ORIGINAL EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The role of brand communications on front line service employee beliefs, behaviors, and performance

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Abstract Frontline service employees often vary in their delivery of the brand promise, leaving service firms with less direct control on other stakeholders' brand perceptions. Internal branding efforts have been suggested as a way to improve employee performance. With this in mind, we develop a two-process model based on identification and internalization theories to explain how internally disseminating brand-relevant information to frontline employees enhances performance. Using multi-source data from the employees, managers, and customers of a business-to-business firm in the hospitality industry, we find that providing brand-specific information directly to frontline employees increases their identification with the brand (as evidenced in perceptions of firm authenticity) and enhances their internalization of brand values. Additional results suggest that firms should make an extra effort to communicate brand-specific information to frontline employees if they desire brand-consistent performance that is observable to managers and customers alike.

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A firm can manage its brand in a variety of ways, including the use of positioning, advertising, and/or other promotional tools (Keller and Lehmann 2006). For service firms, effective brand management hinges on the interactions between service employees and customers. Keller (2003) highlights the importance of service employee behavior by arguing that each contact with service employees impacts the way the consumer perceives the brand. Bendapudi and Bendapudi (2005) refer to service employees as the "living brand," and Barlow and Stewart (2004) use the term "branded customer service" to emphasize the impact frontline service employees can have on customers. In fact, recent empirical evidence reveals that frontline service employees whose behavior is strategically aligned with the brand can effectively reinforce brand meaning as they interact with customers, particularly when the brand is relatively unfamiliar (Sirianni et al. 2013).

Unfortunately, service firms have much less control over employee/customer interactions than they do over positioning or advertising. As a result, frontline service employees may not always represent the brand in the manner preferred by the firm. Accordingly, firms must act proactively to ensure that frontline employees both understand the brand promise and are able to deliver it in a consistent manner. One way firms can accomplish this is to communicate brand information directly to employees, and there is emerging agreement that doing so is a crucial element in achieving an alignment between how the firm wants the brand to be represented and how the brand is actually delivered. Researchers have recently begun studying the internal communication activities designed to create this alignment under the rubric of *internal branding* (Foster et al. 2010).

Researchers have noted the importance of internal branding efforts to the firm, particularly service firms. For example, internal branding is proposed to both enhance service delivery (de Chernatony and Cottam 2006) and lead to a sustainable competitive advantage (Thompson and Pringle 2001). Internal

branding is also associated with less tangible outcomes such as enhancing employee cognitive and affective engagement with the brand (Foster et al. 2010) and employee behaviors toward the brand (Punjaisri et al. 2009a). Although researchers recognize the importance of internal branding, to date no formal definition of internal branding has been offered. A review of the few studies that have explicitly addressed internal branding reveals that a critical element is communication specifically designed to impact employee perceptions of the brand. King and Grace (2010) go so far as to state that at a "rudimentary level, the process (internal branding) must start with the transfer of brand-related information from the organization to the employee" (p. 941). Consistent with the limited extant research, we propose that internal branding be seen as occurring when meaningful and relevant brand information is disseminated to employees in order to aid in the provision of higher levels of customer service.

The ultimate goal of any internal branding initiative is to ensure the behaviors exhibited by frontline service personnel lead to a level of service consistent with that expected by both the firm and its customers. Therefore, the model we advance includes two specific brand building behaviors: service ability and brand citizenship behaviors (BCBs). Service ability refers to the ability of the employee to deliver the service as expected by the firm. Brand citizenship behaviors, a concept first introduced by Burmann and Zeplin (2005), are similar to organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) in that they are extra-role behaviors. The key differences between the constructs are that BCBs (1) focus on the brand and employee behavior that "brings a brand to life" (p. 282) and (2) go beyond the internal focus of OCBs to include externally targeted behaviors. In keeping with the nascent literature on the topic, we believe that internal branding activities (i.e., brand knowledge disseminated by the firm) will enhance service ability, BCBs, and customers' evaluations of the service delivered.

The little internal branding research that does exist has focused primarily on the outcomes associated with internal branding efforts with no efforts made to explore the mechanisms by which the relationship between internal branding activities and outcomes occurs. Thus, to provide a more comprehensive perspective of internal branding, we posit that internal branding can encourage brand building behaviors when internal branding activities (e.g., brand knowledge dissemination) enhance employee brand value congruence and perceptions of brand authenticity. We leverage two elements of Kelman's (1961) theory of social influence—identification and internalization—to build theory and hypotheses concerning the means by which brand knowledge dissemination influences frontline employee attitudes (perceptions of authenticity and brand value congruence), behaviors (service ability and brand citizenship behaviors), and ultimately service performance.

We aim to make three substantive contributions to the literature. First, we add to the emerging literature on the use of internal branding activities as a tool to ensure that service employees deliver the brand in a manner consistent with that expected by the firm. By including brand authenticity and brand value congruence our research represents the first to explicitly investigate possible intervening variables in the relationship between brand knowledge dissemination and employee behaviors. As such, our framework builds upon existing theory to yield a robust perspective of the internal branding process that includes attitudes, behaviors, and performance outcomes. This should aid managers in ensuring not only that delivered service is consistent with the brand message but also that it is delivered reliably, a factor which has been noted as the cornerstone of the five dimensions comprising service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1988). Second, our paper is the first to take into account the notion of authenticity in an internal branding context and one of the first to incorporate it in a services context in general. The importance of authenticity is echoed in Brown et al.'s (2003) observation that "the search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing" (p. 21). Finally, our paper is the first to explicitly tie BCBs to customer assessments of delivered service. While BCBs have been proposed as having positive external effects, to date no research has provided evidence of that. Beyond that, neither has research provided evidence of the complete "chain" from firm actions (e.g., brand knowledge dissemination) to employee attitudes (e.g., brand value congruence, brand authenticity perceptions) to the effect of BCBs on customer assessments of service. Taken together, these represent substantive theoretical and managerial contributions to an important yet under researched area.

The next section provides an overview of Kelman's (1961) theory of social influence, focusing specifically on internalization and identification, which we propose to relate to brand value congruence and authenticity, respectively. Following this we develop theoretically grounded hypotheses, which are summarized in our research model (Fig. 1). Next we outline details about the study's sample, measures, and methodological approach, as well as a summary of our analytic procedure and results. We close with a discussion of our findings, theoretical and managerial implications, as well as study limitations and directions for future research.

