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Assessing the Implementation of Internal Branding Training in the Hotel Industry

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Peter Juskiw

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Abstract

Assessing the Implementation of Internal Branding Training in the Hotel Industry

by

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MA, University of Kent, 1986

Postgraduate Diploma in Personnel Management, Middlesex University, 1975

Higher National Diploma in Business Studies, Stockport College of Technology, 1973

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

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Abstract

Internal branding (IB) evolved from marketing to engage employees in a company's strategic planning. IB has been studied extensively in the hospitality industry, but not with human resource (HR) departments. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to assess the effectiveness of corporate training designs in instilling IB corporate values in global employees of a multinational hotel chain to determine whether European core values could be transferred across different cultural backgrounds. Structured interviews on IB were conducted with 22 HR practitioners of a luxury hotel chain to capture essential information through the lived experiences of the participants, all of whom were involved in how the design of such training programs can instill corporate core values in employees across national cultures. Transcribed interview responses were analyzed using the simplified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to generate textual and structured descriptions to capture IB from their perspectives. The analysis revealed (a) that the HR employees were sensitive to certain core values that did not readily translate to overall brand and employee loyalty, as well as good company-employee working relationships, and (b) the importance of designing effective yet standardized training materials that addressed cultural differences or could be adapted as needed. These findings can help to promote more effective global brand recognition and provide HR specialists with knowledge to educate trainers about better techniques to deliver training across different cultures and engage employees on core values. Employees will be happier performing their roles, have increased job satisfaction, and demonstrate improved levels of productivity.

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Dedication

Soli Dao Gloria.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

A brand can be described as a cluster of functional and emotional values that serve as a unique experience for shareholders (Hatch & Shultz, 2009). Soni, Sharma, and Upadhyaya (2009) described a brand as a way of communicating the essence and spirit of a business to stakeholders. Hatch and Shultz (2009) viewed a corporate brand as integral to the culture and history of a business. Branding is based on values and practices. A brand is a living organism fueled by a company's values and its people (Mosley, 2007). An organization's brand symbolizes crucial factors in recruitment, selection, motivation, and retention processes in engaging potential and existing employees who share the company's core values (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998).

Kunerth and Mosley (2011) as well as Ansari and Riasi (2016) stated that internal branding (IB) draws from marketing theory on brand image to suggest that an organization can be associated with an employment brand consisting of individuals' perceptions about what is distinctive, central, and enduring about the organization as a place to work (Dineen & Allen, 2016). IB gives organizations a strategically better opportunity for greater performance, shared values, and common knowledge (King & Grace, 2008). Branding shapes the perceptions of customers and employees (Amiri Aghdaie, Seidi, & Riasi, 2012; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Punjaisri, Wilson, and Evanschitzky (2008) indicated that consumers use specific brands because they reflect their own personal values.

Gardner, Erhardt, and Martin-Rios (2011) defined employer brand (EB) as the names, terms, signs, symbols, and designs used singly or in combination to identify the

employment offering of one employer and to differentiate it from the offerings of competing employers. The concept of EB is strongly connected to human resource (HR) management and branding (Ansari & Riasi, 2016). Employees are among the most important resources of an organization (Riasi & Asadzadeh, 2015), so it is necessary for managers to improve their brand image in their employees' minds to become more competitive (Amiri Aghdaie et al., 2012). Some organizations create or alter their brand perceptions to convey favorable value propositions to potential or current employees (M. R. Edwards, 2010; Van Hoye, Bas, Cromheecke, & Lievens, 2013). Some researchers have argued that EB might translate into brand equity by influencing potential employees to apply for, accept, and job opportunities (Cable & Turban, 2001; Dineen & Allen, 2016).

Brand names are powerful symbolic structures that represent qualities, characteristics, and ideas that engender and sustain relationships between consumers and products (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011; Eskine & Locander, 2014). Sung and Kim (2010) suggested that brand trust is a critical component in brand relationships because trust can be conceptualized in many ways, including loyalty, service quality, relationship quality, and cooperation. Eskine and Locander (2014) considered brand trust "the willingness of the average customer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (p. 51). Consumers believe that the personality of a firm determines the brand (Siems & Lackus, 2010). De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) asserted that a brand can be considered a "seller's promise to deliver a specific set of features and services consistent to the buyers" (p. 118). Branding strategists use names that are easy to

pronounce, are recognizable, and deliver consistent meanings across cultures around the world.

Foster, Punjaisri, and Cheng (2010) noted that ample research has been conducted on the process required to encourage brand-supporting behaviors. The cost of sustaining brands in competitive market environments with increasingly diverse expectations and decreasing customer loyalty has made companies rethink their tactics toward creating and keeping customer satisfaction and loyalty (Anisimova, 2010). Some tactics have included EB and IB programs. EB refers to how an organization promotes its “people management package” to existing and potential employees (Anisimova, 2010; Berthon, Ewing, & Han, 2005). Kunerth and Mosley (2011) stated that to be effective, the brand not only should be evident to candidates at the recruitment stage but also should inform an organization’s approach to its people management package. For example, the brand can inform how the business tackles orientation, performance management and reward, management of internal communications, promotion of effective management behaviors, and people leaving the organization (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011).

Oladebo (2014) also stated that attracting, selecting, engaging, developing, and retaining employees should be the five main foci of talent management. However, Robertson and Khatibi (2013) argued that the objectives of IB should be directed toward (a) improving levels of employee job satisfaction, (b) increasing staff retention and reducing turnover, (c) enabling higher levels of productivity as the result of greater employee commitment, and (d) reinforcing the consumer brand image of the organization. These components comprise the internal people management package. G.

Martin, Gallan, and Grigg (2011) defined EB as a “generalized recognition of being known among key stakeholders for providing a high-quality employment experience and a distinctive organizational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others” (p. 3621).

IB is a prominent theory in the HR literature, aligning marketing terminology that provides organizations with methods to enhance employees’ attitudes and behaviors by emphasizing organizations’ core values and communicating them throughout the workplace (Judson, Gorchels, & Aurand, 2006; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Researchers have found the service industry increasingly to operate IB activities (Burmamann & König, 2011), but it is still a young field of research. IB strategies give organizations a competitive advantage and improve the satisfaction of employees and customers (Abimbola, 2010; Punjaisri et al., 2008; Turkoz & Akyol, 2008).

Background

The hospitality industry has created recognized EB as a sound business strategy (Abimbola, 2010; Băltescu, 2009). Cerović and Tomašović (2009) proposed that the symbolic and cognitive elements that strengthen the organizational workplace culture are especially visible among high-end branded hotels, particularly in Europe. The brand, through its employees, serves as a welcoming experience for customers (de Chernatony, Cottam, & Segal-Horn, 2006). IB strategies focus on marketing the company brand and image to existing employees (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006). Berry, Burke, and Hensel (as cited in Mosahab, Mohammed, & Ramayah, 2011) introduced IB in 1976 as an approach

to resolve inconsistent and poor service quality. They proposed using customer strategies for employees in an effort to improve the delivery of a company's brand promise.

Gapp and Merrilees (2006) stated that IB involves three stages: communicating the brand effectively to employees, convincing them of its relevance and worth, and successfully linking every job in the organization to deliver the brand promise. Gromark and Melin (2011) provided empirical evidence of a significant and positive relationship between brand orientation (i.e., how organizations should work internally to ensure and build strong brands) and profitability, showing that the most brand-orientated companies in their study almost doubled their profitability over that of the least branded companies. IB strategies entail symbolic and cognitive elements (Mosahab et al., 2011).

A semiotic brand or sign could be defined as anything that represents something to someone (Santos, 2012), and brand identity defines a brand's sense of direction, which is central to a strategic vision. De Lencastre and Côte-Real (2010) suggested that the semiotic response to a brand comprises different cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. Thellefsen and Sørensen (2013) argued that the semiotic potential of the brand is based on the notion that a brand is a symbol, its meaning is based on a habit, and it contains indexical and iconic signs. These components of the concept of cognitive branding require a focus on emotions, shared memory, and the ways the brand generates attention by the communication of emotional elements.

IB programs strengthen the organizational identity and culture, ultimately enhancing productivity and profitability (Cerović & Tomašović, 2009; Ooncharoen & Ussahawanitchakit, 2009; Turkoz & Akyol, 2008). The successful internalization of a

brand by employees will increase the success of delivering the brand promise and enhancing brand equity (King & Grace, 2010). Human capital and talent strategies have progressively developed into a concept that employees are internal customers, the foundation of IB (King & Grace, 2008).

IB has critical implications for recruitment, selection, motivation, and retention strategies, essentially all aspects of HR management (Foster et al., 2010; Simmons, 2009). To achieve a competitive advantage, organizations formulate value propositions and communicate their intentions to recruit and retain superior employees (Hatch & Shultz, 2009). Organizations need to communicate messages about what makes them employers of choice and establish themselves as valuable workplaces (Erickson & Gratton, 2007). Guthridge, Komm, and Lawson (2008) proposed that HR departments work closely with marketing and communications departments to create strong corporate brands that are attractive to potential employees.

An HR department's responsibility is to communicate what career opportunities exist in the company and to make these opportunities as attractive as possible to entice quality applicants (Hatch & Shultz, 2009). An employer of choice recognizes the value of its HR because it considers employees one of the company's most valuable assets (Berthon et al., 2005). Creating a diverse workplace culture and recognizing that each employee can make a valuable contribution is the foundation of an employer of choice (Sutherland, Torricelli, & Karg, 2002). Erickson and Gratton (2007) maintained that an employer needs a "signature experience" that makes the company unique. By

communicating their brands and core values, companies increase employee engagement and performance (Hatch & Shultz, 2009).

Mahrokian, Chan, Mangkornkanok, and Lee (2010) submitted that corporate culture evolves and an organization's history is based on its shared convictions, standards, and values, as well as the vision of its founders. Hatch and Shultz (2009) contended that organizational culture includes material aspects or artifacts. They stressed that the term *artifact* refers to anything created by humans that gives information about the culture of its creator and users. Artifacts act as the formal statement of a company's values and are central to marketing its corporate identity to employees and customers (Hatch & Shultz, 2009).

Corporate culture is representative of management ideas, actions, and methods, and organizational staff (Y. Yang, 2010). Pudelko (2007) cautioned that the corporate culture values and cross-cultural differences of employees should be managed carefully. Because globalization has provided organizations with tremendous opportunities, organizations must confront and manage these cultural differences to maintain their competitive edge in the marketplace (Y. Yang, 2010). By understanding global differences, organizations can establish a balance with global efficiency (Pudelko, 2007). Recognizing these differences is imperative in enabling organizational leaders to harmonize imported and national cultures, personal motifs, and organizational needs and traditions (Cerović & Tomašović, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Foster et al. (2010) found that the meaning of IB has had many conflicting definitions over time, resulting in a poorly understood concept. There also has been a lack of evidence on IB's return on investment that has affected its importance to the directors of organizations negatively (King & Grace, 2010). In addition to the poor definition and misperceived importance of IB by organizational leaders, Abimbola (2009) concluded that there has been a lack of research into IB that described IB's short-term and long-term benefits accurately. Most research has focused on IB's long-term investment, something that can be difficult to promote within organizations. The problem this study addressed was the challenge that HR departments face in designing and delivering effective IB programs meant to develop motivated, committed, and loyal employees.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to assess the effectiveness of corporate training designs in instilling IB corporate values in global employees of a multinational hotel chain. The goal was to capture essential information through the lived experiences of the HR and training personnel involved in how the design of such training programs can instill corporate core values in employees across national cultures. Specifically, the focus was on determining whether European core values can be transferred across different cultural backgrounds.

Nature of the Study

A phenomenological approach guided the study (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) stated that the process of the phenomenological model starts with epoche, that is,

“setting aside prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence” (p. 183). The phenomenological approach considers the participants’ individual lived experiences and perceptions of the problem under investigation as important (Denscombe, 2010). Moustakas suggested the simplified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to analyze the data; this method has been universally recognized among researchers (Creswell, 2013). For the current research, I used the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to generate textual and structured descriptions to capture the essence of IB from an HR perspective.

King and Grace (2010) adopted this approach when they investigated employees’ perspectives of IB efforts. Researchers have recommended qualitative methods for the study of IB (Snell & White, 2009; Wagner & Peters 2009); in particular, researchers have supported the use of longitudinal studies (Burmamann & König, 2011; Campbell, 2004; Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Wilson, 2009) or case studies (Foster et al., 2010; King & Grace, 2010). This study was conducted using primary data collected from interviews at the corporate head office of a hotel chain based in Geneva, Switzerland, with a purposeful sample of 22 HR personnel and trainers at hotels in various global locations. All participants were involved in the implementation of the hotel chain’s IB program and lived the experience of using the training materials and adapting them accordingly to the different needs and cultural experiences of their respective employees (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Traveling the long distances involved to conduct the interviews was sometimes difficult and challenging. However, the method was effective in discovering what the

participants thought about the IB process and the training materials, as well as how employees reacted to the training. The interview data were broken into categories using the IB process framework (Punjaisri et al., 2008).

Research Questions

This study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of a standardized corporate IB training program across different cultural locations in changing employees' perceptions of the core values of the hotel chain. The two primary research questions (PRQs) and five secondary research questions (SRQs) were based on Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) IB process framework. The PRQs were aligned with the SRQs by asking the participants about the company's IB program and their own core values. Then, the focus shifted to the training materials distributed to the participants through the trainers from the head office in Geneva.

Primary Research Questions

PRQ1: How does an international hotel organization benefit from an IB program?

PRQ2: How does commitment to core values help an organization?

Secondary Research Questions

SRQ1: How do the trainers rate the various training materials used to gain organizational commitment to the core values?

SRQ2: What do the trainers think of the training materials used, and do they enable the trainees to identify with the core values?

SRQ3: What cultural factors affect the choice of training materials used?

SRQ4: How effective is the transfer of the content of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors?

SRQ5: How do employees rate the training materials used? What is the effect of the training materials on employees' perceptions of corporate core values?

Theoretical Foundation

Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) IB framework was used to explore the impact of corporate core values on employees' attitudes and behaviors toward the IB. The concepts of IB mechanisms and their effects, internal communications, training, brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty, brand promise, brand orientation, brand psychological ownership and organizational culture, situational factors, and personal variables were defined and examined to illustrate conceptual relationships within the IB literature. I also identified five branches of study in the literature.

After conducting a thorough literature review, I took a more holistic approach and identified five parameters, namely, situational factors, IB mechanisms, brand-supporting attitudes, brand-supporting behaviors, and personal variables from the interview responses, and applied them to Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) model. The works of several researchers were synthesized, and the most prominent IB components were then grouped into these parameters. These factors concentrated on using IB mechanisms to shape the attitudes and behaviors of employees; some researchers have argued that these mechanisms are necessary for the effective implementation of IB (Aurand, Gorchels, & Bishop, 2005; Gapp & Merrilees, 2006; Simmons, 2009).

Traditionally, IB researchers have been inclined to focus on the perspectives of managers and brand, marketing, consultants, and practitioners, that is, predominantly a marketing viewpoint (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; de Chernatony et al., 2006), whereas more recent researchers have started to explore the viewpoints of customer interface employees (King, 2010; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; Punjaisri et al., 2008). HR's perspective remains, for the most part, unexplored. Research on HR's role has been limited to a study by Aurand et al. (2005), and research on HR's perception has been limited to a study by Snell and White (2009).

