would provide more insight into probable causation.

Despite these limitations, this study is a step towards a fuller understanding of the importance of the corporate brand identity management and its effects on employees' commitment, brand performance and satisfaction. It is hoped that the findings presented in this research guide managers' decisions about this important intangible asset.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the financial support of the I + D + I projects (Ref: ECO2009-08283; ECO2013-41257-P) from the Government of Spain and the project "GENERES" (Ref: S-09) from the Government of Aragon and the European Social Fund. Isabel Buil would also like to thank the financial support received from the Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada de Zaragoza and the DGA (CONSI + D) (Programa Europa XXI de Estancias de Investigación). Eva Martínez also thanks the financial support of the "Subprograma de estancias de movilidad de profesores e investigadores séniores en centros extranjeros de enseñanza superior e investigación, incluido el Programa Salvador de Madariaga" (Ref: PR2011-0352).

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