Conceptual background

We advance a dual process model based on Kelman's (1958, 1961) theory of social influence. According to Kelman (1974), social influence occurs when an individual exhibits change as a result of an influence attempt, or what Kelman refers to as induction. Social influence theory offers an insightful lens with which to view internal branding for several
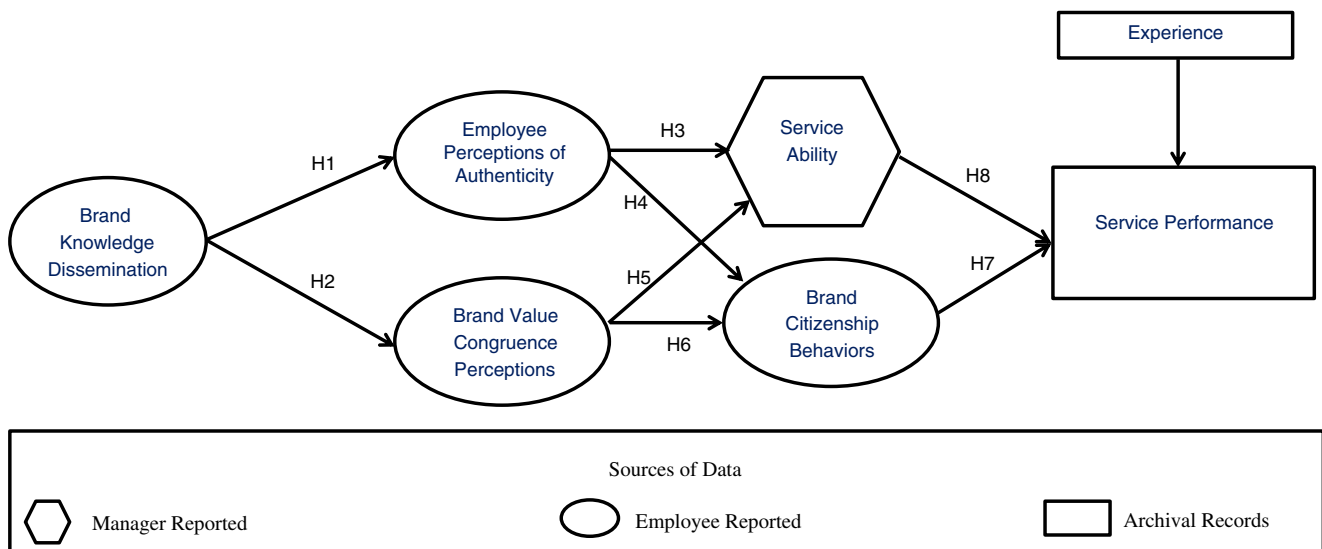
Fig. 1 Research model

reasons. First, because social influence theory focuses on influence from the perspective of the individual being influenced rather than from the influencing agent (e.g., the organization), it is well-aligned with our interest in employee responses to internal communication efforts. Second, Kelman's (1974) definition, which incorporates not only behavioral change but also changes in attitudes or beliefs, is reflected in our proposition that internal brand communications impact brand value congruence and brand authenticity, and ultimately behaviors. Third, Kelman (1974) suggests the process of induction can be either deliberate, as in the case of directed internal brand communications, or unintentional, as in the case of an individual viewing the influencing agent (e.g., a fellow employee, the brand) as an exemplar for their beliefs and behaviors.

According to Kelman (1974) the impact of social influence is a function of three factors: (1) the importance of the influence attempt, (2) the power of the influencing agent, and (3) the prepotency of the change. The importance relates to the extent to which the target of the influence perceives the influence situation as being motivationally significant, such as when the influence attempt makes salient goals that are important to the individual being influenced. This suggests that as the importance increases, so too does the individual's responsiveness to the influence attempt. In the context of this study, we expect the importance to be high due to internal brand information communicated to the employee being directly related to the employee's ability to successfully fulfill their service delivery obligations. The second factor, the power of the influencing agent, refers to the ability of the influencing agent to impact the employee's capacity to achieve goals. As the power of the influencing agent is greater, the impact of the influence attempt should be more successful. In this study we investigate the extent to which the firm, via internal brand

communications, acts as the influencing agent. Since we expect the firm to be viewed by employees as having the power to impact goal achievement, we believe the impact of social influence will be high. Finally, Kelman (1974) maintains that the effectiveness of the influence attempt will be a function of the extent to which the change that occurs is viewed as appropriate vis-à-vis the available alternatives. That is, the influence attempt will be successful when an individual believes a specific response is "distinctive, readily performable, and uniquely relevant" (Kelman 1974, p. 136).

Kelman was motivated to develop his framework in part due to frustration with the state of social influence research in the late 1950s, specifically the lack of a clear conceptual framework. Kelman (1958) addressed this by proposing three conceptually distinct social influence methods: (1) compliance, (2) identification, and (3) internalization. Although compliance, the acceptance of influence in order to gain rewards or avoid punishments (Kelman 1961), is important, we focus on identification and internalization, which we consider to be more "voluntary" or "soft" reasons that help to explain why employees would embrace the brand and engage in brand-building behaviors. Also, social influence based on internalization and identification has been shown to persist longer than influence based on compliance (Fulk 1993).

Identification captures the extent to which one party "adopts behaviors derived from another person or group because this behavior is associated with a satisfying self-defining relationship to this person or group" (Kelman 1961, p. 63). In other words, employees who desire to be like someone else will tend to model their behavior after that person due to their desire for affiliation. This has come to be known as *classical identification*. Building on Kelman's original conceptualization, Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed social identity theory (SIT), which focuses on identification

with groups. SIT explains how individuals develop and maintain a self-concept based on comparisons between groups in which the individual has some degree of affiliation (in-groups) and those for which they have less affiliation (out-groups). SIT acknowledges that individuals are likely to have affiliations in many different groups and therefore are likely to have multiple identities that reflect those different groups and their roles in those groups (Stryker 1980).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) extended SIT by arguing that one of the groups with which individuals may have an affiliation is the organization in which an individual works. However, as Pratt (1998) has pointed out, the effects of identification are not limited to the organization, but may include elements of the organization. Building from this observation and consistent with other conceptualizations (e.g., Burmann and Zeplin 2005; Morhart et al. 2009), Hughes and Ahearne (2010) propose that employee–brand identification is one such point of identification. Employee-brand identification refers to "a social construction that involves the integration of perceived brand identity (or brand image) into a self-identity" (p. 84), which suggests that employees can identify with an organizationally affiliated brand. Based on this work, one can conclude that when service employees are provided meaningful and relevant brand information, the process of identification will manifest as an authentic affiliation with the brand.