After conducting an extensive review of the literature, it became clear that no definitive research has been conducted to explore how property-level HR practitioners perceive IB in the hospitality industry and whether practice corresponds to theory, especially in exploring how training materials can be used to implement IB effectively. Researchers such as Cheung, Kong, and Song (2014); Erkmer and Hencer (2014); and J. T. Yang, Wan, and Wu (2015) have endorsed the role of HR as critical to the implementation of IB. Moreover, HR practitioners' perceptions of their role and that of other departments within the process remains uncharted, although researchers have offered many recommendations for what it should be (Aurand et al., 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; Sartain, 2005). Siems and Lackus (2010) recommended studying the HR perspective of branding rather than marketing, particularly because other researchers often have advised a marketing approach to HR (Nikbin, Saad, & Ismail, 2010; Sartain, 2005; Tag-Eldeen & El-Said, 2011).

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined for use in this study:

Brand commitment: A clearly defined brand that incorporates a clear vision is vital to the success of IB (Ferdous, 2008; Nikbin et al., 2010) because it helps to make sense of the brand and enables the correct interpretation (de Chernatony et al., 2006; M'zungu, Merrilees, & Miller, 2010). This understanding initiates the intellectual and emotional commitment of employees to the brand; provides a conspicuous, collective direction for organizational efforts (Tosti & Stotz, 2001); and enhances an accurate brand promise delivery (King & Grace, 2010; Punjaisri et al., 2009). Organizational commitment is whether employees feel attached to the organization and should maintain their membership in the organization; affective commitment is the strength of employees' emotional attachment to the organization (Jyothi, 2013). Successful brands depend on how employees interpret the brand values and the commitment they have toward behaving accordingly (de Chernatony et al., 2006; Sartain, 2005).

Brand identification: De Chernatony (2010) defined brand identity as “who the organization is, and what it stands for” (p. 53). Ultimately, a clear brand identity and collective values translate to a consistently strong organizational culture that guides brand-related behaviors (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2008; P. Harris, 2007). In fact, Ferdous (2008) emphasized that IB fundamentally implies collective values.

Brand loyalty: De Chernatony (1999) maintained that culture management is the new brand management. Thus, organizational culture must be integrated into the brand; otherwise, the likelihood of its acceptance will diminish, and resistance toward it will

increase (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Such resistance results in a disconnection between the externally espoused brand and employees' actions, which will obliterate consumer loyalty (P. Harris, 2007). King and Grace (2010) elaborated that a strong organizational culture supports internal relationships, which fosters a supportive and open work environment.

Brand-orientated culture: Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010) suggested that a brand-orientated culture leads to brand-supporting behavior, which can ensure that employee behavior is as consistent as possible with the brand identity and expressed brand values. Brand orientation is a type of organizational culture that ensures that the brand has a dominant role in the organization's strategies. Urde, Baumgarth, and Merrilees (2013) described this as an inside-out, identity-driven approach that puts the brand at the center of an organization and its strategy.

Brand orientation: Brand orientation has been defined as an approach in which the process of the organization revolves around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity through ongoing interactions with target customers, with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantage (Urde, 1999).

Brand-supporting attitudes: When employees have values that are congruent with the values of the brand, their behaviors and attitudes provide a believable brand experience for consumers; specifically, the brand vision becomes the brand reality (Miles & Mangold, 2004; Tosti & Stotz, 2001). Hence, brand values and organizational values need to be aligned (Joshi, 2007).

Brand-supporting behaviors: IB and EB values need to be aligned so that employees can deliver what is expected by consumers, resulting in a unified and seamless brand identity (Burmam, Jost-Benz, & Riley, 2009; King & Grace, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). An open work environment improves employees' morale and job attitudes, particularly at the induction phase of employment (Burmam & König, 2011). Community-like environments that support intellectual capital through effective knowledge transmission facilitate internal communication and help to nurture individual knowledge that has been developed throughout the length of employment (King, 2010; King & Grace, 2008, 2010).

Core values: Values are the basis of the corporate culture. Ferguson and Milliman (2008) stated that values are the heart of organizational culture and represent its philosophical views. Values constitute the purpose of the organization that guides its actions, especially in recruitment, training, and leadership practices. Values become cultural assets for the organization and often become success factors for specific initiatives that frequently point to support from the culture and values in the organization, including the alignment of culture and values between individuals and departments, and the organization's mission, vision, and values (Arbab Kash, Spaulding, Johnson, & Gamm, 2014). Corporate values might have to demonstrate corporate social responsibility (Villagra & Lopez, 2013). Corporate social responsibility might have a direct impact on the corporate brand and values, including the vision and mission (de Beer, 2014).

Employer branding (EB): EB refers to a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective employees that the company is an employer of choice and a desirable place to work (Birtch, Flora, Van Esch, & Van Esch, 2016). Advertising is one of the key tools to attract and retain potential employees by communicating the proposition that the company is unique and different (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011).

Employer of choice: Berthon et al. (2005) defined employer of choice "as the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (p. 156). In regard to job choice decisions, although millennial undergraduates rated values highly in job choice scenarios, the majority were willing to trade this off for greater extrinsic benefits (Leveson & Joiner, 2014). Employer of choice also is referred to as employer attractiveness (Maxwell & Knox, 2009),

Internal branding (IB): IB refers to the methods implemented by organizations to improve employer-employee relationships by aligning employees' values and behaviors with the brand's desired values (F. Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). The brand's task is to help employees to identify with the company and make them feel engaged with the corporate core values (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). Service industries have the characteristic of intangibility. Thus, IB is an indispensable factor in service industries because a strong brand can increase customers' trust and reduce their psychological and financial risks when purchasing intangible products or services (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013).

IB mechanisms: IB mechanisms refer to the guidelines that recommend courses of action to achieve the desired outcomes (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Reliable means to

achieve the described value congruence is the selection of the right employees, that is, employees who share values with the organization and the brand (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Recruitment and selection help to ensure cultural and structural fit (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

Although some researchers have argued that they are an EB tool (Foster et al., 2010), IB mechanisms also are considered an HR-led IB initiative (Burmam & König, 2011; Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). To align employee behaviors with brand values, IB mechanisms foster a number of behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. Three key outcomes of IB that were prevalent in the literature included brand identification, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior (Asha & Jyothi, 2013; Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; King & Grace, 2012; Löhdorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014).

Internal communications: IB initiatives need support from communication strategies that include internal and external communication practices (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Internal communications should be the first point of focus in an IB branding program aiming to secure employees' commitment and encourage behavioral change (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Feedback ties in with communication because it implies that communication is a two-way process (Punjaisri et al., 2009) that will be treated as another mechanism. First, periodic assessments of and modifications to the IB process are inherent to the successful implementation of IB because organizations are equally as alive and subject to change as the employees who work within them (Tosti & Stotz, 2001). Moreover, feedback allows employees to be involved the IB process, which

increases their propensity to engage in delivering the brand promise and living the brand (Burmamann & König, 2011; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005, P. Harris, 2007).

Internal marketing: The combination of effective IB and shared brand understanding is based on a committed workforce that delivers the brand promise. This delivery requires internal marketing through in-house communication and HR activities (Punjaisri et al., 2008).

Market orientation: Market orientation has been defined as the organization's purpose to identify needs and wants in its target market and to satisfy the needs more effectively and efficiently than its competitors (Baumgarth, 2010; Mulyanegara, 2011).

Organizational commitment: Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1982) defined organizational commitment as "the positive strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 27).

Organizational culture: The culture of an organization comprises the beliefs and values of management and employees (Green, 2008). Organizational culture also can be defined as the basic pattern of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs considered the correct way of thinking about and acting on problems and opportunities facing the organization (Schein, 2008).

Personal variables: Personal variables such as educational background and age might inhibit the effectiveness of IB (Punjaisri et al., 2008). For instance, empirical evidence has suggested that employees with the highest satisfaction, commitment, and stress resistance tend to be older, more experienced, and better educated (King & Grace, 2010; Punjaisri et al., 2008). However, characteristics such as age, experience, and

education in combination are atypical in hotel settings, posing a fundamental challenge for management (King & Grace, 2010).

Psychological ownership: Psychological ownership refers to an experience from an employee's perspective that promotes positive perceptions and attitudes toward the brand (Chiang, Chang, Han, & McConville, 2013).

Situational factors: To ensure the identified alignment between values and the fulfillment of promises made to consumers, if the promises that a brand makes are not kept throughout the consumer experience (e.g., heterogeneous employee behavior), the credibility and strength of a brand will deteriorate (Burmamann & Zeplin, 2005). Creating such consistency is the core purpose of IB management (Kahn, 2009). Service quality is crucial for organization performance and survival in rapidly changing and highly competitive environments, so organizations need to improve their performance permanently to keep their competitive edge (Abzari & Ghujali, 2011). Motivated employees can deal with their customers better and are competent to provide quality service (Akroush, Abu-ElSamen, Samaqi, & Odetallah, 2013; Tsai & Wu, 2011).

Training: Burmann and Zeplin (2005) supported the use of brand-centered HR activities to achieve brand commitment; hence, HR must take part in the collective IB goals of the organization and reinforce training as a commitment to secure the implementation of IB. However, HR is not the only contributor to the success of IB programs.

Value congruence: J. R. Edwards and Cable (2009) stated that value congruence refers to "the similarity between values held by the individuals and the organization"

(p. 655). Personal values (i.e., beliefs, education, and social status) and corporate values that are represented in vision and mission statements can elicit valuable insight about members (E. A. Anderson & Jamison, 2015). These personal values generally result in significant relationships among cultural values, employee-focused values, and productivity-focused values (Chen, Lune, & Queen, 2013). Screening new members' personal values and knowledge for congruency with the organization's values could help to prevent future problems with engagement, delivery of the brand promise, and high turnover (E. A. Anderson & Jamison, 2015). The decision-making freedom accorded to managers determines whether they design stakeholder participation in accordance with personal value orientations, the organization, or policy (Aggestam, 2014).

Assumptions and Limitations

Based on King's (2010) research, I assumed that effective IB programs would affect employees in a positive manner and that a positive IB outcome would be the best foundation to assess the effectiveness of training programs used to promote corporate core values. Another assumption was that the scope of the change in attitude toward brand loyalty would be limited to individual employees (King, 2010; King & Grace, 2008).

Limitations included insufficient understanding of employees' awareness of all IB efforts; inadequate understanding of all situational factors; scant descriptions of close internal employees' relationships; and incomplete details of personal variables such as age, experience, education, and career trajectory (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Finally, the qualitative data that I collected from one hotel chain operating in Europe, Africa, the

Middle East, and the Far East cannot be generalized to hospitality employees around the world.

The study was conducted to determine how effectively a single multinational luxury hotel brand designed and implemented an IB program throughout its chain of hotels. The investigation of a single brand limited the findings to the hotel brand studied. However, because some of the interviews were conducted in the Eastern hemisphere, some participants had a rudimentary command of English, a factor that had an impact on the effectiveness of the interviews. The findings will guide further research in the IB discipline with an informative description of the brand's efforts with detailed notes, transcripts, and coding procedures (V. Anderson, 2004). Keeping an audit trail was useful in minimizing threats to the validity and credibility of the study (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2011; Creswell, 2009). The audit trail included, but was not limited to, audio recordings, field notes, transcripts, theme identification, interpretations, and procedural notes.

Significance of the Study

There has been limited research on the implementation of IB strategies in the hospitality industry (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Specifically, the relationship among individual values, corporate values, and job satisfaction has been largely ignored, despite its potential benefit to productivity in the hospitality industry (Diskiené & Gošautas, 2010). Foster et al. (2010) stated that although research into brand-supporting behaviors has been conducted in many industries, there has been little literature on the role of HR and other departments in strategic IB efforts. The focus has largely been on theoretical

efforts describing IB strategies, not on empirical studies (Aurand et al., 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Conducting an empirical study into the HR perspective of IB efforts was advisable (Siems & Lackus, 2010); however, some studies reflected the beliefs of other researchers (e.g., King et al., 2014; So et al., 2016) about IB influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors.

Snell and White (2009) found that the HR department would like to play a more significant management role as an agent of change in the implementation of IB strategies. However, M'zungu et al. (2010) submitted that IB is still seen as a marketing function controlled by marketing professionals as part of an overall corporate branding strategy, albeit with some HR input. A marketing approach toward IB often has been recommended (Nikbin et al., 2010; Tag-Eldeen & El-Said, 2011). The new role that HR has assumed is based on organizations communicating clear messages regarding their values and what they stand for (Seitel & Doorley, 2012). However, de Aguilera, Baños-González, and Ramírez-Perdiguero (2015) stated that an integrated communication strategy might be deduced, such as (a) identifying marketing communication and other organizational objectives, such as IB; (b) planning all tools in a coherent and synergic way; (c) effectively managing and integrating all promotional activities; and (d) managing all communication tools and considering all media to send brand messages.

Burmann and König (2011) found that implementation of a successful IB strategy builds commitment from employees, but it must be linked to brand-orientated communication that emphasizes marketing processes. Nikbin et al. (2010) argued that HR departments need to take more of a marketing approach because IB terminology and

approaches were borrowed from the marketing discipline. HR and marketing departments should work together because training is an HR activity and communication is a marketing activity (Punjaisri et al., 2008).

One approach to ensure the success of IB strategies is to create an IB team with representatives from both departments to offer a complete IB perspective (M'zungu et al., 2010). Therefore, the most comprehensive perspective would come from the integrated marketing, communication, HR, and leadership teams. For IB objectives to be realized, strategic efforts must create a culture of commitment from all stakeholders. IB strategies are meant to encourage employee engagement that results in empowered employees and higher levels of job satisfaction (Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2014).

The results of this study will contribute to the IB literature regarding how training programs can be implemented successfully to help employees to identify with corporate core values across cultures in different parts of the world by emphasizing how important cultural differences are in the design of effective IB training materials. The results can lead to positive social change when individuals no longer experience negative value congruence with the corporate core values and their own cultural values.

Organizations have been making a concerted effort to have a selection checklist of their core values and interview questions to ensure congruence with potential employees' values and behaviors. Stride and Higgs (2014) argued that the idea of values fit between individuals and organizations, a recurring theme in academic and business circles, must be established during the selection process. Staff perceptions of organizational values have the greatest impact on employees' commitment (Stride & Higgs, 2014). This value

congruence generally results in significant relationships among culture values, employee-focused values, and productivity-focused values (Villagra & López, 2013). Therefore, preselection EB must forge and emphasize the values and culture of the organization.

The results might facilitate social change regarding the ways HR and training professionals adapt and design effective training materials so that employees can readily identify with certain corporate core values to ensure delivery of the brand promise. Analysis of the interview responses highlighted the need for trainers to take employees' views into account; be aware of core values and cultural differences; and take notice of personal variables such as education and age and situational factors, along with relationships with colleagues and leaders, in the development of effective training materials.

Summary and Transition

This study was conducted to better understand how the HR department can implement IB strategies to strengthen the positive attitudes and behaviors of employees (Aurand et al., 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Wagner and Peters (2009) contended that a successful IB program can promote employees' understanding and adoption of corporate values. However, the design of an IB program in a multicultural work environment is quite complex (Pollitt, 2008).

Major challenges for the hotel brand studied included the competitiveness of the luxury segment and the independent ownership model of the properties in the chain, making brand standards more difficult to implement. However, the brand's leadership maintained that their core values of traditions, entrepreneurial performance,

straightforwardness, and passion for European luxury can be transferred to each hotel globally to provide their customers with a unique experience. Punjaisri et al. (2008) developed a framework that I used in the current study to explore how one HR department used an IB training program to communicate corporate core values to affect employees' commitment and loyalty toward their employer (Foster et al., 2010).

The IB framework is introduced in Chapter 2, along with a review of the literature on IB mechanisms and their effects on employees. The review also includes a discussion of the personal variables and situational factors that moderate the effects of IB initiatives. The review illustrates how the researchers of recent IB studies have advocated aligning HR, marketing, and communications disciplines to research IB. The chapter concludes with a summary of the current literature and brief introductions to Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the methodology, Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the findings, and Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter begins with an introduction to the concept of IB and a presentation of the IB framework that guided the current study. IB has a relatively short history, so a universally accepted definition does not exist. However, the IB framework that Punjaisri et al. (2008) developed represents common elements presented in the literature, and the variables within the framework are defined in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature, an introduction to Chapter 3, and an overview of Chapters 4 and 5.