Internalization, in contrast, occurs when a requested behavior is consistent with the individual's value system (Kelman 1961). Similarly, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) emphasize that internalization is "predicated on congruence between individual and organizational values" (p. 493), and Bagozzi and Lee (2002) state that internalization derives from "the congruence of one's values with the values of another" (p. 228). Equating internalization with intrinsic motivation, Gagné and Deci (2005) argue that internalization occurs when individuals subscribe to external values to the extent that their behavior is no longer driven by external forces (e.g., compensation, supervisor oversight) but rather becomes autonomous. Thus, one can argue that internalization occurs when employees view the values of some external entity (e.g., the brand) as being congruent with their own and therefore behave in ways that are consistent with those values. Miles and Mangold (2004) focus specifically on this element of identification in defining employee branding as "the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents" (p. 68). In light of the meaningful role that internalization plays in transmitting values, we focus on this process as a key mechanism that translates brand communications into employee brand values.

To summarize, we advance a dual process model focusing on the underlying processes that explain how the dissemination of brand information to employees eventually results in observable, brand-consistent behaviors. We propose that internal branding activities will engender greater brand value congruence because employees internalize those values as their own. Further, we propose that higher levels of brand identification will encourage employees to believe the brand truly exemplifies the qualities for which it stands or, in other words, is authentic. Having provided an overview of the mechanisms we believe underlie the relationships between internal branding, brand value congruence, and perceptions of brand authenticity, we now move to providing specific support for our hypotheses.

Hypotheses development

Brand knowledge dissemination efforts

We previously defined internal branding as the dissemination of meaningful and relevant brand information to employees in order to aid in the provision of higher levels of customer service. Internal branding efforts are achieved through firm-derived brand communication initiatives that specifically discuss the brand meaning and values and are targeted directly at employees. This information is meant to guide employee behavior with customers such that the customer experience with the brand falls in line with firm expectations. There are many means available to communicate brand information to employees (e.g., de Chernatony et al. 2006; King and Grace 2008). These include the creation of a brand value statement, the use of brand books to capture the full complexity of the brand, newsletters, the intranet, and the development of internal role models (i.e., people who perfectly represent the brand identity) (Burmann and Zeplin 2005). Gill (2011) offers another perspective, proposing corporate storytelling. However, the most common and perhaps effective way to communicate brand information internally is through direct communication between a manager and the employee (de Chernatony et al. 2006). Both Burmann and Zeplin (2005) and Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) echo this view, suggesting that successful internal branding efforts are those that are facilitated by firm leaders. The importance of firm leadership is expanded upon by Morhart et al. (2009), who report that transformational (vs. transactional) leadership is most effective in building employee brand behaviors. A transformational leader is one who authentically lives up to the brand, provides a compelling and motivating story of the brand, helps employees think about their position as a member of the brand community, and teaches employees to become brand representatives.

Regardless of the form, brand communication directed at employees can facilitate a variety of desirable outcomes including a better understanding of firm strategies (Wasmer and Bruner 1991), enhanced organizational (King and Grace 2009) and brand commitment (Burmann and Zeplin 2005), a reduction of role conflict and ambiguity (Jones et al. 2003), and harmony amongst employees (Punjaisri and Wilson 2007). Yet

more communication may not increase outcomes directly. Although there is some evidence that communication frequency relates positively to perceptions of higher communication quality (Mohr and Sohi 1995), we contend that the communication of brand knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient, for reinforcing the brand's message. Rather, employees assess the efficacy of brand communications in terms of timeliness, accuracy, and adequacy (Anderson and Narus 1990). When successful, these brand communications should clarify both an employee's understanding of the brand and the employee's role in delivering the brand message, connecting them to a common, brand-specific goal. The degree to which the employee perceives that brand information provided to them directly by the firm is meaningful and relevant is of critical importance.

Perceived brand authenticity

The importance of authenticity is highlighted by Brown et al. (2003), who state, "The search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing" (p. 21). Unfortunately, as noted by Beverland (2005), there is no generally accepted definition of authenticity. Since the full explication of authenticity is beyond the scope of this paper, interested readers are referred to recent articles by Yagil and Medler-Liraz (2013) and McShane and Cunningham (2012) as well as Grayson and Martinec (2004), Leigh et al. (2006), and Beverland (2005) for a deeper background regarding authenticity. Generally speaking, however, authenticity has come to be associated with terms such as "genuineness," "reality," and/or "truth" (Grayson and Martinec 2004). McShane and Cunningham (2012) propose that the one constant across multiple literatures that discuss authenticity is the idea that authenticity refers to an object that is true to itself. It is important to note that Beverland and Farrelly (2010) state that authenticity should be viewed as a "socially constructed interpretation of the essence of what is observed rather than properties inherent in an object" (p. 839). In other words, consistent with social identification theory (Kelman 1961) and social identify theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), employee affiliation with the firm's brand does not derive only from elements inherent in an object but rather is a "social construction" or perception that enhances perceptions of authenticity.

This view is shared by others (e.g., Bruner 1994; Grayson and Martinec 2004) who propose that authenticity is best understood as being that which is perceived by an individual. Finally, Phillips (1997) indicates there are no objective criteria for evaluating authenticity; rather authenticity is perceived by the evaluator. Based on these ideas, we define brand authenticity as *an employee's perception that a brand genuinely embodies the values it stands for in its positioning.*

According to Edwards (2010), effective communication is built on the notion of authenticity. The credibility of the message forms the foundation for a genuine relationship.

Interestingly, most studies that have investigated the impact of communication on perceptions of authenticity have focused on the impact of advertising on consumers. For instance, Beverland (2005) states that consumer perceptions of brand authenticity can be enhanced via the dissemination of brand information. Furthermore, Beverland et al. (2008) report that to have a positive influence on consumer behaviors, advertising must be judged as authentic. In a study that focuses specifically on employee identification, Hughes (2013) found that internal communications moderated the effect of external brand advertising on a salesperson's identification with the firm brand. This was believed to be the case due to the diagnostic nature of the information.

While evidence points to the role internal communications can have on perceptions of authenticity, messages lacking authenticity have the potential to undermine the credibility of the organization (Lencioni 2002). Indeed, Thorbjørnsen and Supphellen (2011) suggest that if employees cannot make sense of or relate to what is being communicated, they may perceive the efforts as empty rhetoric. The term "self-promoter's paradox" has been used to describe the negative outcomes that may occur if the information is cynically interpreted (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990). Thus, firms must be careful to ensure that the content of internal communications is consistent with the image the firm wants the brand to represent.

Stemming from these ideas, we suggest that brand knowledge dissemination will lead to greater brand authenticity perceptions through identification (Kelman 1958). Firms' deliberate direct provision of brand information to employees is an attempt to influence employee beliefs about the brand such that they are more likely to identify with the brand. This process is particularly effective in a business context due to employees' inherent motivation to succeed. The high salience of the information presented to employees enhances identification with the firm. We find support for the role of identification in the relationship between internal branding and authenticity from a number of places. The most direct support comes from Yagil and Medler-Liraz (2013) who, in a qualitative study set in a services context, propose that identification is an antecedent of authenticity. In addition, Edwards (2010) proposes that identification and authenticity are related and occur, in part, when the firm engages in authentic communications and/or offers authentic products or services. Thus,

H1: Internal brand knowledge communications will be positively related to employees' perceptions of brand authenticity.

Brand value congruence

Within an organizational context, *values* refer to the beliefs an employee has regarding the behaviors and actions that should

be taken (i.e., instrumental values) and/or end states that should be achieved (i.e., terminal values) (Rokeach 1973). One facet of values that has the potential to impact behaviors and actions has been referred to as *value congruence*. Generally speaking, value congruence refers to the similarity of the firm's values and those of an employee (Edwards and Cable 2009). Consistent with social identification theory (Kelman 1961), this suggests the firm's values have been transmitted to and internalized by the employee. In our specific context, we define brand value congruence as *the extent to which there is congruency between employees' personal values and those communicated by the brand* (de Chernatony et al. 2004; Zhang and Bloemer 2008).

de Chernatony et al. (2004) argue that a service brand's values are largely a function of the interaction between the service employee and the customer. The importance of this can be found in a study by Zhang and Bloemer (2008), who find that an increase in the congruence between a service brand's values and a customer's values has a positive effect on customer satisfaction, trust, affective commitment, and loyalty. Therefore, the firm should work diligently to ensure employees share the brand's values so that this can be effectively communicated to customers. This may begin as early as the hiring process (Schneider 1987) in that firms should work to attract employees that share the firm's brands. However, once employees are hired, the firm should also play an active role in assisting employees in sharing the firm's values by using socialization processes such as orientation and mentoring programs, as well as teamwork exercises (Cable and Parsons 2001). In fact, internal firm communications often implicitly include a socialization aspect designed to facilitate the internalization of brand values into the employee's self-concept (Burmann and Zeplin 2005; de Chernatony et al. 2004; King and Grace 2008). High quality and timely internal communication efforts should enhance the perceived congruency between the service employee's values and the brand's values through internalization. This is particularly true given the realization that the firm is in a position of power relative to the employee and therefore the impact of the information presented greater.

Internalization occurs when an employee believes an induced change is congruent with his/her value system (Kelman 1961). The importance of this is highlighted by Reardon and Enis (1990), who argue that before being able to project the brand as preferred by the organization employees must first internalize it. We believe that as the firm effectively communicates information about the brand to its employees, those employees will come to see the brand's values as being consistent with their own via this process of internalization. Thus,

H2: Internal brand knowledge communications will be positively related to employees' brand value congruency.

Brand authenticity effects on brand citizenship behaviors and service ability

The true insights with respect to brand authenticity lie in determining the degree to which these views translate into specific brand-related behaviors. To add a depth of perspective, we consider this from two standpoints: manager and employee. From the manager's perspective, we examine employee service ability, which we define as *the manager's assessment of an employee's effectiveness in servicing client needs*. Effective employees are available to clients and strive to meet client needs in a courteous manner. From the employee perspective, we investigate the extent to which employees report having engaged in BCBs.

Support for these relationships comes from two places. First, according to Grayson and Martinec (2004), consumers view product authenticity in terms of how things ought to be. Claims of brand authenticity have been found to resonate with (Beverland 2006) and to affect consumer product choices (Kates 2004; Thompson et al. 2006). Specifically, Kates (2004) and Thompson et al. (2006) suggest that when consumers perceive the brand as being authentic they are more likely to purchase the product. Consistent with social identification theory (Kelman 1961), a similar thought process should take place with employees. One way to ensure that employee brand behavior is not just consistent with the brand, but is over and above normative expectations, is by ensuring employee views about the brand are consistent with what the brand represents, ensuring the brand is viewed as being authentic.

Perceptions of brand authenticity should also impact employees relative to their view of the legitimacy and credibility of the institution. Brands are perceived as authentic when cues provided by the organization are consistent and compare favorably with the employees' lived brand experiences relative to how those brand experiences ought to be. This shared understanding of the brand provides clear guidelines on how to deliver the brand promise. The inherent lack of ambiguity serves as a motivating force that inspires employees to live up to the brand promise by demonstrating performance consistent with the brand. Consistent with Kelman's theory of social influence (1958, 1961), employees who see the brand as genuinely embodying its positioned values will identify more highly with the brand and will adopt behaviors consistent with the relationship and readily observable by managers. A greater understanding of and identification with the brand has a direct and material influence on employee brand-specific behaviors desired by the firm.

A second perspective of the relationship between authenticity and BCBs stems from the brand psychological ownership literature. Chang et al. (2012) define brand psychological ownership as "psychological experiences that make employees produce positive brand cognitions and brand attitudes" (p. 630). Based in part on identification theory, Chang

et al. (2012) propose a direct test of the relationship between brand psychological ownership and BCBs and find strong support. In addition, O'Reilly (2002) suggests that psychological ownership may result in employees engaging in behaviors that have long-term benefits to the firm, behaviors which would more than likely include BCBs. Finally, Leigh et al. (2006) conclude from their study of MG owners that authenticity can form from identification with an object such as the brand. Thus, it appears that as psychological ownership, which could be based in part on perceptions of authenticity, increases, so too do BCBs and managers' perceptions of employee brand performance.

Based on this rationale, we hypothesize that employee perceptions of brand authenticity will be positively related to employee BCBs and service ability.

H3: Employee perceptions of brand authenticity will be positively related to employee service ability.

H4: Employee perceptions of brand authenticity will be positively related to BCBs.

Impact of brand value congruence on brand citizenship behaviors and service ability

Values have long been considered important in explaining action in organizations (O'Reilly et al. 1991). Organizations are thought to reflect the values of their members. Consistent with social influence theory (Kelman 1974), employee internalization of firm values leads to changes in employee attitudes which, in turn, induce behavioral responses. The internalization of values should positively enhance employee job performance, and this brand-supportive performance should be evident to employees and managers alike. An alignment of personal and firm brand values is likely to encourage employees to readily think of themselves as brand ambassadors. Similarly, managers are likely to see evidence that the employee is living the brand in the provision of branded customer service.