Literature Search

Articles used for the literature review were sourced from several databases, including Academic Search Premier, Business and Management, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES. Publication dates for the referenced articles spanned 1976 to 2016, and most articles were from relevant literature published over the last 12 years. The reason for the search extending back to the 1960s was that the research covered Bandura's (1977) social learning theory (SLT), George and Berry's (1981) EB, Locke's (1976) research into job satisfaction, and Sasser and Albright's (1976) IB. The rest of the citations were relevant and current. Search terms used to find relevant articles included *employer branding*, *internal branding*, *internal marketing*, *corporate culture*, and *employer of choice*. The reviewed articles provided the necessary background and methodological structure for the study.

Internal Branding

Sasser and Arbeit (1976) redefined the use of certain marketing terminology and strategies, specifically branding, to help HR personnel to make companies more attractive to potential employees and to increase current employees' understanding of the companies' visions, missions, and values (George & Berry, 1981). A fundamental component of IB is the notion that employees are the customers and their jobs are the product (Berthon et al., 2005; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Ultimately, IB strategies are meant to strengthen employees' positive attitudes and behaviors toward their employers and company identities (Green, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2008).

Foster et al. (2010) mentioned that research into brand-supporting behaviors has been conducted in many industries. However, few studies have been conducted to understand the effects of IB from the viewpoints of employees (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Many studies on IB have tended to focus predominantly on the perspectives of brand/marketing managers (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; de Chernatony et al., 2006).

Some studies have focused on employees in customer-interface roles (King, 2010; King & Grace, 2008), but very few studies have focused directly on the role of HR in the implementation of IB strategies (Aurand et al., 2005; Snell & White, 2009). Some studies on IB, especially the interactions between employees and customers needed to deliver the brand promise, have considered these interactions the essence of service industries. Thus, employees' commitment to delivering brand value is a key facilitator of the external brand experience (Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013).

In this sense, employees are even known as brand ambassadors, which means that they must deliver brand-consistent behaviors and take on the role of brand builder. In terms of talent attraction and retention, organizations with positive EBs that take an innovative approach to the design and delivery of HR initiatives to help employees develop their expertise and maximize their potential to become future managers and leaders will achieve a competitive advantage in the labor market (Cascio, 2014).

Javanmard and Nia (2011) studied the effect of IB efforts on the perceptions, brand commitment, brand loyalty, and performance of banking employees to attract customers to Islamic banking. The results were contradictory, suggesting that even though the organization could improve its brand understanding and brand commitment among its employees, its IB efforts had no meaningful impact on employees' loyalty and performance. Inconsistent results of studies of IB have highlighted the need to investigate more than just the strategic mechanisms that a company employs to promote its internal brand (Asha & Jyothi, 2013).

Burmann and Zeplin (2005) noted that IB is a holistic concept of strategic brand management to attract and retain competent personnel to ensure that employees fit with the corporate culture. A strong organizational culture is a prerequisite of a successful IB program (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006; Merrilees & Miller, 2008; M'zungu et al., 2010). However, IB also is essential to promoting the competitiveness and long-term success of companies in the sense that it can stimulate organizational identification and convert committed and engaged employees into brand champions (Vasta, 2016). Greater organizational identification among employees enhances positive word of mouth and

their voluntary participation in brand development (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014). It also optimizes their intensity to engage with customers in the best possible ways.

The success of any IB initiative depends on how committed top management are to supporting the culture, corporate mission, and vision of the organization with integrity (Vasta, 2016). One IB strategy is to make the company an employer of choice (Bellou, Chaniotakis, Kehagias, & Rigopoulou, 2016). The more attractive that potential employees perceive an employer to be, the more personnel equity the employer has in its corporate brand (Berthon et al., 2005).

Haari, Salleh, and Hussin (2012) found a causal relationship between IB efforts and employees' positive attitudes and behaviors. They also found a strong correlation between IB practices (i.e., the dissemination of brand knowledge and rewarding of good brand behaviors) and employees' job commitment. Job commitment correlates with employees' attitudes and behaviors, and employees' positive attitudes and behaviors are expressed as valuable brand citizen behaviors (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Green, 2008).

Asha and Jyothi (2013) agreed that IB efforts are a key determinant of employees' organizational and brand citizen behaviors. IB mechanisms create a favorable psychological climate within the organization that helps to build employees' commitment and psychological ownership in the organization (Asha & Jyothi, 2013; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley (2008) suggested that for an IB program to be implemented successfully, there must be an alignment between understanding the different roles of HR, marketing, and internal communication and understanding the need to work together in a collaborative effort (Foster et al., 2010). The IB role of the HR

department is to implement communications and the training program, and HR managers are responsible for communicating the corporate brand message by promoting its shared values among its employees (Jacobs, 2003). In their study of the hotel industry in Thailand, Punjaisri et al. (2008) discovered that the effects of IB mechanisms on employees vary because of personal variables and situational factors (see Figure 1).

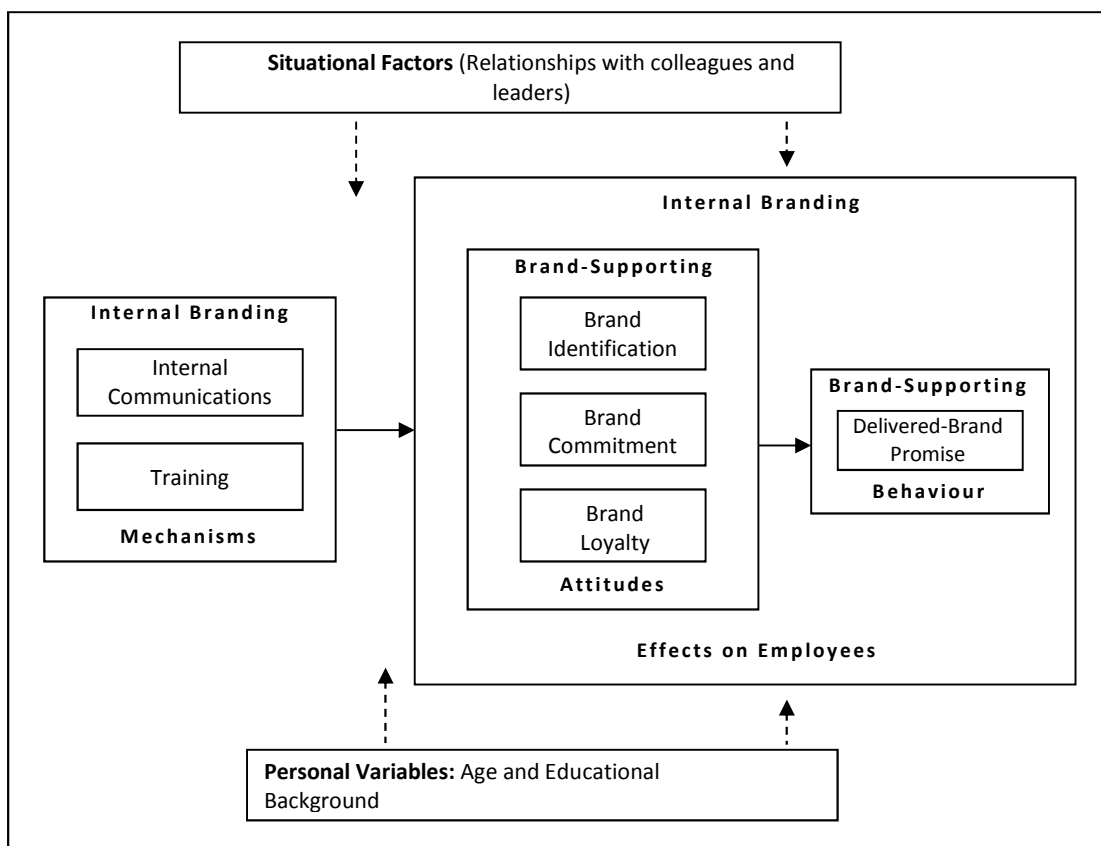


Figure 1. IB process framework. Adapted from the model presented in “Exploring the Influences of Internal Branding on Employees’ Brand Promise Delivery: Implications for Strengthening Customer-Brand Relationships,” by K. Punjaisri, A. Wilson, & H. Evanschitzky, 2008, *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 7(4), 407-424. doi:10.1080/153326602508430

As the main brand representatives, service employees play a crucial role in corporate reputation and brand building efforts (P. Harris, 2007). Service branding relies

on employees' performance and appropriate behaviors because of their face-to-face service interactions with customers. Employees' significant role in terms of delivering the service quality promised through marketing messages can be considered the basis of a company's competitive advantage (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Punjaisri et al. (2009) suggested that an appropriate IB program can enhance employees' brand commitment and performance that is critical to manage any issues regarding unpredictability in service delivery. The relationship between the organization and its customers is constituted by the employees understanding the need to deliver the brand promise to the customers' expectations (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

Kang (2016) stated that another function of an IB program is to ensure that employees are ready and competent in terms of brand attitude and brand behaviors to deliver services as promised. The company brand and its IB efforts contribute to a doctrine to shape employees' attitudes and behaviors to ensure that the brand service is delivered as promised to the customers (Green, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2009). IB training is a way to improve the employer-employee relationship by making it a more open relationship (Kucherov & Zamulin, 2016).

A strong employer-employee relationship is the foundation of a successful company-customer experience in maximizing the brand promise (Punjaisri et al., 2008). An improved, healthy, transparent, and communicative relationship among the organization, employees, and customers helps to increase the company's competitive advantage (Carter, Armenakis, Field, & Mossholder, 2013). An open environment also enables new employees to settle into the company more quickly during the orientation

stage, thus increasing morale and job attitudes (Burmamann & König, 2011; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

Organizations should not tend toward disorganization (Villagra & López, 2013). A flat organizational structure with open communication and transparency tends to engage employees more easily in their early stages of employment (Stiles, 2011). Organizational health refers to the ability of the organization to deal with the tensions resulting from the diverse and competing values of employees and to help managers to resolve value tensions underlying workplace health problems at the organizational, group, and individual levels (Orvik & Axelsson, 2012).

Internal communication and training are the two most important mechanisms of any HR-developed IB program (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). IB training programs design and deliver emotional and intellectual activities that employees engage with to clearly understand and embrace the corporate brand values (Mahnert & Torres, 2007). HR personnel use IB guidelines to inform the selection and hiring of new employees and to communicate to all employees the corporation's core values. To minimize HR issues, there should be value congruence between employees and employers (Van Rekom, Van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006). If employees do not believe in corporate core values, they will not embrace them or use these core values to deliver the brand promise as designed (Mahnert & Torres, 2007).

Internal Branding Mechanisms and Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is expressed through its values (Van Quaquebeke, Graf, Kerschreiter, Schuh, & van Dick, 2014). These values play a central role in guiding how

leaders communicate the organizational culture to employees (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Organizational values are engrained in mission statements and organizational guidelines, and they not only define organizations' ideals but also govern employees' perceptions and responses to the world around them (Arthaud-Day, Rode, & Turnley, 2012; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012). Ferguson and Milliman (2008) suggested that organizational values form the essence of organizational cultures, which represent the philosophical views, priorities, and purposes that guide all actions, including recruitment, training, and leadership practices, within organizations.

Organizational leaders' personal values affect, shape, or align with corporate values, which are important because they determine the choices that executives make and how those choices influence corporate strategies (Aggestam, 2014). Therefore, EB and IB initiatives to succeed need effective leaders who can implement change initiatives successfully and who are concerned with building and communicating the right culture and values (Arbab Kash et al., 2014). Those values need to start at the top as the personal values of the executives, who then use values strategically in their day-to-day management practices and embed those values into strategic and other planning processes (Bell-Laroche, MacLean, Thibault, & Wolfe, 2014). Possessing strong or inspiring values is a key quality of successful leaders (Aggestam, 2014).

In addition to other common management practices, management by values is an important factor contributing to enhanced organizational performance (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014). Managers who develop values-based leadership learn to recognize their personal and professional values (Graber & Kilpatrick, 2008). This recognition helps

them to determine their personal expectations from the larger organization and understand what can be implemented within their individual spheres of influence (Peregrym & Wollf, 2013).

Hofstede (2001) explained that values are an important element of organizational cultures and demonstrated that organizations' differences are more visible in their practices than in their values. How employees perceive the meanings of organizations' practices evolves over time (Kostova, 1999; Wilderom, Glunk, & Maslowski, 2000). Business practices are ways of conducting organizational functions, whereas organizational values are expressed in organizational practices. Van Quaquebeke et al. (2014) proposed that the dynamics of values are partly responsible for employees' satisfaction with their jobs. Employees who attach more importance to the values of openness, fairness, logic, and moral integrity, for example, are more committed to organizations if these values are promoted by the organizations as part of their core values (Kumar, 2012).

De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998), as well as King and Grace (2012), identified three types of core values: values that relate to the organization; values that represent the spirit of the company (i.e., its cultural habits and norms); and values perceived by customers. Core values should inform the development of an IB program because of their significant influence on employees and customers (Asha & Jyothi, 2013). Corporate core values also should be inspired by employees and used by employers as a motivational tool. Employees need to believe in their organizations' values; otherwise, IB

programs will not resonate with employees and will not achieve the desired outcomes (Van Rekom et al., 2006).

Value congruence has been defined as employees' values that match the values of the organizations (Andreassen & Lanseng, 2010; Hoffman, Bynum, Piccolo, & Sutton, 2011; LePla, 2013). When there is value congruence, employees are more likely to be happier and more satisfied with their jobs (Kumar, 2012; Uçanok, 2009). When organizations experience value congruence, labor turnover is reduced, and employees' behaviors are correlated with positive attitudes (Besharov, 2014; J. R. Edwards & Cable, 2009; Jiang & Iles, 2011; Kuchеров & Zavyalova, 2011). Inconsistency between individual values and organizational core values cause conflict, putting the delivery of the corporate brand promise in jeopardy (Monahan, 2013). Asha and Jyothi (2013) asserted that IB programs can help to maximize the congruency between employees' values and organizational values, thus increasing employees' satisfaction and resulting in positive citizen behaviors among employees (Besharov, 2014).

Employees are drawn to work for organizations that reflect their own personal values (Diskienė & Gošautas, 2010). Value congruence can enhance the customer brand experience because employees are more motivated to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction (Hughes & Rog, 2008). When employees clearly understand the brand identity, a strong corporate culture is the result, and this understanding guides positive brand-related behaviors (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2008). Ferdous (2008) asserted that effective IB programs should communicate and emphasize the collective values of employees and the organizations. Beaty et al. (2011) stated that global HR trends have

indicated the extent to which Internet-based assessments have been incorporated into the talent assessment practices of organizations that have begun to use online assessments, including the measurement of applicants' characteristics. The Internet has made it possible to assess applicants across linguistic and cultural boundaries on a seemingly unlimited number of attributes (Lievens & Burke, 2011).

Internal Communication

Clear communication of corporate core values is one of the most important elements of successful IB implementation (P. Harris, 2007). Patla and Pandit (2013) found that management's attempt to introduce an IB program to reduce customers' complaints and increase employees' commitment toward customers was hampered by the lack of communication of the organization's values. In addition, the lack of general communication and the lack of reinforcement of training have been identified as major obstacles in building an effective IB program (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Employees generally understand the relevance of brand values, but these values need to be reinforced by management through their daily routines, communication channels, and verbalization of the corporate brand identity (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

Verheyden (2014) suggested that internal marketing and IB can foster emotional attachment between employees and employers. This emotional attachment can help to build organizational identification, commitment, and sense of community among employees. Verbalization of the corporate brand creates momentum by transferring the essence of the brand to the employees and encouraging its interpretation and application.