Indeed, empirical evidence has shown positive outcomes from value internalization. For instance, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) revealed that a shared understanding of values led to higher employee performance and employees who are more satisfied and committed to the firm. In addition, Hofmann et al. (2011) found a strong and positive relationship between person-organization value congruence and work group effectiveness, which they believed to be driven partly by similarity-attraction. Just as individuals are more attracted to and trusting of other individuals who are similar to them, employees are believed to be more attracted to and trusting of firms that are similar to them. As it relates specifically to our study, a number of researchers (e.g., Cascio 1999; Podsakoff et al.

2000; Riketta 2005) have proposed that value internalization leads to more extra-role behaviors such as BCBs.

Edwards and Cable (2009) suggest that an alignment of values has a positive influence on outcomes for two reasons: trust and communication. Trust has to do with the belief that the other party can be relied upon to do no harm (Williams 2001). The sharing of assumptions about what is right and wrong is thought to foster perceptions of integrity. Communication relates to the ability to exchange information with little likelihood of interpretations being misconstrued. When employee-firm values are congruent, outcomes are enhanced due to greater employee trust in the organization and stronger lines of communication (Edwards and Cable 2009).

These findings suggest that the positive outcomes associated with value congruence are likely to directly extend to BCBs and service ability. Therefore, consistent with the research conducted on value congruence and with the motivational relevance of social influence theory (Kelman 1974), we propose:

H5: Employee brand value congruence will be positively related to employee service ability.

H6: Employee brand value congruence will be positively related to BCBs.

Brand citizenship behaviors and service performance

Service performance research generally considers frontline employee performance from the perspective of customers. Customer satisfaction is the customer's overall perception of the experience relative to her/his expectations (Parasuraman et al. 1991). Employees who exhibit more BCBs demonstrate an external focus, making them more inclined to deliver service that meets or exceeds customer expectations. For example, in their original conceptualization of BCBs Burmann and Zeplin (2005) argue that BCBs include seven activities: helping behavior (helpfulness and empathic behaviors directed towards external constituents such as following up on complaints by customers), brand consideration (adhering to internal brand communications and accounting for the impact of any behaviors before acting), brand enthusiasm (being enthusiastic about the brand and its values), sportsmanship (willingness to engage customers for the brand even at high opportunity costs), brand endorsement (willingness to recommend the brand to others), self-development (willingness to continuously enhance brand-related skills), and brand advancement (actively working to pass along customer ideas or generating ideas of their own to adapt the brand's identity to changing conditions). Basically these seven activities are indicative of employees who consider the brand promise before acting and who care enough to want to share brand insights with others. Engaging with the brand in this manner should

result in employees who are attitudinally and behaviorally ready to deliver the brand promise. Research by Chang et al. (2012) provides empirical evidence of this relationship in a study where hotel employees self-reported their BCBs while hotel customers provided satisfaction scores. Although customer satisfaction scores were not matched to specific employees, hierarchical linear modeling confirmed a strong positive relationship between BCBs and customer satisfaction. This provides evidence of the importance of the alignment between the brand itself and the behaviors demonstrated by employees (BCBs). As a result, consumer expectations about how employees perform should align well with the brand promise and result in higher service performance evaluations.

H7: Employee BCBs will be positively related to customer evaluations of service performance.

Service ability and service performance

Finally, we propose a positive relationship between an employee's service ability and the customer's evaluation of the service provided by the employee. The link from ability to performance has been well established in the literature and has been found to be robust across a number of different jobs and occupations (Bertura et al. 2005). Furthermore, Le Pine et al. (2000) found this effect to be stronger when the job being performed was more complex or demanded adaptability on the part of the employee, both factors which would seem to characterize service delivery. A number of explanations have been proposed for why ability would be positively related to performance, including the fact that those with more ability are better at learning and making decisions (Schmidt et al. 1988).

In addition, employee abilities should be evident to managers. Managers continually evaluate employees' work ethic, competencies, and effectiveness in serving customer needs. Several studies have shown that manager ratings of employees have a strong predictive validity. For example, Netemeyer and Maxham (2007) found that favorable supervisor evaluations of employee performance (relative to customer complaints) strongly related to customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth. The relationship was considerably more robust relative to an employee's self-rating of performance. Managers were better able to evaluate the service ability of employees. They attributed this to the existence of a self-serving attribution bias whereby employees over-rate their performance to attempt to maximize their future opportunities in the firm. The research concludes that "supervisor ratings of customer service employee performances may be the preferred form of measurement for predicting customer outcomes" (p. 207). All in all, research in the area of service ability suggests that the more able an employee is to perform his or her role, the more enhanced the employee will perform. For that reason we propose:

H8: Employee service ability will be positively related to service performance.

Methods

Participants

The data used in this study come from a U.S.-based firm within a business-to-business service force in the hospitality industry. The firm partners with hospitality operators throughout the industry to provide customized solutions designed to keep their facilities fully functioning. The company provides products, systems, training aids, and services to help in areas most critical to an operation's success: guest satisfaction, operational efficiency, and employee and food safety. The company under study has a standard structure where subordinates and managers frequently interact with one another. Using data from a single company sample inherently controls for factors such as services engaged in, variance across brands and products within different companies, size, market conditions, etc.

Data were collected from three separate sources: (1) written employee surveys, (2) written manager surveys, and (3) archival job performance data collected from company records between three to six months following the completion of the study surveys. The employees in this study represent a service role, wherein employees partner with customers to provide service support using the company's solutions. All employees engage in extensive on-the-job training. The service personnel comprising the study sample are compensated based on a salary and bonus structure where the reward is solely based on their individual performance. In order to obtain the employee segment of the data, all 428 service employees in the organization were surveyed, and 265 (62%) usable responses were obtained.

The managers in this study are responsible for management activities including effectively selecting, training, developing, and coaching employees. Managers supervise area business processes to maximize productivity, drive business results, and manage employee relationships. They are also responsible for maintaining customer focus and taking action to increase customer satisfaction and retention. An effective manager must fully understand the company's protocols and procedures to assure quality service and compliance with applicable regulations/laws. To obtain the management data, all 80 managers from the focal organization were surveyed, resulting in responses from 68 managers (85%), and yielding an employee-to-manager ratio just under 4 (3.90:1). Finally, we matched employee- and manager-

level data to customer service ratings and experience metrics from corporate records.

Measures

All scales (excluding service performance and experience) were Likert-type scales adapted from previous multi-item scales. Table 1 reports all reliabilities, correlations, and relevant psychometric properties. From the service employees, we collected information on perceived brand knowledge dissemination, brand authenticity, brand value congruence, and brand citizenship behaviors. We used three items from King and Grace (2010) to assess brand knowledge dissemination, which captured the ongoing nature of information passed through the organization regarding the brand. Brand authenticity was assessed using four items slightly modified from Wood et al.'s (2008) authentic personality scale designed to capture the perceived image of the brand. Brand citizenship behaviors were measured with three items from a scale developed by King and Grace (2010). The measure evaluates the brand-related behaviors that employees engage in. The fourth scale, brand value, was measured using three items from Baumgarth and Schmidt's (2010) internal brand commitment scale. The items were modified slightly to capture employees' knowledge of the brand, similarity to the brand, and behavior consistent with the brand. Managers reported on their employees' service ability with four items stemming from Schlesinger and Zornitsky's (1991) measurement instrument related to employee service capability. We modified the items to align with the employee's ability to serve the customer. A complete listing of the items for each of the scales can be found in Appendix A.

Because the managers in this study provided service ability ratings for multiple subordinates, it can be argued that disaggregation to the individual level potentially violates the independence of errors assumption in regression. In order to test for non-independence, we conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using managers as the independent factor and service ability as the dependent measure. This analysis yielded a non-significant manager effect for service ability ($F=1.112$; ns), suggesting that the data were sufficiently independent to be analyzed at the individual level.

The final two measures used in our study (i.e., experience and service performance) were collected from archival records. Experience was assessed as the length of time that the person had been employed with the firm. Service performance was an archival measure provided by the sponsoring firm. A random selection of customers from each service employee is contacted on a quarterly basis to determine their level of satisfaction with the service employee provided on a 1 to 10 scale rating with a higher score indicative of higher satisfaction. The company then aggregates these customer scores to a single score and matches them to each employee.

Results

Tests of reliability and validity

We followed the procedure used by Mathieu and Taylor (2006) and conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) for all of the model constructs. Using analysis of moment structures (AMOS), we conducted a CFA to test all measures simultaneously. Following suggestions by Hu and Bentler (1999), we chose to use a combination of fit indices which provide a broad assessment of model fit. Specifically, we use SRMR as an absolute fit index, CFI as a measure of relative fit, and RMSEA as a noncentrality-based measure. Fit values of <0.08, >0.95, and <0.08, respectively, provide evidence of acceptable fit. By these standards, our model provides a strong fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(116)}=181.33$, $p<0.01$; SRMR$=0.03$; CFI$=0.98$; RMSEA$=0.05$), suggesting our measurement model fits well.

Summarized in Table 1, additional evidence derived from the CFA suggests that the resulting measures are reliable and valid. To assess construct convergent and discriminant validity, we followed the approach recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). All construct reliabilities were above 0.70 (Table 1), and the lowest average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.64. Furthermore, all indicators demonstrated significant loadings on their respective latent constructs ($p<0.001$) giving strong support for reliability and convergent validity (Gerbing and Anderson 1988). For discriminant validity, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that the discriminant validity of a construct is established when its AVE is greater than the squared correlations between the construct and all other variables. As shown in Table 1, all constructs met this criterion for discriminant validity.

Hypothesized model results

To begin our analysis, we examined the level one relationships using covariance-based structural equation modeling using AMOS. Table 2 presents the parameter estimates for the research model illustrated in Fig. 1. The structural model demonstrated strong overall fit indices based on the criteria indicated by Hu and Bentler (1999) as indicative as good fit ($\chi^2_{(128)}=208.03$, $p<0.01$; SRMR$=0.04$; CFI$=0.98$; RMSEA$=0.06$). Thus, we believe our proposed relationships provide a good fit to the data. Next, we summarize the model results in the context of our hypotheses.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 argue that perceptions of the adequacy and quality of internal brand communications will positively influence employees' perceptions of brand authenticity and brand value congruence. Parameter estimate results provide support in this regard, indicating that brand knowledge dissemination positively influences perceived brand authenticity (H1: $\beta=0.52$, $p<0.01$) and

Table 1 Correlations and descriptive statistics

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Brand Knowledge Dissemination	0.92						
2. Brand Authenticity	0.50*	0.98					
3. Brand Citizenship Behaviors	0.25*	0.57*	0.89				
4. Service Ability	−0.03	0.20*	0.01	0.74			
5. Brand Value Congruence	0.74*	0.57*	0.55*	0.03	0.85		
6. Service Performance	0.08	0.22*	0.22*	0.19*	0.12*	–	
7. Experience	−0.01	0.04	−0.01	0.08	0.02	−0.08	–
M	4.89	5.36	5.85	3.45	3.04	6.34	3.29
SD	1.41	1.48	1.12	0.50	0.59	2.36	3.95
AVE	0.68	0.78	0.64	0.66	0.82	–	–

*$p<0.05$; Cronbach's internal consistency reliability (α) values are shown along the diagonal; *AVE* average variance extracted

brand value congruence (H2: $\beta=0.74$, $p<0.01$). As Fig. 1 shows, we posit that the effects stemming from internal brand communication will continue to affect more distal constructs beyond brand authenticity and brand value congruence. We hypothesized that employee perceptions of brand authenticity will relate positively with brand citizenship behaviors and manager perceptions of employee service ability. Our results reveal that brand authenticity positively influences brand citizenship behaviors (H4: $\beta=0.54$, $p<0.01$) and service ability (H3: $\beta=0.17$, $p<0.01$). Shifting focus to brand value congruence, we argued that employee perceptions of brand value congruence will positively influence brand citizenship behaviors and manager perceptions of employee service ability. We find that brand value congruence relates positively to brand citizenship behaviors (H6: $\beta=0.16$, $p<0.01$), but it does not influence service ability significantly (H5: $\beta=-0.08$, $p>0.10$). Thus, we find support for H6 but not H5.

Hypotheses 7 and 8 focused on the employees' service performance outcomes. Specifically, we argued that employee

brand citizenship behaviors will positively impact service performance, and that manager perceptions of employee service ability will positively impact service performance. Results offer support for both hypotheses, indicating that employees' service performance is positively impacted by both brand citizenship behaviors (H7: $\beta=0.20$, $p<0.01$) and service ability (H8: $\beta=0.19$, $p<0.01$) even while controlling for the service employee's experience ($\beta=0.03$, $p>0.10$).