Verbalization results in brand values becoming meaningful and relevant to employees (Green, 2008; P. Harris, 2007; Lings & Greenley, 2010).

In addition to the communication of organizational core values, training and employee development are important elements of successful IB programs (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Miles and Mangold (2004) proposed that successful IB programs can be accomplished through organizational message systems, channels through which organizations should encourage employees to receive and deliver messages embedded with organizational values. These channels include training and development, performance management systems, and compensation and benefits (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Miles, Mangold, Asree, and Revel (2011) found that maximizing the desired brand image entails defining the desired brand image based on organizational values and that these values must be communicated effectively through the organization's message systems.

De Chernatony and Cottam (2008) suggested that three resources are critical for developing the IB message: the corporate vision statement, the description of the organizational culture, and the collective values of the employees. Successful implementation of an IB program depends on the incorporation and development of these resources into the communication of a corporate brand (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2008). Malbašić and Brčić (2012) stated that even though organizational values can be communicated to employees, customers, and stakeholders, managerial communication plays an indispensable role in the delivery and maintenance of organizational values.

HR personnel should assume the role of internal communicator between organizational departments, especially marketing and communications (Tag-Eldeen & El-Said, 2011). Communicating core values through training and development is an effective method to clarify the corporate culture to employees (Gill, 2011). Sole and Wilson (2002) confirmed this assertion, stating that storytelling through training programs is one method that “conveys norms and values across generations within the workforce” (p. 3).

Training and Coaching

Training and coaching are considered a strategic HR practice that benefits individuals, teams, organizations, and society (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Training is one of the most frequently used HR development interventions (Jaidev & Chirayath, 2012). Typically conducted through HR, employee training is focused on providing knowledge and skills that should transfer to changes in behaviors and attitudes (Turbin, 2001; Yamkovenko & Holton, 2010).

H. J. Martin (2010) confirmed that although billions of dollars is spent annually on training and development, the transfer of knowledge and the training process are not clearly understood by most practitioners. Cromwell and Kolb (2004) estimated that as little as 15% of training knowledge is transferred successfully on the job. The transfer of learning, or the transfer of training, is a process that attempts to create an environment where employees can learn and retain the knowledge, skills, behavior and attitudes taught during training (Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, & Baert, 2011; Saks & Burke, 2012; Yamkovenko & Holton, 2010).

Guidice, Thompson Heames, and Wang (2009) suggested that the benefits of a well-structured and successful training program can impact operational efficiency, organizational renewal, long-term growth, and strategic advantages in competitive markets while minimizing employees' turnover rates. By adopting carefully designed training methods, companies can exploit new business opportunities, build better future career perspectives, increase innovation and productivity, and improve the quality of products and services provided to customers (Chatzimouratidis, Theotokas, & Lagoudis, 2012).

The successful transfer of the content of training materials depends on many factors, some of which are training design, supervisor and peer support, content relevance, and transfer climate (Hutchins, Burke, & Berthelsen, 2010). Rowold (2007) asserted that causal factors such as self-efficacy, motivation to learn, and employees' conscientiousness and anxiety can affect this transfer of training content. When there is a gap between ineffective and effective employee behaviors, typically, trainers are not using relevant techniques or materials during the training process (Sahinidis & Bouris, 2008). For example, organizations that are operating overseas and their HR practitioners should consider the complexity of differences while managing the training of employees in culturally diverse settings (Hassi & Storti, 2011).

To implement an IB program successfully, the necessary resources need to be secured by HR personnel to ensure that the most appropriate training tools are being used (Burmam et al., 2008). Training guidelines also are necessary and should recommend appropriate training tools, a course of action, and a desired outcome based on a training

program's objectives (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Capps and Capps (2005) stated that the development of an IB training program comprises three elements: program objectives, program design, and program delivery.

Program objectives include training goals and outcomes, both of which should be reflected in the training materials used in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors (Capps & Capps, 2005). Sahinidis and Bouris (2008) recommended that trainers design training programs that are consistent with their organizational cultures to increase the effectiveness of the training. Training programs should include standard portfolios with training scenarios that businesses should use as a centralized scheme to maximize training consistency (Hughes & Rog, 2008). Hughes and Rog (2008) recommended regional portfolios for different parts of the world so that trainers could select the most relevant modules for local groups. Program delivery should include time lines and schedules, train-the-trainer camps, executive and employee sessions, and feedback opportunities (Sahinidis & Bouris, 2008).

Rewards and employee benefits packages also have been recognized as strategic IB tools and important determinants of healthy employer-employee relationships (King, 2010; King & Grace, 2008). Positive employer-employee relationships, rewards, and benefits are correlated with employees' commitment to or intention to leave an organization (Kuchеров & Zavyalova, 2011). Burmann and Zeplin (2005) suggested that the combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation leads to solidarity, commitment, and strong organizational culture.

Capps and Capps (2005) noted that a successful IB training program requires input from employees and trainers through training tools such as needs assessments that measure the level of understanding of corporate core values, reveal which core values are important to employees, and illustrate how employees engage with the organization's core values. Integrating and coordinating pretraining, during training, and posttraining activities enhance the success of the transfer of training (Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Jaidev & Chirayath, 2012).

Kissack and Callahan (2010) stated that organizational culture, training, and development programs are inseparably linked. Freiling and Fitchner (2010) suggested that organizations can act as catalysts of competence by fostering the process of learning, employee development, and cultural understanding between employees and the organization. Buchko (2007) cautioned that attributes of failure also can be linked to organizational culture by stating that "training failure can be a manifestation of the values, beliefs, and assumptions shared by members of various levels of organizational culture" (p. 147).

Chong (2007) emphasized that the specific knowledge required to engage in and deliver consistent service quality is transferred by understanding corporate core values and knowing how to live the organization's brand promise (Devasagayam, Buff, Aurand, & Judson, 2010; Green, 2008; Judson, Devasagayam, & Buff, 2012; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). Soft skills such as social graces, communication, language, personal habits, and friendliness also are important assets of employees in the service sector, and they are critical to ensure delivery of the brand promise (Sing, 2013). Collins, Crespín-Mazet, and

Goglio-Primard (2011) posited that an IB program should facilitate the transfer of knowledge using local experiences for storytelling, internal communication, sharing of best practices, and innovation during the training program. Merriam and Leahy (2005) concluded that there are three ways for trainers to increase the training impact of learning transfer in the workplace: including the participants in the program planning, incorporating strategies that coordinate knowledge transfer in the program design, and ensuring a supportive transfer environment.

Effects of Internal Branding on Employees

An IB program is meant to maximize value congruence within an organization (King & Grace, 2008; King, Grace, & Funk, 2012; Mosaheb et al., 2011). IB training fosters increased organizational commitment and engagement with corporate core values, and instills brand values in employees (Baker, 2009; King et al., 2012). Employees' adoption of corporate core values can improve their attitudes and commitment levels (Dahlgaard-Park, 2012; Hur & Adler, 2011). Training and development efforts also can contribute to increased employee motivation, job satisfaction, and morale (Chatzimouratidis et al., 2012). So, King, Sparks, and Wang (2016) argued that customer engagement plays a significant role in building customer-brand relationship quality as well as customer loyalty toward the brand.

Brand-Supporting Attitudes and Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership has been defined as experiences from the employees' perspectives that promote positive perceptions and attitudes toward the brand (Chiang et al., 2013). Employees demonstrate intense feelings of ownership toward the brand that

encourage and create constructs that enforce motivation, commitment, engagement, and overall employee satisfaction (Chiang et al., 2013; LePla, 2013). Corporate core values define and guide the expected direction of employees' attitudes within the organizational culture (Davies, 2010).

Chiang et al. (2013) emphasized that a strong brand provides clear and practical benefits to employees and that companies that use programs to encourage their employees' understanding of the brand through training and rewards are hoping that employees adopt psychological ownership of the brand (Barrow & Mosley, 2008; Pinar, Girard, Trapp, & Eser, 2016). Hur and Alder (2011) concluded that employees who properly understand the organization's brand are better able to offer the kind of service that the organization seeks to satisfy its customers. Diskiené and Gošautas (2010) noted that when corporate and employee values are congruent, employees' likelihood of being satisfied at work is higher.

Brand identification and organizational culture. Organizational culture is, in part, based on an organization's unique history (Campbell, 2004). Cultural substance, that is, corporate core values, can be developed through the collective attitudes of an organization's leadership and its employees that are manifested through the behaviors of management and employees. Without a clear understanding of the organization's culture and values, the behaviors of employees and management are undirected and uncontrollable (Hultman, 2005). Cultural knowledge influences employees' attitudes and behaviors. For an organization to facilitate employees' identification with the corporate

brand, employees need to be informed of clearly defined corporate values through an efficient internal communication strategy (Buchko, 2007; Krishnan, 2004).

Many definitions of organizational culture exist. Green (2008) defined organizational culture as the beliefs and values of management and employees. M. R. Edwards (2010) commented that the culture of an organization refers to employees' shared perceptions of organizational practices. Van den Berg and Wilderom (2004) stated that organizational culture establishes the behaviors that employees need to conform to as they strive to meet organizational standards effectively. Organizations can attempt to instill specific values in their employees to develop a specific organizational culture or brand identity (M. R. Edwards, 2010).

A brand culture can be created through the delivery of an IB program that communicates corporate values to increase employees' identification with the corporate brand (Green, 2008; Uçanok, 2009). IB efforts are focused on engaging employees with corporate core values and corporate culture (Pinar et al., 2016; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Successful IB efforts need employee input regarding the ways in which employees connect or do not connect with corporate values (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). To maximize employees' identification with corporate brands, organizations should incorporate the diverse values of employees into their IB strategies (King & Grace, 2012; Muafi, 2009; Pollitt, 2008).

Organizations need strategies to communicate their organizational cultures so that employees can identify with the corporate core values (M. R. Edwards, 2010). Corporate values and their communication need to be consistent while connecting a diverse

spectrum of beliefs (Muafi, 2009). Brand identification is achieved when personal beliefs of employees inform corporate values, which can then direct decision making to help set priorities in employees' work and personal lives (Pollitt, 2008).

Murray and Efendioglu (2007) suggested that as organizations grow, the gap between corporate and personal values increases and becomes more complex. This increase in the gap reduces employees' ability to identify with the corporate brand. Kahn (2009) suggested that successful IB strategies depend on the shared values and mutual understanding of all stakeholders. IB strategies are meant to communicate an organization's culture and values to employees clearly so that they can find ways to identify with the corporate culture and its brand (Lee et al., 2014; Punjaisri et al., 2008).

Brand commitment. Mowday et al. (1982) defined organizational commitment as the empathy that individuals within the organizations experience. This empathy includes value congruence, a willingness to exert considerable effort to achieve personal and organizational goals, and a commitment to stay with the organizations (Fritz, O'Neil, Popp, Williams, & Arnett, 2013; Mowday et al., 1982). Organizations benefit from employees who identify with their corporate values of the companies and who subsequently are more likely to be more committed to the organizations and are less likely to leave (Arnett, Fritz, & Bell, 2013; Green, 2008).

Job satisfaction and employee commitment also have been correlated (Khan & Abdul Rashid, 2012). Locke (1976) explained that job satisfaction is an internal state that individuals experience related to their jobs and work environments. Chiboioiwa, Chipunza, and Samuel (2011) identified high levels of job satisfaction and organizational

commitment as essential for organizations to compete and achieve operational excellence. LePla (2013) posited that satisfied employees are essential to a company's productivity because they form more bonds with customers, develop unique relationships with the brand, and create personnel-oriented values that enhance competitive advantage.

Employees' commitment to the brand is visible at every stage when customers contact the product or service providers (Pinar et al., 2016). The commitment of employees regarding the ways in which they deliver services relevant to the brand promise has a significant impact on customers' decision making and experience with the brand (Holland & Weathers, 2013). LePla (2013) suggested that raising employees' commitment can be accomplished when organizations communicate their corporate core values clearly. Employees who have a strong commitment to the brand will deliver better service and improve the customers' expectations (Barrow & Mosley, 2008; Mosley, 2007).

When customers' expectations are not met, customers seek options within the competitive market (Foster et al., 2010). Organizations that encourage and inspire employees to live the brand values through training will create loyal employees and customers (Davies, 2010; Holland & Weathers, 2013). Organizations that simply list core values on media platforms and expect employees to manage their own education of the brand are at risk of having unsatisfied employees and customers (Foster et al., 2010). Ultimately, the organizational goal is to develop employees who believe in the company values, who are emotionally connected to the brand, and who are motivated to work creatively through work that has purpose (Holland & Weathers, 2013; LePla, 2013).

Brand loyalty. Brand strategies need to permeate the organizational culture to build employees' loyalty to the brand (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Potential employees try to identify organizations to work for that have values similar to their own so that they can assimilate quickly into the organizational cultures (Andreassen & Lanseng, 2010).

Berthon et al. (2005) defined employer attractiveness as the envisioned benefits that potential employees seek in employers. An employer of choice can be defined as a firm that potential employees see as their first choice because of their status and reputation in terms of culture, values, and HR practices (Sutherland et al., 2002).

Employer value proposition also plays a significant role in enhancing the attractiveness of employers to potential and current employees (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). Hence, it is imperative for organizations to articulate the benefits of the employer value proposition to potential and current employees adequately (Vasta, 2016). In addition, companies can leverage consistent word-of-mouth endorsements of existing employees by ensuring a culture of trust, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness toward all stakeholders (Sengupta et al., 2015). However, EB might ring hollow if organizations do not integrate EB efforts with IB efforts (Vasta, 2016). Disgruntled employees might post negative comments about the company on social media sites such as Glassdoor.

Personal values are hierarchical (M. R. Edwards, 2010), and at some levels, these values will, or will not, be congruent with the organization's values and culture. The specific values that are congruent need to be developed and leveraged into a common bond with the corporate core values (Huang, 2005). Brand loyalty is nurtured through a

common link between organizational vision and employees' values (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2008). De Chernatony and Cottam (2008) suggested that an organizational audit be conducted to assess employees' attitudes and perceptions before the organization implements an IB program; otherwise, the organization will flounder as it tries to design motivational strategies meant to build brand loyalty. Burmann and König (2011) supported the involvement of employees in the design of IB strategies that are the foundation of successful IB programs that foster brand loyalty. Employees' involvement can encourage and empower employees to become brand ambassadors as well as encourage role modeling and support of brand fellowship (Burmann & König 2011; Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2005).

The SLT (Bandura, 1977) stipulates that people can learn new behaviors by observing others, and it emphasizes the reciprocal relationship among social characteristics of the environment, how they are perceived by individuals, and how motivated and able individuals are to reproduce the behaviors that they see happening around them. Wurtz (2014) emphasized that the SLT focuses on four aspects: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. The first aspect is the need for attention, meaning that individuals must notice and pay attention to what is being taught. The second aspect is retention, which refers to memorization, comes into play. Without remembering the behaviors, individuals will not be able to reproduce them. Reproduction also is key because it requires putting the model behaviors or what has been learned into practice. Finally, motivation and incentives are critical because they affect each of the three other aspects (Wurtz, 2014).

When interacting with peers and guests, employees learn which behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable by observing and imitating others. Imitation is a function of successful modeling, meaning that individual can quickly reproduce the behaviors exhibited by the model (Bandura, 1977; Davis & Luthans, 1980). Modeling can be viewed as a way to disperse values, attitudes, and behaviors in a variety of social contexts successfully (Weaver, Treviño, & Agle, 2005). In addition, corporate values need to be analyzed against the EB to develop synergy between EB and IB values to maximize the loyalty of employees and customers to the brand (Burmamann & König, 2011). The further apart IB and EB values are, the greater is the possibility of message confusion among employees and customers (Muafi, 2009; Pollitt, 2008). There are assumptions regarding how employees perceive the corporate culture or brand if the values or brand is not communicated properly by the organization (Krishnan, 2004). Green (2008) stated that inconsistency is the worst-case scenario for the development of brand loyalty because inconsistent values reflect an organization that has not managed differences and has not been able to identify common aspects among its workplace culture, its corporate vision, and employees' values.

A well-designed IB program based on research is critical to affect the attitudes, behaviors, and motivation of employees positively (Guidice et al., 2009; Huang, 2005). King and Grace (2010) suggested that a strong organizational culture supports cooperative internal relationships that can foster an open environment. A strong organizational culture and an open environment are imperative to the success of an IB program and the development of brand loyalty (Burmamann & König, 2011). An open

environment also facilitates community spirit, supports knowledge transmission, improves and supports internal communication, and increases brand loyalty (King, 2010). A strong organizational culture that achieves high levels of employees' loyalty to the brand will realize motivated employees, high job satisfaction rates, and high productivity levels (Bellou, 2010; Eskildsen, Kristensen, & Antvor, 2010).

Delivery of brand promise. Uçanok (2009) proposed that a prerequisite of a successful IB program is the alignment of IB and EB values so that employees better understand the complete corporate brand effort. The result is that employees will be more informed on how to deliver the brand promise (Burmam et al., 2008; Green, 2008; King & Grace, 2008). The corporate brand is meant to give employees a way to connect with or find relevance in the organization, motivate them to work as a team, develop organizational commitment, and live the brand promise (Green, 2008; Murray & Efendioglu, 2007).

The more that individual employees' values are different from the organization's brand values, the greater is the likelihood that the employees will experience dissonance toward the organization (Pollitt, 2008). This dissonance could result in decreased job satisfaction and lower morale that would see employees failing to deliver the organization's brand promise (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2008). Dahlgaard-Park (2012) cautioned that organizations that overlook the importance of core values in their IB efforts will experience adverse effects relevant to employees' attitudes, behaviors, and commitment.

Delivery of the brand promise is difficult to achieve in the service industry (Pinar et al., 2016; Punjaisri et al., 2008). The potential for failure is high because different employees must deliver quality service that stays true to the brand promise within the entire service chain (P. Harris, 2007; Punjaisri et al., 2009; Schallehn, Burmann, & Riley, 2014). Successful brand promise delivery in the service industry is a long-term brand value commitment by all employees in the service chain who interact with customers. It is dependent on a collective pool of committed employees (King, So, & Grace, 2014).

Brand-Supporting Behaviors and Brand Orientation

Brand orientation is a term that uses a market orientation concept (Urde et al., 2013). Urde et al. (2013) viewed brand orientation as a more appropriate concept than market orientation to achieve market leadership because of the greater strategic importance that it attaches to brands. Brand orientation is an inside-out approach and should be guided by the vision, mission, and values of an organization to foster brand-supporting behaviors among its employees (Urde et al., 2013). Brand-supporting behaviors can be strengthened when an organization embraces the brand at a cultural level and uses corporate values as a compass for decision making and the development of brand promises (Evans, Bridson, & Rentschler, 2012).

Situational Factors

The SLT posits that people learn by observing and wanting to emulate the behaviors of others, particularly role models (Bandura, 2002). Role models inspire and empower employees to emulate their role models' behaviors and make decisions that are consistent with the corporate brand vision (Devasagayam et al., 2010; Mosley, 2007).

According to the SLT (Bandura, 2002), there are differences between people as individuals and people as members of a group. Most individuals conform to group norms and develop their identities through social identity, a process that is usually more powerful than individual identity. Korte (2007) stated that socialization training at work contributes to the development of group identity by increasing individuals' assimilation into the organization. Trainers must address the frame of reference from the differences stemming from the identities of the group and attend to the readiness of group members to learn before they deliver any training (Korte, 2007).

Relationships With Colleagues and Leaders

Internal work relationships are an important dynamic of productive work environments (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Many situational factors pose a challenge for IB efforts. Cohesive relationships in organizations are a major goal for IB programs because the comfort levels among peers and managers contribute to employees' commitment level, production level, and intention to stay (Carter et al., 2013; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Employment length, absenteeism rates, collaboration rates, and innovation are influenced by the strength of the value congruence between employees and managers (Leblebici, 2012).

Implementation of core values is a top-down approach. Senior managers and leaders need to model the company's core values in their professional daily routine as an example to their employees (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011). When an organization communicates its values to employees through diverse means, the organization maximizes employees' identification with the organizational culture, their managers and

their peers (Green, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Visible and collective values result in mutual trust between leaders and employees, and they maximize employee satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment (Dahlgard-Park, 2012). Matta, Scott, Kloopman, and Conlon (2015) stated that to ensure a healthy work environment, leaders and subordinates must reach consensus in transactional roles, expectations, behaviors, and resource exchanges.

Personal beliefs and convictions between employees can and will be different, so workplace clashes between personal values and corporate values will occur sporadically (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2008; Huang, 2005). IB efforts are meant to minimize the number of times that personal and corporate values clash. Personal values must be congruent with corporate core values, even though the personnel pool might reflect a diverse spectrum of personal beliefs (Muafi, 2009). It is important that companies adopt a top-down approach to develop IB strategies (King et al., 2012). Training senior management to engage in and live the brand promise is meant to build trust, create an emotional connection with employees, and develop visible examples of brand ambassadorship (Burmamann & König, 2011; Green, 2013).

Personal Variables

Age and level of education can impact employees' understanding of corporate values, brand, and brand promise delivery (Hur & Alder, 2011). Younger and degree-holding employees are better able to display more positive attitudes toward the corporate brand (Hur & Adler, 2011). Personal variables present challenges to implementing successful IB programs because of their significant variability in the workforce (Punjaisri et al., 2008).

Punjaisri et al. (2008) found in their study that age and education level affected employees' loyalty to the brand, as expressed in their intention to stay and their commitment to deliver the brand promise. They also reported that employees under the age of 30 years and who hold university degrees are more likely to leave their jobs for opportunities to advance their careers. Employees who intend to stay at their jobs are typically over the age of 30 years, are more loyal to the corporate brand, and are more willing to deliver the brand promise as instructed (Punjaisri et al., 2008).

Influence of Current Variables

IB has been defined as a holistic concept (Burmam et al., 2007). For the operationalization and integration of IB to be successful, it must be incorporated into all aspects of the business (Mahnert & Torres, 2007; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). M'zungu et al., (2010) stated that IB can be viewed as a humanized approach to help employees to identify with the brand vision. Burmann and Zeplin (2005) developed a conceptual framework with three broad themes: IB mechanisms, situational factors, and outcomes. The framework was further developed by Punjaisri et al. (2008).

Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) then empirically tested the model and concluded that to be implemented successfully, IB programs should harness corporate marketing, HR, and other disciplinary departments such as communications and training. Punjaisri and Wilson did not suggest how such coordination could be achieved or its limitations. Punjaisri and Wilson's research was based on the opinions of employees working in customer interface. However, King (2010), along with King and Grace (2008), asserted that employees often do not have much understanding of the benefits of IB.

Summary and Transition

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to IB and its successful implementation. There has been a significant amount of research on IB, but research on the application of IB strategies in the hospitality industry has been limited. Four main themes were identified in the literature review: IB mechanisms, IB effects on employees, situational factors, and personal variables. Within these main themes, nine variables were defined and discussed: internal communication, training, brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty, delivered brand promise, relationships among colleagues and leaders, age, and education level.

Service organizations benefit when employees deliver on a company's brand promise. A significant amount and diverse group of employees are responsible for the total service-chain that customers' experience. Further, the overall customer satisfaction level is dependent upon each employee living the company brand as directed by the organization.

Chapter 3 describes the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the transcribed interview responses and explains the research design, setting and sample, instrument, interviews, researcher qualifications, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and provides insight into the relationship of the framework to the IB process (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Chapter 5 discusses the findings and offers alternative explanations of the results.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to assess the effectiveness of corporate training designs in instilling IB corporate values into global employees of a multinational hotel chain. This chapter details the research design, data limitations, setting and sample, instrument, interviews, researcher qualifications, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The problem addressed in this study was the challenge that the HR department of a luxury hotel chain based in Europe faced in designing and delivering effective IB programs meant to develop motivated, committed, and loyal employees.

Research Design

Creswell (2009) stated that a phenomenological approach is best suited to understand individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon to develop practices or policies or to develop a deeper understanding of the features of the phenomenon. This approach is useful when designing a study to focus on individuals' descriptions of their lived experiences (Saunders et al., 2009) of the phenomenon, which in the current study was the company's IB training program. The research design required use of the simplified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to generate textual and structured descriptions to capture the essence of IB from an HR perspective (Moustakas, 1994). This design facilitated an in-depth investigation of the processes developed and implemented at a multinational luxury hotel chain. Specifically, I investigated and reported on the ways a European luxury hotel group used an IB training program to embed its corporate core values within its global employee base. Data were collected

during 2014 and 2015 after I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval #04-01-14-0127605) to conduct the study.

Setting and Sample

I used purposeful sampling to identify and select a hotel brand that instituted an IB program to promote its corporate values throughout its chain of branded properties. The hotel chain represented an excellent setting to conduct a theory-based study because the hotel's executive leadership planned and implemented an IB effort in coordination with newly established IB and EB values. The hotel chain that was the focus of this study is a European luxury (5-star) hotel brand headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It has 76 hotels in Europe, the Asia Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 22 staff members, primarily HR specialists and trainers, as well as one communications, one marketing, and one talent management specialist (see Appendix A). Table 1 provides a demographics breakout of the participants. The vice presidents of training, communications, and talent management were from the corporate head office in Geneva, Switzerland ($n = 7$); the other trainers and HR personnel were selected from hotels in Europe, Africa, and the Far East ($n = 15$). Eighteen of the participants were women; four were men. This sample size was comparable to the sample sizes of similar studies (Burmamann & König, 2011; Snell & White, 2009; Wagner & Peters, 2009).

Table 1

Demographic Breakout of the Participants

Position	Based	Nationality	Gender
Vice president training	Geneva	German	Female
Director of internal communications	Geneva	Japanese	Female
Corporate director of marketing and branding	Geneva	German	Female
Director of talent development	Geneva	South African	Male
Director of research and organizational planning	Geneva	Dutch	Female
Corporate communications manager	Geneva	German	Female
Corporate director of training	Geneva	British	Male
Trainers and HR managers	Europe, Middle East, China, and Africa	Varied	13 females; 2 males

The 22 interviews were conducted over 4 months. Data from one interview were lost because the interview did not record properly on Skype. I conducted the face-to-face interviews at the corporate head office in Geneva, Switzerland, and the other interviews through Skype. The procedure is detailed on the informed consent form. A list of the participants and the cities and countries where they were working at the time of the study is presented in Appendix B.

Research Questions

I conducted this study to assess whether a standardized corporate IB training program was effective across different cultural locations in changing employees' perception of the company's core values. The two PRQs and five SRQs were based on Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) IB process framework. All seven questions also served as the interview questions.

Primary Research Questions

PRQ1: How does an international hotel organization benefit from an IB program?

PRQ2: How does commitment to core values help an organization?

Secondary Research Questions

SRQ1: How do the trainers rate the various training materials used to gain organizational commitment to the core values?

SRQ2: What do the trainers think of the training materials used, and do they enable the trainees to identify with the core values?

SRQ3: What cultural factors affect the choice of training materials used?

SRQ4: How effective is the transfer of the content of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors?

SRQ5: How do employees rate the training materials used? What is the effect of the training materials on employees' perceptions of corporate core values?

Interviews

The in-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted with individuals involved with the implementation of the IB program. I conducted a total 23 interviews of HR professionals, some face-to-face in Europe and through Skype in other countries. The Skype interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. One recording was lost because of a malfunction in Skype, bringing the total number of recorded interviews down to 22. The PRQs and the SRQs, which also were the interview questions, were developed using Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) model to find out how core values developed in Europe could be transferred to the various continents and cultures where the company operates.

A small number of participants from the corporate head office in Geneva, Switzerland, could not answer some of the questions about the training materials used

because they were mainly HR specialists who were not involved in delivering training to frontline employees. I prepared an outline of the critical topics as a guide, and I asked a series of open-ended questions sequentially to ensure that all topics, including, but not limited to, internal communication, training, branding, relationships, and personal variables, were covered.

To answer the two PRQs and five SRQs comprehensively, I collected authentic information from the participants (Creswell, 2013). The validity of the interview process was dependent on my ability to be unbiased and objective (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing ensured that the research process was “rooted solely on the topic and question under investigation and the bracketing provides an epoch, a new way of looking at things ... distinguish and describe what is seen” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). I tried to remain aware of researcher bias to ensure that it would not interfere with the intended meanings of the participants’ responses.

Some connection problems were experienced because of connectivity issues using Skype. I had recommended 20 interviews in the study proposal, and 22 were achieved. The interviews varied in length from 20 to 50 minutes. I stored the audio recordings of interview responses on a hard drive and a jump drive. I then transcribed the responses and stored them in a locked file cabinet at the corporate head office on the same devices. I then forwarded the transcriptions to the interviewees as part of the member-checking process.

Researcher Qualifications

Creswell (2013) stated that the role of a qualitative researcher is to collect data on the issue or the problem that the participants have experienced. Moustakas (1994) stated that a qualitative researcher should ask two broad questions: (a) What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and (b) What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? My profile fit the questions under investigation, and I was passionate about the study. My experience relevant to the topic of research includes 40 years in a professional HR management career. In addition, I hold a master's degree in management. Because my previous experience in HR management and education could have been a source of personal bias, I established procedures in the methodology that were meant to limit any researcher bias.

Data Analysis

I chose the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to analyze the data because it has systematic steps in its procedures and guidelines for analyzing textual and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013). Prior to data collection, I practiced epoche (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). This technique allows researchers to describe their own experiences and increase their alertness of any underlying feelings about the research topic. Researchers should then be able to relinquish biases and look at the topics from clear perspectives (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). In this method, it is important that researchers have experienced the same phenomenon so that their experiences and the participants' experiences can connect. Eventually, everyone in

such studies can describe the same phenomenon from different perspectives (Moustakas, 1994).

I analyzed the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combining the statements into themes (Creswell, 2009). I then developed textual descriptions of what the participants experienced and structural descriptions of their experiences in terms of the conditions or situations of the IB training program. Creswell (2013) stated that the process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories is known as the constant comparative method of data analysis. Construct, internal, and external validity were considered, along with reliability of the data.

I used the constant comparative method to analyze the data. NVivo v.11, a data management tool used primarily for nonnumeric unstructured data indexing, was the primary data management tool. Patton (2002) stated, “Qualitative software programs facilitate data storage, coding, retrieval, comparing, and linking, but human beings do the analysis” (p. 442). Using a qualitative software package such as NVivo v.11 allowed me to create an audit of the data analysis process. Merriam (2009) stated that in qualitative research, “Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data” (p. 173).

NVivo v.11 can node and code data collection methods; I used these methods to node and code the interviews. A *node* is a term used by NVivo v.11 to represent a code, a theme, or an idea about the data to be included in the analysis. I coded the data by theme

and category detailed in each PRQ during and after data collection. I followed a constant comparative method using NVivo v.11 to code the transcriptions and achieve data saturation. Data saturation was reached when the interviews failed to provide new information. I used open coding and axial coding to analyze the themes and categories to identify anticipated and unanticipated themes (Creswell, 2013). The coding included 212 sources and 973 references that identified 17 nodes. I used these 17 nodes to identify five themes. Four main themes represented the study's theoretical model; one additional theme was identified later.