Post-hoc analysis

Given the nature of our model, it was important to establish whether our proposed model and theorized causality best capture the relationships among the constructs. Specifically, we investigate multiple models that propose direct relationships could potentially exist between: (1) brand authenticity and brand value congruence, (2) brand knowledge dissemination and employee service ability, and (3) brand knowledge dissemination and employee brand citizenship behaviors. Our inclusion of the first path is based on the idea that authenticity captures the extent the brand genuinely embodies the brand

Table 2 Model estimates

	Service person level-1 parameter estimates			Unstandardized parameter estimates (Std. Errors)	Standardized parameter estimates
H1	Brand Knowledge Dissemination	to	Brand Authenticity	0.45** (0.05)	0.50**
H2	Brand Knowledge Dissemination	to	Brand Value Congruence	0.77** (0.05)	0.74**
H3	Brand Authenticity	to	Service Ability	0.05** (0.02)	0.16**
H4	Brand Authenticity	to	Brand Citizenship Behaviors	0.43** (0.05)	0.54**
H5	Brand Value Congruence	to	Service Ability	−0.01 (0.02)	−0.06
H6	Brand Value Congruence	to	Brand Citizenship Behaviors	0.10** (0.04)	0.14**
H7	Brand Citizenship Behaviors	to	Service Performance	0.42** (0.13)	0.20**
H8	Service Ability	to	Service Performance	1.15** (0.42)	0.20**
	Experience	to	Service Performance	0.01 (0.01)	0.03

**$p<0.01$; *$p<0.05$

values espoused by the firm. Accordingly, as employees see the brand as more authentic, it is possible that this will lead them to see the brand's values as being more congruent with their own. On the other hand, Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) suggest that authenticity does not necessarily lead to value congruence. Owing to the uncertainty but potential importance of this link, we chose to test for the relationship even though it was not a focal element of our model. Our inclusion of the other two paths is based on research that has posited a direct path from internal communications to behaviors (Punjaisri et al. 2009b). While we do not propose mediating relationships, it seems prudent to assess whether there are direct effects between internal communication efforts and the behaviors we investigate.

Results from testing these alternative models re-affirm the adequacy of our proposed model relationships. Falling in line with Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012), the first alternative model found the relationship between brand authenticity and brand value congruence was not significant ($\beta = 0.10$, $p > 0.05$). Our second alternative model tested the direct path between brand knowledge dissemination and service ability. In contrast to Punjaisri et al. (2009b), results indicate the relationship was not significant ($\beta = -0.07$, $p > 0.10$). As we elaborate in our discussion section, our results imply that even though firms may communicate brand information, it may not be enough to overcome an employee's lack of skills needed to provide effective service. Our third alternative model tested the direct relationship between brand knowledge dissemination and brand citizenship behavior. While we did find a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$), the additional parameter did not significantly improve the overall model fit ($\chi^2(1) = 1.13$, $p > 0.10$). Thus, it would appear our proposed model that uses brand authenticity and brand value congruence to explain these relationships provides a more parsimonious explanation for the model relationships. Finally, to examine and capture any potential variance due to a manager influence, we tested a random coefficients model with error terms at the manager level and found no significant differences in our reported relationships from the structural equation model results.

Discussion

Firms must ensure that their brand communication to consumers is consistent with their intended brand positioning. While some firms have a high degree of control over communication used to position the brand (e.g., advertising), service firms are not so fortunate. Service firms must also recognize that customer service employees play an increasingly critical role in communicating the service brand to consumers (Wentzel 2009). Yet, it is often difficult to ensure service employees are representing the brand in a manner preferred by the firm. Thus, service managers should welcome ways to ensure frontline service employees are communicating the brand message effectively. We believe our paper provides such insights. Specifically, our paper contributes to the nascent literature on internal branding, defined here as disseminating meaningful and relevant brand information to aid employees in providing higher levels of customer service. Below we detail what we believe are the theoretical and managerial contributions of our research.

Theoretical contributions

To date, internal branding research has primarily investigated the impact of internal branding on outcomes without examining the mechanisms that may underlie those relationships. We provide a strong theoretical argument and empirical support for the role of authenticity and brand value congruence in the relationship between the dissemination of brand-focused communication and brand building behaviors. Perhaps the most important theoretical contribution our study makes is in regard to the inclusion of authenticity, which refers broadly to the extent to which something truly represents what it stands for.

Authenticity has been an important construct in explaining consumer purchase decisions (Grayson and Martinec 2004), leadership (Avolio et al. 2004), and employee support (McShane and Cunningham 2012). Yet, to our knowledge, our study is the first to incorporate employee perceptions of brand authenticity into a model that investigates the impact of internal branding. As expected, our results indicate that internal branding activities can enhance perceptions of brand authenticity which, in turn, lead employees to engage in more BCBs and exhibit higher levels of service ability. Following from Kelman's (1961) theory of social influence, we propose that employees identify more with a brand when they perceive it as more authentic. Parallel with this thinking, Leigh et al. (2006), propose that assessments of authenticity are based in part on one's identity. Thus, it would appear that as firms are effective at communicating information concerning the brand, employees identify with the brand and thus perceive the brand as being more authentic.

In addition to authenticity, we also investigated the role of brand value congruence on the relationship between internal branding and brand building behaviors. Brand value congruence refers to the extent to which the employee perceives the brand's values as being consistent with their own values. We find support for the notion that effective brand communication leads employees to perceive the brand's values as being congruent with their own. We propose that the theoretical mechanism for this finding comes from Kelman's (1961) theory of internalization, which suggests that influence occurs via internalization when an individual internalizes an entity's communicated values into their own. In sum, our results provide some of the first theoretical support to explain how internal branding

activities increase brand building behaviors (e.g., BCBs and service ability).

Prior internal branding research that has included BCBs is limited and has included BCBs only as an outcome. We contribute to this literature by conceptualizing and demonstrating the connection between employee BCBs and customer perceptions of service performance. In doing so, our study is one of the first to look at the extent to which BCBs actually lead to higher levels of service as assessed by customers. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) conceptualized BCBs as specific brand building behaviors on the part of employees, giving credence to the idea that BCBs should enhance a customer's perceptions of the service provided. However, our model provides a more nuanced interpretation by positioning BCBs as a behavioral mechanism to explain how authenticity and brand value congruence lead to behaviors that ultimately provide higher levels of customer service. Specifically, it seems that it is not enough to engage in internal communications, but rather that this communication must lead employees to more authentic and congruent brand value perceptions. Only then will employees engage in brand building behaviors, such as BCBs, that enhance customer evaluations of delivered service.

Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, our research highlights the fact that the success of internal branding programs may be more complex than initially thought. We find that communications are more effective when employees perceive the brand as being more authentic and consistent with their own values. To accomplish this, firms must manage a well-crafted internal branding program that carefully considers the quantity, meaningfulness, and relevance of the information being shared with employees, as well as unanimity. Unanimity refers to the extent that the influencer (i.e., firm) is committed to the message and that the message is consistently delivered. As has been shown in the context of externally focused communication, it is easy for the firm to disseminate messages that are seemingly inconsistent. For example, the "communications gap" in the gaps model of service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1985) refers specifically to inconsistent messaging regarding what the service firm delivers and what they claim to deliver.