Ethical Considerations

I maintained the anonymity of the identities of all interviewees, and all participants signed the informed consent, as required by the IRB, before engaging in the interviews. I also signed a confidentiality agreement with the company to ensure that the data were protected. Ensuring and guarding the participants' rights were of paramount concern to me. The consent form included information regarding confidentiality and the storage of interview data. The form also included the name of someone at Walden University whom the participants could contact in case they had questions or concerns during or after the study. The interviews were recorded, and all participants were notified of this protocol in the confidentiality agreement. None of the participants had any issue with being recorded during the interviews. I stored all electronic data on a password-protected hard drive and all paper documents in a locked file cabinet in the company's corporate head office. I will destroy all data, electronic and paper, 5 years after completion of the study.

Summary and Transition

In this chapter, I presented the research design, data limitations, setting and sample, instrument, interviews, researcher qualifications, data analysis, and ethical considerations. This study involved a phenomenological approach to focus on the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences. The results cannot be generalized beyond the company studied; however, in-depth insight can be gathered from the study regarding future research on the planning and implementation of corporate IB efforts.

Twenty-two interviews with HR personnel and trainers were completed via face-to-face meetings and Skype software. These leaders were the key individuals responsible for the design, delivery, and assessment of the corporate IB program. The data collection and analysis revealed similarities to the major themes relevant to the IB framework discussed in the literature review.

The 22 participants provided information on how cultural factors affected their implementation of IB training in the hotel industry. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, the themes and subthemes, and the participants' words to support ways to ensure the successful implementation of an IB program. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings and alternative explanations of the results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings regarding implementation of an IB training program by a multinational European luxury hotel chain. The qualitative analyses of the interviews conducted with HR personnel and trainers reflected the answers to the interview questions. Information gathered during the review of the implementation of IB training in the hotel industry is included in the following analysis.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to assess whether a standardized corporate IB training program was effective across different cultural locations in changing employees' perception of the company's core values. The two PRQs and five SRQs that guided the study were as follows:

PRQ1: How does an international hotel organization benefit from an IB program?

PRQ2: How does commitment to core values help an organization?

SRQ1: How do the trainers rate the various training materials used to gain organizational commitment to the core values?

SRQ2: What do the trainers think of the training materials used, and do they enable the trainees to identify with the core values?

SRQ3: What cultural factors affect the choice of training materials used?

SRQ4: How effective is the transfer of the content of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors?

SRQ5: How do employees rate the training materials used? What is the effect of the training materials on employees' perceptions of corporate core values?

Findings

Analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions illustrated the ways the company implemented an IB process in its hotels around the world and how the hotel's training programs influenced its employees. Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) IB process framework formed the basis of the analysis of the interview responses. I referred to the model parameters while transcribing and coding the participants' interview responses. Consistent with Punjaisri et al.'s model, the analysis yielded three broad themes: IB mechanisms, IB outcomes, and moderating factors. The effects of the IB mechanisms on the IB outcomes were moderated by personal factors (i.e., age and education) and situational factors (i.e., relationships with colleagues and leaders). One additional theme critical to the company's IB efforts was the perception of the company leaders as playing a significant role in influencing the IB process and its success. In addition, some subthemes of the major themes were identified.

Theme 1: IB Mechanisms

IB mechanisms were mentioned by 18 of the 22 (81.8%) participants. Two major subthemes emerged: internal communication and training programs. Some of the participants thought that these two factors were important for IB to be implemented successfully. Both subthemes were perceived as critical IB mechanisms. Following are descriptions of the two subthemes and quotations from the participants supporting the subthemes.

Internal communication subtheme. Punjaisri et al. (2008) noted that internal communications and training programs fall under the theme of IB mechanisms. Both

internal communication and training programs were perceived as key IB mechanisms. The effects of these mechanisms on the expected outcomes were moderated by personal variables and situational factors. Research by Punjaisri et al. revealed that all 30 participants in their study agreed that face-to-face communication was an important factor in an IB program.

In my study, only eight of the 22 (36.4%) participants considered internal communication an important subtheme. Kaurav, Paul, and Chowdhary (2015) recently reported that coordinating and integrating communication strategies meant to improve organizational systems would be helpful in providing the proper procedures or guidelines to employees so that they can respond to organizational changes. Internal communication was considered an instrument that gave employees critical information about the brand. Internal communication, although picked up by only eight participants, was thought to be integral to IB.

Participant 5 said, “I think it’s very important for, already on the corporate structure, for the brand itself to understand who you are and what you stand for, what your communication is externally, but also internally.”

Internal communication provided employees with essential strategic information that gave them confidence and motivated them to follow the brand standards and deliver on the brand promise. Results of the empirical study by Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) suggested a potential synergy between internal communications (marketing) and training programs (HR). They concluded that internal communication and training had a

statistically significant impact on employees' brand-supporting behaviors, although the effect of the former was stronger.

Training programs subtheme. The importance of training programs was mentioned by 18 of the 22 (81.8%) participants. A variety of training courses were regarded as coaching and education about the precise attitudes and behaviors necessary to deliver the brand promise.

Participant 2 explained:

I think this is one of the training programs, which has an immediate, or maybe the most immediate effect, on changing behavior. Of course, also the programs are there, so you want to change attitude, of behavior, knowledge, or skills, but in this kind of training, you basically ensure people that we share the same values in this company as basically you do.

Corporate training programs were perceived as being pivotal to changing employees' attitudes and behaviors. The programs could be adapted by the trainers to suit the cultures, ages, and educational backgrounds of the employees so that they could engage in the core values and deliver the brand promise.

A number of IB training tools were identified, such as the company's DNA and storytelling. The importance of storytelling was mentioned by eight of the 22 (36.4%) participants; four of the 22 (18.2%) participants referred to the company's DNA.

Storytelling was considered an integral part of the training package, and it was used by the trainers as a way to communicate the core values in different cultures. Most cultures

around the world have fairy tales, and in cultures such as China and parts of Africa, it can be an effective tool in communicating certain messages.

Participant 6 responded:

Well, with the training material we have for the DNA, all the training managers are free to adapt to the local needs, and this makes it easier to gain the organizational commitment because you can focus on your property, as well. The material is good for a start-up, but everybody can adapt to the local need. The training managers change the original training material according to their needs. I won't say all, but I know a few.

Storytelling made the hotel chain's corporate values easier to explain and easier to relate to the DNA, especially in the Middle East, China, and Africa, as mentioned in the literature review (Gill, 2011). Sole and Wilson (2002) confirmed this assertion, stating that storytelling through training programs is one method that "conveys norms and values across generations within the workforce" (p. 3).

Summary. The personnel involved in organizing and delivering the IB program gave a clear indication of how important communication and training were in consistently communicating the core values and providing the right type of training to employees. Eighteen of the 22 (81.8%) participants noted that trainers should adapt the training materials to the cultures and educational levels of the employees. Both internal communication and training programs needed to be coherently orchestrated to disseminate consistent brand messages across employees. Storytelling was mentioned as a popular way of getting the core values across in some cultures. Although it was

mentioned by only eight of the 22 participants (36.4%), storytelling was a preferred way of engaging employees and making them more comfortable and more willing to participate in the training sessions.

Theme 2: IB Effects on Employees

All 22 participants (100%) recognized the need for IB to be in place so that it could help employees to understand the brand and deliver the brand as expected by the customers. Results indicated that IB affected employees attitudinally and behaviorally. Following is information about the six subthemes that emerged from Theme 2: brand-supporting attitudes, brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty, brand-supporting behavior, and delivered brand promise.

Brand-supporting attitudes subtheme. All 22 participants (100%) regarded brand-supporting attitudes as an important factor driving employees' brand-supporting behaviors. Some participants discussed the link between employees' positive attitudes and their brand-supporting behaviors. When employees identified themselves with the brand, it was more likely that they would deliver on the brand promise.

Participant 16 stated:

This is already done above. I think, first and foremost, that branding helps in creating some awareness of the brand amongst the staff, which ensures that there is purpose. So, everybody knows about the brand, everybody is made aware of what the brand is all about, what it stands for, the brand promise, and everybody is focused on delivering the brand promise, so that, for me, I think is the number

one thing. Then it also helps in engaging the staff just for people knowing that they are working for this brand and having that one identity.

This participant saw brand-supporting attitudes and behavior as important prerequisites in identifying with the brand and core values. Some participants even mentioned that value congruence should be determined in the selection process.

Brand identification subtheme. Seventeen of the 22 (77.3%) participants considered brand identification an important element in understanding the company's core values and associating with the brand. IB was considered important because it enhanced employees' sense of pride in belonging to the brand (brand identification). They considered IB essential to improving their skills and capabilities to meet customers' expectations. Their confidence allowed the employees to fulfill the brand promise.

Participant 3 stated:

People mention the core values, when I talk to people at the hotels, or when I visit the hotels, they always mention the values; you always see posters and things like this hanging in the back-of-house. I think it's just a way of bringing the core values sort of to the forefront of the mind when they're working with guests.

Participants agreed that identifying with the IB training program and materials was important in reinforcing the delivered brand promise to the customers. They felt that having materials about the core values on display helped the employees to identify with the company's culture.

Brand commitment subtheme. Brand commitment was considered an important variable in connecting with the corporate core values. Of the 22 participants, 12 (54.5%)

regarded brand commitment as important and believed that with delivery of the appropriate training, it could be reinforced with employees.

Participant 4 remarked:

I think the values are good, and I think commitment helps especially with those values. Yes, definitely. I mean, if you look at the core values, and yes they are good, then definitely it helps deliver what [the hotel chain] is trying to achieve. Also, if the interaction between employees is done by proper training by our core values, because I think then a lot of things would go smoother within employee interactions, and then they stay longer, etc. So I definitely do believe that commitment to those values helps, but I think you shouldn't go too much over the top, it has to be a little more subtle, let's say, because otherwise, they might get annoyed with it and just hearing about it makes them go like, oh, not again, and it achieves exactly the opposite. A good training program done in a supportive way, but not too over the top, will engage employees to the core values and help strengthen employees' commitment to the brand. They don't like being indoctrinated with constant reminders of the core values.

Brand commitment was expressed as important by some participants because it enhanced loyalty to the core values and the delivery of the brand promise, both of which could only be done through proper training. Some participants stated that storytelling worked well in some cultures to help to engage employees with the core values.

Brand loyalty subtheme. Although the hotel industry is characterized by high staff turnovers, only five of the 22 (22.7%) participants believed that brand loyalty was an important factor in understanding the company's core values and living the brand.

Participant 3 stated:

From what I've seen from all of the activities that we've done that are corporate-culture-related in some way, it helps increase loyalty to the brand amongst the employees, especially in places like China, where employee loyalty is a little bit difficult to achieve.

Brand loyalty had an impact on the employees' commitment and intention to stay with the company. The statement made by Participant 3 supported the view that even in countries where there is high turnover, identification with the company's core values helped to promote brand loyalty. This statement also could raise concerns whether the concept of brand loyalty could be of value when applied within the Western hemisphere, especially in the Asian context. Therefore, this study set out to understand IB from the HR perspective within the hotel industry in Europe and the Eastern hemisphere.

It should be acknowledged that different Asian countries have diverse culture-specific issues (Hofstede, 2001). According to Hofstede (2001), there are some significant differences among Asian, North American, and European cultures. For example, one of the four dimensions of Hofstede's schema, that is, individualism versus collectivism, often is used to describe Asian-Western differences. For example, Asian cultures are collectivist and have strong group orientations, whereas in Western cultures, people are individualists and are trained to be self-reliant and focus much more on

themselves (Hofstede, 2001). This dimension, which often is used to highlight the impact of culture on people's behaviors and attitudes, suggests that the traits of people from Western cultures (e.g., European countries) are different from those of people from the Eastern hemisphere (e.g., the Middle East). The dimension also provides insight into how IB should be practiced, the outcomes that management can expect, and the factors that can interfere with the success of IB campaigns.

Brand-supporting behavior subtheme. Of the 22 participants, 14 (63.6%) considered brand-supporting behavior important. Participants indicated that standardization of the core values had to be emphasized in the training materials and delivered in a way that would ensure that employees understood and would act accordingly to deliver the brand promise. It also was emphasized that selecting employees with the right behaviors was critical for them to engage positively with the organizational culture. Participants also stated that this value congruence was an important factor in engagement and behaviors supporting the core values and the brand, and delivering the brand promise to customers. Results showed that brand-supporting attitudes drove employees' brand-supporting behaviors.

Participant 10 commented:

So we get feedback, and what's really important is, yes, we have a set of core values, but we made sure that we took the time to interpret those values or sort of translate those values per region. Because the value doesn't change and certain behaviors don't change, but some might a little bit because if you're being straightforward in Germany, for example, you're probably behaving a little bit

differently than someone who's being straightforward in China. So I mean a German can still be straightforward in China, but they might need to change the way they behave a little bit. So we made sure to translate that into the regions, and we do ask our trainers to adapt the training material according to their needs to help people understand. It might be different activities, it might be different stories, it might be different examples. We have the DNA stories, we have regional stories that speak more to a local culture, and we have sort of general global stories, yes.

Participants noted that the IB program needed to have an element of consistency, especially in identifying with the core values; however, trainers were allowed some element of discretion in how they delivered the training.

Delivered brand promise subtheme. Nine of the 22 (41%) participants stated that delivering the brand promise was important. Despite the influences of attitudes on employees' behaviors, IB remained pivotal in providing clear guidelines on ways to deliver on the brand promise during service encounters.

Participant 18 stated:

Let me say that the most important is that guests are knowing the brand as product of quality and of good reputation. The brand delivers promises as, we use the loyalty reward program. That has a central reservation system, functional and informing people of the core values. With the brand of the hotel benefits from this know how. The support from the experts based in the corporate office, the

training-based program for role and vision and defined objectives, if that makes sense?

Delivering the brand promise to the customers played an important role in understanding and connecting employees with the core values and how they needed to behave internally.

Summary. All 22 (100%) participants mentioned that IB in some form affected them as employees. Value congruence was an extremely important factor affecting attitudes, identification, commitment, behavior, and loyalty toward the brand value. These factors had a positive effect on ensuring that employees delivered the brand promise to the customers. It also emphasized in the selection process that value congruence was an important factor in identifying potential employees who fit in with the culture of the company.

Employees needed to be engaged with the core values. Employees who could identify with the brand early on had a much greater chance of engaging with the company's core values. Employees who could engage with the core values were more likely to be happier in their jobs and stay longer with the company.

Theme 3: Personal Variables

Fifteen of the 22 (68.2%) participants stated that because of their potential influence on the success of IB programs, personal variables such as age and educational background were important moderating factors that had to be considered before delivering the training. Results reflected previous findings that age and educational background affect employees' intentions to stay with an organization, with younger

employees more likely to leave. Results did not reveal any significant relationship between attitude and behavior. Personal variables, aside from age and educational background, were mentioned by some of the participants as potential moderating factors, something to consider when preparing and delivering training programs.

Participant 13 commented:

I think when you do a train, no matter what training material it is, but especially for the DNA, for the values, you have to pay attention on the background of the people. Where do they people come from? The environment, where are they working in? The gender as well, especially when you go into [the] Middle East.

Trainers needed to be sensitive to the needs of employees, especially in regard to cultural issues, age, and educational background, when delivering the training.

Age subtheme. Some Eastern Asian cultures still a different perspective on age. In the United States and Europe, it is illegal to advertise jobs specifying age because it is considered direct discrimination. However, in some Eastern Asian cultures, it is still not a legal issue to advertise jobs specifying age.

In some cultures, especially in the Eastern hemisphere, age is considered important for several reasons, one of which is that older people are considered more experienced, especially if they have been with the company and have had various roles. Older employee also are respected by younger ones. In most Asian countries, half of their populations are under the age of 30 years.