Authenticity is defined phenomenologically. That is, employee perceptions of authenticity are based on their own perspectives, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs, which are often more resistant to internal brand communications. However, managers have many means to help overcome this resistance. Managers may form brand groups or utilize corporate storytelling to help employees perceive the brand as authentic. Leigh et al. (2006) point out the importance of groups in this context, by suggesting that brand communities can be used to enhance perceptions of authenticity.

Accordingly, firms may call on employees to help co-create and disseminate brand information to personalize the authentic nature of the brand and increase identification. Corporate storytelling promotes narrated messages designed to reinforce or create new attitudes or behaviors about the past and future of the organization and its people (Gill 2011). Successful stories include a number of elements such as drawing on the organization's collective memory to provide a historical overview, providing ideas about where the firm is heading in the future, and illustrating compelling characters (e.g., brands). One advantage of storytelling is that it allows the recipients to share knowledge and interpret the information received in light of their own experiences leading to personalization and deeper meaningfulness of the information (Denning 2005). This depth should result in greater levels of identification with the brand and, in turn, increase brand building behaviors on the part of service employees.

Firms should also recognize that critical brand-related information must be communicated to employees as soon as possible, perhaps even prior to their joining the firm. This may be particularly true with regard to brand value congruence. One implication of Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework is that individuals will self-select themselves into firms that share their values, but this can only occur when the firm effectively communicates the brand's values during the selection and hiring process. By effectively communicating brand values to potential employees, firms increase the likelihood not only that new hires share the brand's values but also that they will be influenced by future brand-directed communication.

Finally, our research indicates that BCBs and service ability lead customers to give higher evaluations of the delivered service. While utilizing internal brand communication can enhance BCBs and service ability through authenticity and value congruence, it should be noted that perceived authenticity and value congruence may not overcome deficiencies in the employees' ability to provide quality service. As such, firms should augment internal branding efforts with other service training methods. This training should add to the employee's skillset while reinforcing the brand message. Additionally firms may wish to provide rewards to employees that engage in BCBs either by compensation or perhaps via recognition. Recognitions are a valuable tool that adds to the firm's "story" in such a way that authenticity could be enhanced, thus leading to greater levels of employee BCBs.

Limitations and future research

We should acknowledge some limitations inherent in our research. First, our research is set within the context of a single

firm engaged in B2B service provision. While we feel confident that our results would generalize to B2C service providers, this needs further investigation in similar and different contexts in order to provide more support for our findings. In addition, it is possible our results might be more generalizable to service providers where employees have a stronger commitment, both psychologically and in terms of tenure, to the firm. However, we should note that we included experience as a covariate and found that it was not significantly related to customer perceptions of service performance. Nonetheless, the transitory nature of employment in many service industries might be a factor that would impact our results. Finally, as it relates to our context, the data in this study come from a firm that uses a single brand name strategy. Our model needs to be tested using data from firms that utilize a multiple branding strategy. We expect that the findings would hold since employees would tend to identify with one brand more than another. Even if not, we would expect that brand communication concerning the multiple brands offered would have the same effects as we find in this study.

While the proposed model helped explain how the dissemination of brand information ultimately leads to enhanced service performance, there was one surprising limitation. The hypothesized positive relationship between brand value congruence and service ability was not found. We believe this implies that that employees' understanding of the brand and perceived value congruence may not be enough to overcome a lack of competencies needed to provide a high level of service. An understanding of the brand may help an employee grasp what he or she should be doing, but the employee may lack the knowledge to fulfill the role effectively.

In addition, research could be conducted to more fully explicate how the context in which communication is delivered impacts employee brand identification. For example, it may be that the creation of a service climate within the firm may amplify internal brand communications and enhance their effectiveness. In addition, given the significant findings in our model with regard to authenticity, more research should be conducted relative to this construct. Emerging literature on authentic leadership may be used to identify how to ensure employees perceive the brand as authentic.

It is also possible that the impact of brand communication on employees may be a function of message delivery. A number of methods have been proposed, including corporate storytelling, mentoring, rites, rituals, and the development of brand statements (de Chernatony et al. 2006). These and other methods need to be studied in more depth to aid managers in understanding the relative extent to which they work. In addition, as we suggest above, research could be conducted using Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition framework to determine exactly when brand information should be communicated to employees, and even to potential employees. Prior to employment, individuals are more likely to be attracted to firms where they believe employees share the brand's values and/or perceive the brand as authentic. If so, how can communication be managed to ensure it is consistent to what employees will find to be the climate/culture with in the firm? How important is brand information that is communicated when an individual begins employment relative to that communicated later during an employee's tenure? These are all questions that could provide service managers with additional knowledge regarding how best to go about ensuring the service employee does in fact "live the service brand."

Finally, while the expectation is that most firms will work to ensure the message being delivered internally to employees will match that being delivered to external constituents, it is possible there will be some misalignment. Because research has indicated that employees can and will be impacted by external communications, research could be conducted to better understand the relative impact of internal and external communications on employee attitudes and behaviors.

Appendix A

Scale Items

Brand Knowledge Dissemination (original source: King and Grace 2010)

1. *FIRM* communicates its brand message well to its employees.
2. *FIRM* explains the importance of my role in delivering the brand message.
3. The information provided to me when I started at *FIRM* helped me understand the goals of the *FIRM* brand.

Brand Authenticity (original sources: Wood et al. 2008; Sirianni et al. 2013)

1. The *FIRM* brand genuinely embodies its image.
2. The *FIRM* brand has integrity.
3. The *FIRM* brand is not fake or phoney.
4. The *FIRM* brand exists in accordance with its values and beliefs.

Brand Value Congruence (original source: Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010)

1. My attachment to this brand is based first and foremost on the similarity of my values to those represented by the brand.

2. The values represented by our brand are more than just words; they influence my day to day behavior.
3. In our company, we have a clear idea of what our brand stands for; brand identity and brand promise are well defined.

Service Ability (original source: Schlesinger and Zornitsky 1991)

1. This PERSON always makes sure that he/she can be reached whenever a customer needs something important.
2. This PERSON provides high-level service/maintenance to all accounts.
3. This PERSON has the knowledge to effectively/ competently help all accounts.
4. This PERSON provides courteous service to customers.

Brand Citizenship Behaviors (original source: King and Grace 2010)

1. I demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with the brand promise of *FIRM*.
2. I consider the impact on the *FIRM* brand before communicating or taking action in any situation.
3. If given the opportunity, I pass on my knowledge about *FIRM*'s brand to new employees.

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