Punjaisri et al (2008) found in their study of IB in hotels in Thailand that employees' intention to stay was tied to age, especially if they were over the age of 30

years. Younger employees with degrees stated that if opportunities for promotion were not available in the property, they were more likely to leave. Participants also noted that the training materials need to be prepared and adapted to the age levels of the employees. Some trainers mentioned that younger employees' expectations of the training materials were different from those of older employees.

Age was considered a factor in the effective delivery and understanding of IB by three of the 22 (13.6%) participants. However, implicitly, it seemed that employees who intended to stay with the brand believed that they were committed to delivering on the brand promise more than those who did not show their loyalty to the brand, as discussed in previous sections.

Participant 2 explained:

There are certain expectations from the different age levels. I wouldn't say in different departments, but based on the age levels. So under 16 years old, I don't know, an engineer has a different expectation about the training, but here then at 32 years old sales guy, but the trainer should be the connection between the material itself and its meaning and what it's meant to be about.

Educational background subtheme. Of the 22 participants, 13 (59%) referred to educational background, with some of the participants stressing the need to consider the audience and apply training materials accordingly, particularly in relation to a country's culture and values, and employee gender.

Participant 8 stated:

It depends, of course, on the nationality, on the level of education that you need to adjust your training. I mean, I had training with people who hardly spoke English, have never been to Europe, and you talk about European luxury, they have never ever been outside of their country, so you really need to adjust it and to break it down so they really can understand it. Here in Europe, I have a much higher education, and they, of course, they experience European luxury every day, so you need to put it on another so they still connect it to the company, which is also difficult. I would not say that one thing is easier and the other not, both are challenging, but you need to find the right way.

Participants believed that although hotels have employees who might be well educated, most operatives might lack some basic educational background. They also considered language a factor in comprehending and understanding training programs. Trainers needed to be sensitive to these factors.

Summary. Personal variables such as age and educational background acted as moderating factors in IB. Sixteen of the 22 (72.8%) participants mentioned these variables as important to engaging employees in the training sessions. These personal variables are important considerations in cultural situations. Some of the participants agreed that frontline trainers must consider the overall situations of employees of the property before delivering the training by not only adjusting the materials to suit the audiences but also trying to adapt and personalize materials to consider the influences of age and educational background. Brand loyalty can be affected by these personal

variables. Frontline employees who are from a different generation than younger employees might lack some basic education or language skills if they are working in different countries.

Theme 4: Situational Factors

Relationships with colleagues and leaders also acted as moderating factors in the IB program. Eight of the 22 (36.4%) participants stated that relationships with colleagues were important, and nine of the 22 (41%) participants stated that relationships with leaders were important. Some of the participants referred to relationships with colleagues and leaders as influential in their attitudes toward and delivery of the brand promise. Positive relationships with colleagues and leaders also affected employees' intentions to stay with the company and increased their brand loyalty. The impact of good relationships with employees and leaders increased the success of the IB process.

Eight of the 22 (36.4%) participants stated that having good relationships with company leaders was an important factor in delivering the brand promise. Nine of the 22 (41%) participants believed that these relationships could influence employees' attitudes and performance in delivering the brand promise. Being comfortable with and supportive of colleagues created a positive environment that enhanced employees' performance in delivering the brand promise. These factors highlighted the importance of positive internal relationships.

Relationships with colleagues and leaders subtheme. Eight of the 22 (36.4%) participants stated that having good relationships with colleagues was important. They

responded positively that these relationships encouraged appropriate behavior among the employees.

Participant 2 stated:

On the other hand, employees just realized that basically, what is expected from them is used on a daily basis by the supervisor, by the manager, by the general manager, by the corporate office people, and so on, and so on, and so on. So it helps immediately this feeling that I belong to a company, I belong to a family, which is very similar to I am.

If there was a good working environment, along with positive engagement with colleagues and managers, then employees felt comfortable and were consistent in delivering the brand promise. The relationships that employees had with company leaders were found to impact the success of the IB process. Nine of the 22 (41%) participants expressed having positive perceptions of their relationships with the company's leaders.

Summary. These variables emphasized that relationships with colleagues and leaders are important in demonstrating how to associate with the company's core values on a daily basis, and how to deliver the brand promise to customers. However, the results did not explicitly identify the effects of these personal variables on other attitudes and behaviors. Having a good working environment encourages dialogue with colleagues and leaders, and emphasizes how to engage with the core values. Therefore, having a transparent workplace culture that makes employees feel more welcome will encourage empathy and engagement with the company. Positive internal relationships improve employee engagement.

Additional Theme: Leadership

Participants agreed that company leaders had to be committed to the IB program. As mentioned previously, Bandura's (1977) SLT can help employees to emulate the actions of their leaders. The positive framework of the IB process (Punjaisri et al., 2008) did not mention that a commitment from leaders would ensure the success of an IB program; rather, it mentioned that only a positive relationship with employees can increase the potential successful implementation of an IB program. Kunerth and Mosley (2011) stated that implementation of core values at all levels of the company requires that senior leaders and managers model these core values in their professional daily routine as an example to employees. Visible and collective values result in mutual trust between employers and employees, and they can maximize employee satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment (Dahlgaard-Park, 2012). Seven of the 22 (31.8%) participants mentioned that the commitment of leaders to the IB process was important in ensuring that employees received the appropriate training. Top management support was identified by some participants as important in having an effective relationship in delivering the training. Schein (2008) stated, "It can be argued that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture" (p. 363) and that "what distinguishes leadership from management is that leaders create and change culture" (p. 365).

Participant 22 commented:

In Africa, probably people in China said the same, I suppose, a lot of HoDs [heads of departments] this is the point where they stop, where they've said, "Well, I'm

happy if they do already...” this is how they say it, “I’m happy if they do what they’re supposed to do, I don’t want them to do - give them freedom that might be abused not to do what I want them to do.” So for the HoDs, when we speak about effectiveness, it is really to convince them to, of course, within the boundaries of the local context, to give people the freedom that they are supposed to have in order to follow the DNA. It is very, yes, it is effective.

Participants expressed the belief that commitment from leaders and managers was paramount to the success of the IB training program and that without this commitment, the IB would fail.

Summary. Seven of the 22 (31.8%) participants stated that leaders should show their commitment to and provide meaningful examples of how to live the brand through the core values. These actions could have a positive effect on employees through SLT. Some participants stated that ongoing training on the core values was needed so that employees would be able to reinforce the brand promise to the customers consistently.

Identified Themes and Derived Subthemes

Table 2 presents the identified themes and derived subthemes, along with the frequency count of responses and percentages for the sample. The themes that were identified corresponded with the IB process model proposed by Punjaisri et al. (2008) presented in Figure 1. The five main themes were IB Mechanisms, IB Effects on Employees, Personal Variables, Situational Factors, and Leadership.

Table 2

Compilation of Identified Themes and Derived Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	#	%
IB mechanisms	Internal communications	8	36.4%
	Training	18	81.8%
IB effects on employees	Brand-supporting attitudes	22	100.0%
	Brand identification	17	77.3%
	Brand commitment	12	54.5%
	Brand loyalty	5	22.7%
	Brand-supporting behaviors	14	63.6%
	Delivered brand promise	9	41.0%
Personal variables	Age	3	13.6%
	Educational background	13	59.0%
Situational factors	Relationship with colleagues	8	36.4%
	Relationship with leaders	9	41.0%
Leadership		7	32.0%

Relationship of Themes to the Research Questions

Two PRQs and five SRQs guided this qualitative study. The following details explain how the identified themes related to them. The two PRQs were general questions that addressed how the participants viewed the company's IB program and how the two PRQs related to the core values. The responses were coded using NVivo v.11 and then added to the themes in the model. The same procedure was used for the SRQs but these questions were more specific to the trainers and the training material used to connect the employees with the core values. The participants also responded to cultural issues in both the PRQs and the SRQs.

Primary Research Questions

PRQ1: How does an international hotel organization benefit from an IB program?

All 22 participants (100%) reacted positively to this question, stating that an IB program that has standardized core values benefits the whole organization.

Participant 1 remarked:

That's a big, big, big, big question. It depends what you, first of all, how you can see it's an internal branding: It's to standardize as well, in order to standardize the internal operations or standardizing attitudes, or is it something; do you want to create to an organizational culture? It depends which perspective you are taking. [The hotel chain] is doing this as well in order to standardize because all hotels are completely different from one another.

Organizational culture and core values were important factors in trying to understand and implement an IB program across a diverse workforce in an international company. The themes tied to PRQ1 were IB Mechanisms (subtheme of training) and IB Effects on Employees (subtheme of brand-supporting attitudes).

PRQ2: How does commitment to core values help an organization? All 22 participants (100%) stated that commitment to the core values was essential in understanding them, how they engaged employees with the brand, and how brand loyalty translated into delivering the brand promise.

Participant 20 stated:

There's a human aspect to making a commitment, and that is a part of our process when we're implementing our culture explicitly to, again, explicitly state what are our values. These are all kinds of behaviors that are associated with it, so you can imagine and extrapolate what other behaviors would be also be appropriate. But we do expect staff to make a formal commitment to these behaviors and to something specific that they can do, and this formal moment of commitment is

actually really important because it solidifies, if you like, in the employees mind the importance of acting according to these values in their professional life.

Employees who were engaged were more likely to demonstrate commitment to the brand and core values. Employees also had to express certain behaviors in the workplace that were appropriate. The theme tied to PRQ2 was IB Effects on Employees (subthemes of brand-supporting attitudes, brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty).

Secondary Research Questions

SRQ1: How do the trainers rate the various training materials used to gain organizational commitment to the core values? Twenty of the 22 (91%) participants responded positively to this question; two participants who were not trainers from the corporate head office in Geneva did not respond to this question because they were not involved in delivering the training. Experienced trainers adapted the training materials to suit the employees' personal variables and cultural backgrounds.

Participant 3 explained:

The effect of the training materials on employees' perceptions of the core values?

Well, I think that's what the training materials are supposed to do. I don't think the core values are something that the employees wouldn't have experienced outside of [the hotel chain] because I think the core values have a lot to do with hospitality. They have a lot to do with personality, as well.

Even though the training materials were standardized and reflected European core values, some trainers adapted them to suit the situations and local needs. The theme tied

to SRQ1 were IB Mechanisms (subtheme of training) and Personal Variables (subtheme of Relationship with colleagues and leaders).

SRQ2: What do the trainers think of the training materials used, and do they enable the trainees to identify with the core values? Twenty-one of the 22 (95%) participants responded to this question; one person from the corporate head office in Geneva did not answer the question because the individual was not involved in delivering the training. As already mentioned, trainers could modify the training materials to implement the company's core values in the IB program.

Participant 8 stated:

Yes. Well, for me, the package is - I'm now here with the company for 5 years. I think I was part of experiencing how the company grows and how the training part gets developed, so the packages are for me pretty clear. I understand what we have and what we can use in special situations. I also know that the package needs to be communicated clearly and very clearly and strongly towards new training managers, because we really have much more material - well, actually a lot of material - and it's really important to guide the new training managers. For me, it's easy access, easy understanding. I know why we are doing things, but it's important for newcomers to make sure that they get a proper understanding of how to use the material.

The more experienced trainers were familiar with the training materials and knew how to adapt them and make an impact in the training sessions. There was a choice of materials that they could use. The themes tied to SRQ2 were IB Mechanisms (subthemes

of internal communication and training) and Situational Factors (subtheme relationship with colleagues and leaders).

SRQ3: What cultural factors affect the choice of training materials used? Cultural factors played a crucial role in the use of training materials. A total of 21 of the 22 (95.4%) participants responded to this question, one person from the corporate head office in Geneva did not answer the question for the same reason mentioned earlier. As mentioned previously, the trainers could modify the training materials to implement the core values in the IB program.

Participant 2 said:

Exactly, exactly. Actually, this is something that is a good question, because in regards to the cultural background, you somehow need to adapt somehow some training material; this is very important. For example, in the Middle East also, they have sometimes very different approach in regards to behavioral trainings, right? We here in Europe, we have much more education as we have an apprenticeship system, so people get really a lot of knowledge within that apprenticeship; this is something that we can benefit from here in Europe. So I need to make sure, if I have a look at training material, that it fits our knowledge because our employees are really pretty well educated already, due to the fact that they have received an education in the background. So for me, it's very important in the German culture, and especially in the European culture, that we come really straight to the point. Especially in the German culture, I think - this is my experience, let's say it like this - we really need to make sure that there's a strong

goal, clearly described in the training what the intention of the training is. So I make sure that we have a clear structure in the material, and sometimes are certainly cut due to the fact that I know that the experience is already there.

Cultural issues presented a challenge to the participants, especially for those who had worked in different countries. They learned very quickly to adapt the training materials. The themes tied to SRQ3 were IB Mechanisms (subthemes of internal communications and training) and IB Effects on Employees (subthemes of brand-supporting attitudes, brand identification, and brand loyalty).

SRQ4: How effective is the transfer of the content of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors? Twenty-one of the 22 (95.4%) participants responded to this question; one person from the corporate head office in Geneva did not answer the question. As mentioned previously, the trainers could modify the training materials to implement the core values in the IB program.

Participant 16 stated:

Definitely. You know, I recently stated, as I said, as I mentioned before, that people learn a lot from visual, and I truly believe in that. I definitely saw a big change since we started in the autocues for people and people learn from visual, as I said, and the more it is attractive, interactive, the better they will learn.

Practices in the class always help them to understand the message that we deliver.

And anyway, this proven that we capture 90% of the people attention in training them. But I definitely saw a big change in their attitude here because it is not in their culture to, for example, smile to, for example, say, "good morning, how are

you?” so there’s definitely a big change and it influences a lot and thank god we have a training department here.

Adapting the training materials to the employees’ personal variables had a big impact on the success rate and the transfer of the content of the training materials. The theme tied to SRQ4 was IB Effects on Employees (subthemes of brand-supporting attitudes, brand commitment, brand loyalty, brand-supporting behavior, and delivered brand promise).

SRQ5: How do employees rate the training materials used? What is the effect of the training materials on employees’ perceptions of corporate core values? Twenty of the 22 (91%) participants responded to this question; two participants from the corporate head office in Geneva could not answer the question because they were not involved in delivering the training. As mentioned previously, the trainers could modify the training materials to implement the core values in the IB program. Most of the trainers had positive comments about employees’ perceptions of the core values.

Participant 13 remarked:

As all our training are well prepared; very well organized; and, I hope, well delivered, too, while enhancing our values here. The feedback forms that I have put in place here, that we do have in [the hotel chain’s] training, I do capture 98% satisfaction of training, so yes, definitely, yes, it’s excellent. You know, I was working for a French group before called Sofitel. That was a French brand, and I can really say that there is a whole difference from their style of training and their core values. There’s a lot we can say about it because here, the training really

enhances the value of people, of what people can bring to the client, and I think that's the most important because [the hotel chain] really touches on – how do I explain this – unless the people themselves understand who they are, what they should do, they wouldn't be able to deliver the service, and I think the good thing here is [the hotel chain] have really touched on the right points on targeting people and give them the value of what is service. So, I think we're doing a great job on people organization and they are having now all the information, all the right tools to be able to deliver the goods to the service, yes.

The trainers seemed to value the training materials and that they gave a sense of purpose to the employees in understanding and connecting with the company's core values. The theme tied to SRQ5 was IB Effects on Employees (subthemes of brand-supporting behavior, brand commitment, brand loyalty, and delivered brand promise).

Summary and Transition

Chapter 4 provided detailed information explaining how I collected and analyzed the data for this qualitative study assessing the implementation of IB training in the hotel industry. A total of 22 participants from the corporate head office in Geneva, Switzerland, and other global properties were interviewed. Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) IB process framework was used to identify the themes, which were coded using NVivo v.11 software. I presented participants' response counts for derived themes and subthemes as well as supporting quotations, and then related the themes to the PRQs and SRQs. The major themes identified were IB Mechanisms, IB Outcomes, Personal Variables,

Situational Factors, and Leadership. All of the themes and subthemes were discussed in the chapter and supported by verbatim quotations from the participants.

Most participants ($n = 16$; 72.8%) touched on the theme of IB mechanisms. They emphasized that managers and leaders should encourage internal communication with various media, especially when developing material for IB training. Participants regarded training as crucial in IB programs. Some participants suggested that a variety of training courses be made available to suit employees from different cultures. All 22 participants commented on the theme of IB effects on employees. They stated that because the hotels that the company owned were different, IB had to be standardized and that the core values of the company should be identical in all hotel properties, regardless of cultural setting. The more experienced trainers had the knowledge and experience to adapt the training materials to suit the different cultural settings and audiences. This adaptability meant that the employees would be more likely to live the core values of the company and deliver the brand promise.

Fifteen participants (68.2%) mentioned the theme of personal variables. These moderating variables were considered important when delivering the training or selecting relevant training material, both of which could influence the success of the IB. Results reflected previous findings that age and educational background affect employees' intentions to stay with an organization, with younger employees more likely to leave. Brand loyalty can be affected by these personal variables.

Thirteen participants (59.1%) contemplated the theme of situational factors. These factors emphasized the importance of relationships with colleagues and leaders as touch

points in a collaborative working environment. Some participants recognized that maintaining a healthy relationship with colleagues and leaders improved dialogue and transparency, behaviors that encouraged employee engagement.

Seven participants (31.8%) considered positive and committed leadership an important factor in influencing employees' commitment to the brand. Participants agreed that company leaders had to be committed to the IB program. If leaders were seen as willing to model the core values, the result would be mutual trust, which would maximize employee satisfaction and loyalty to the brand.

Results indicated that IB enables an organization to influence employees' brand identification in terms of their sense of belonging; brand commitment; or emotional attachment; and brand loyalty, as expressed in their desire to deliver the brand promise to customers. IB could strengthen employees' relationship with the brand. Regarding the delivery of the brand promise, IB should give employees a clear understanding of the brand and its promise as one way to optimize their potential to deliver the brand promise. Consistent with the model, the results indicated that employees' brand attitudes, as influenced by IB, have an impact on their delivery of the brand promise. I recognize that employees' positive perceptions of their colleagues and leaders could enhance the effect of IB on their behaviors in delivering the brand promise. However, the effects of personal variables such as age and education, both of which have a moderating effect on IB, also should be taken into consideration.

Included in Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results, the presentation of recommendations, and an explanation of the impact of the findings on social change. The

chapter provides a systematic description of the data collection and analysis processes.

The two PRQs allowed the participants to review the IB program and describe their experiences connecting with culture and how the standardized training program affected the delivery of the training materials. The five SRQs gave an overview of the training materials used and how these materials needed to be adapted to suit the various cultures.

The interview responses were analyzed using NVivo v.11 and then adapted to Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) model. Five themes and 12 subthemes emerged using the NVivo v.11.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, the findings and conclusions of the study, as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to assess the effectiveness of corporate training designs in instilling IB corporate values in global employees of a multinational hotel chain and to investigate the ways in which cultural differences affected the use and delivery of the training materials, which were developed based on European core values. Two PRQs and five SRQs were used to obtain information from 22 participants from the company's corporate head office in Geneva, Switzerland, and countries in the Eastern hemisphere. The rationale for the study was based on the lack of current research regarding how an IB program with training materials based on core values developed in Europe can be translated across different cultures. As stated in the literature, positive and carefully planned IB strategies can create a competitive advantage and improve the satisfaction of employees and customers (Abimbola, 2010; Punjaisri et al., 2008; Turkoz & Akyol, 2008).

Most of the participants reacted positively to the PRQs and the SRQs; the SRQs also served as the interview questions. Their responses confirmed the importance of how the participants viewed IB and the effectiveness of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors in support of the company's core values. The PRQs addressed broad themes in the implementation of an IB training program and the company's core values. As Buchko (2007) and Krishnan (2004) stated, employees need to be informed clearly of the defined corporate values to facilitate their identification with the corporate brand. The SRQs concentrated on gaining the trainers' perceptions of the

training materials. The PRQs were answered by all 22 participants, but some of the HR staff from the corporate head office in Geneva could not answer some of the SRQs because they were not familiar with the training materials used in the IB program. The questions also investigated the unique experiences of the HR professionals and trainers and the ways they could adapt the training materials to meet the needs of the employees.

The responses to the interview questions and the use of the framework of the IB process (Punjaisri et al., 2008) model provided insight into the ways in which HR practitioners and trainers experienced IB from an international perspective. I used NVivo v.11 to analyze the 22 interview responses; 17 nodes were identified, a number that was consistent with the number of variables in the model. However, analysis of the responses detected an extra theme indicating that leaders have a responsibility to identify with and model the company's core values. Kunerth and Mosley (2011) stated that senior managers and leaders need to set an example to employees in the organization and live the core values themselves. This assertion that leaders and managers should emulate the core values in the workplace as well as be committed not only to training but also adaptations of the training materials was reiterated by seven (31.8%) of the 22 participants. As Freiling and Fitchner (2010) suggested, organizations can act as a catalyst of competence by fostering new learning. The next section interprets the findings of the current study.

Interpretation of Findings

Primary Research Questions

PRQ1: How does an international hotel organization benefit from an IB program?

All 22 (100%) participants reacted positively to this question and mentioned that standardization of core values was integral to the success of an IB program across all of the hotels in the chain. Twenty (90.9%) participants believed that this standardization created brand-supporting attitudes and delivered consistency in the quality of service.

As mentioned earlier, the core values were developed at the head office in Geneva and had been adapted for use in most European countries and the Eastern hemisphere. All of the participants stated that standardizing the IB program would mean that all employees would receive the same standardized material, albeit with accommodations made by the trainers to reflect employees' cultural norms. Some of the more experienced participants who had worked in different countries mentioned that IB programs and core values had to be standardized. They emphasized that the more experienced trainers provided valuable insight into the value of IB training at the organizational level and in different culture settings. Some participants stated that this insight reinforced the role of service employees and that their views should be viewed as extremely important if the organization is to implement the most appropriate IB training programs.

The participants' views reflected those of King et al. (2014):

To have any chance at surviving the increasingly competitive landscape, hospitality organizations must provide quality service. However, good service is

insufficient to establish a competitive advantage, particularly in the Chinese hotel market where all competitors hold service excellence to be a strategic priority.

(p. 178)

However, some participants commented that brand loyalty among the Chinese employees of the company was not as high as that of employees in the Western hemisphere, as evidenced in the delivery of the brand promise. Comments also were made that in the Eastern hemisphere, European core values might not have reflected the employees' cultural norms.

The standardization of certain training materials gave the participants the tools to deliver certain parts of the training. However, trainers who had been in the position for a longer period of time had the flexibility to adapt parts of the material to meet the needs of their audiences. Chong (2007) emphasized that employees require specific knowledge of the corporate values and ways in which to live the organization's brand promise to engage in and deliver a consistent quality of service (Devasagayam et al., 2010; Green, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). They mentioned brand identification ($n = 16$, 73.3%); brand commitment ($n = 12$, 54.6%); brand loyalty ($n = 4$, 18.2%); brand-supporting behaviors ($n = 14$, 63.6%); and delivery of brand promise ($n = 9$, 41%) as prerequisites that employees needed to understand as important components of the IB program.

The IB training fostered increased organizational commitment and engagement with corporate core values, and it instilled brand values in employees (Baker, 2009; King et al., 2012). As mentioned in the literature, IB is considered necessary to create a powerful corporate brand because it helps the organization to align its internal processes

and corporate culture with the brand (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001; Vallaster, 2004). Further research would illuminate the unique challenges presented in an industry that is dominated by Western cultural values but is developing in an Eastern context.

The participants' responses reflected the findings of Hatch and Schultz (2009) that customers do not trust the brand when the brand does not deliver on its promises, which is usually indicative of a misalignment between the brand identity and the organizational culture. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) asserted that hotels with a strong brand equity also have employees who are more committed to the brand. Therefore, hotel managers need to determine the factors that explain employees' commitment to the brand and their willingness to contribute to the brand-building process before designing any training or internal communication programs.

Punjaisri and Wilson (2007), as well as Vallaster and de Chernatony (2005), noted that once employees have internalized the brand values, they will maintain the established standards of the brand during customer contact at any time or place. All participants agreed that one of the benefits of an IB program with standardized core values and training would be to enhance their commitment to the brand. They also recognized that the purpose of IB is to ensure that employees recognize and believe in the brand values and pass them on to customers. De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2001) claimed that the stronger the employees' recognition of the brand, and the deeper their commitment and loyalty to it, the more their behaviors would benefit the brand.

PRQ2: How does commitment to core values help an organization? All 22 (100%) participants stated that commitment to the company's core values was essential in

understanding them and the ways they engaged employees with brand loyalty to deliver the brand promise. IB programs are meant to maximize value congruence within an organization, so some participants argued that this congruence should be determined during the selection process of job candidates and that the interview questions should focus on the core values (King & Grace, 2008; King et al., 2012; Mosaheb et al., 2011).

Preselection criteria and internal IB training programs would enhance employees' adoption of corporate core values and would subsequently improve employees' attitudes and commitment levels (Dahlgaard-Park, 2012; Hur & Adler, 2011). IB is essential for augmenting the competitiveness and long-term success of the company in the sense that it can stimulate organizational identification and convert committed and engaged employees into brand champions; however, a strong organizational culture is needed to implement these values (Vasta, 2016).

Higher organizational identification among employees would enhance their voluntary participation in brand development and positive word of mouth (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014). It also would optimize their intensity to engage with customers in the best possible ways. All of the participants also stated that the more strongly the employees could identify with their employer, the more internally motivated they would become to engage in behaviors supporting organizational brand-building efforts on and off the job. Research has shown that employees who identify with their employers also provide better performance, engage in voluntary citizenship behaviors, and express fewer intentions to leave (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014).

De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2001) claimed that the purpose of IB training is to communicate with and educate employees while enhancing their knowledge of and emotional response to the brand. When employees have a clear understanding of the value of the corporate brand, this knowledge will improve the enterprise performance. The success of any IB initiative depends on how truly top management support and reflect the culture of the organization, along with the corporate mission and vision, with integrity (Vasta, 2016).

The responses to PRQ2 also clarified Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) proposition that IB training that integrates brand recognition, communication strategies, and delivery of the brand promise to customers inspired employees to think of themselves as part of the brand, care about the brand, and put more effort into accomplishing the goals of the brand. All the participants agreed that commitment to the brand was integral to delivering the brand promise, and they considered value congruence an important prerequisite in the delivery of the brand promise.

Vasta (2016) stated that IB training is essential to improve the competitiveness and long-term success of the company in the sense that it can stimulate organizational identification among employees and convert committed and engaged employees into brand champions. King et al. (2013) contended that IB programs seek to train and motivate employees to behave in ways intended by the organization and communicated externally to customers in an effort to achieve customer loyalty and maintain a competitive advantage that requires employees to meet and satisfy customers' expectations of the brand consistently (Urde et al., 2013). Therefore, although a brand

orientation is concerned with achieving customer satisfaction, its priority is maintaining the integrity of the brand identity through its interactions with customers (Urde et al., 2013).

Secondary Research Questions

SRQ1: How do the trainers rate the various training materials used to gain organizational commitment to the core values? Twenty of the 22 (90.9%) participants responded positively to this question, noting that training and development efforts contributed to increased employee motivation, job satisfaction, and morale (Chatzimouratidis et al., 2012). The responses indicated that although the standardized training materials were developed in Europe, the trainers had the freedom to adapt them to the cultures and personal variables of their employees. Guidice et al. (2009) suggested that the benefits of a well-structured and successful training program provide operational efficiency, organizational renewal, long-term growth, and strategic advantages in competitive markets while minimizing employee turnover.

Participants also mentioned that value congruence did increase retention. Trainers, especially the more experienced ones, had clearer methods of adapting the training materials to the local needs. By adopting carefully designed training methods, companies can exploit new business opportunities, build better future career perspectives, increase innovation and productivity, and improve the quality of products and services provided to customers (Chatzimouratidis et al., 2012). Trainers used feedback sheets, but they also relied on verbal feedback. The more experienced ones noted the interactions of the participants and changed their delivery methods accordingly. They also checked

customer satisfaction surveys at all of the hotel chain's properties to see if employees were delivering the brand promise to the customers.

Y. Yang (2010) mentioned that hotel employee training programs focused on IB and core values should allow employees, especially those in the Eastern hemisphere, to share information. Hoteliers should develop appropriate training programs that could teach people how to use social techniques to empathize with the core values and that these programs should be presented on a regular basis to increase awareness.

Yamkovenko and Holton (2010) stated that hoteliers (managers) need to reinforce brand values among younger employees who have higher levels of education. IB should be added to corporate training programs to strengthen cooperation among brand positioning, long-term education, and resources.

Y. Yang (2010) also stated that employees with higher levels of education are less likely to feel that they are "stuck" in their jobs because they tend to be confident in their own abilities and are less likely to worry about finding other positions if they find themselves unemployed. Accordingly, companies should design different brands of IB to educate their staff. Researchers such as Yamkovenko and Holton (2010) and Y. Yang (2010) have found that younger employees with higher levels of education and shorter duration of employment are less responsive to branding, a situation that requires a different method of brand education, such as long-term training or delegating, that specifically targets these employees.

Effective training is deemed essential to reinforcing the core values that enhance the delivery of the brand promise. This statement highlights the concerns of Kimpakorn

and Tocquer (2009), who stated that the lack of a relationship between employees' perceptions of employers' brand differentiation and employees' brand commitment in the hotel industry happens for two reasons. First, employees do not see any differentiation in hotels' management practices, and second, EB differentiation with competitors exist only at the cognitive level and do not influence employees' brand commitment significantly. Lee et al. (2014) determined that employees' perceptions of the EB vary across different dimensions, including age, gender, experience, and so on.

SRQ2: What do the trainers think of the training materials used, and do they enable the trainees to identify with the core values? Twenty-one (95.6%) participants responded to this question. Merriam and Leahy (2005) concluded that trainers have three methods at their disposal to increase the training impact of learning transfer in the workplace: (a) include the participants in the program planning, (b) incorporate strategies that coordinate knowledge transfer in the program design, and (c) ensure a supportive transfer environment. In some cultures, storytelling was a popular way for some of the trainers to adapt the training materials in order to engage employees. This method was popular with trainers in the Middle East, China, and Africa. Some trainers stated that the training materials were good; others saw them as inadequate. These responses might have been indicative of their experience as trainers. Program objectives included training goals and outcomes that should have been reflected in the training materials used in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors (Capps & Capps, 2005).

The trainers stated that for most of the employees to feel emotionally connected to the company's IB and values, it was important that they connected with and related to the

workplace experiences. In this way, they expressed empathy with the training material and understood the connection between the core values and delivery of the brand promise. This assertion by the trainers was in accordance with Riasi and Asadzadeh's (2015) conclusion that employees' positive experiences and reinforcements at work determine the success of employee training and the connection with the core values of the company.

King et al. (2014) emphasized that good service in the contemporary marketplace is insufficient to establish a competitive advantage, particularly in the Chinese hotel market, where all competitors hold service excellence to be a strategic priority. To deliver the brand promise, hotels need to emphasize the unique features of their service offerings, as reflected in the brand and their employees. Trainers were encouraged to adapt the training portfolio to suit cultures and environments so that employees could connect with the core values.

SRQ3: What cultural factors affect the choice of training materials used? Twenty-one (95.6%) participants responded to this question, stating that because the company is a very diverse international hotel chain, cultural factors must be considered in the development of training materials. Sahinidis and Bouris (2008) recommended that trainers design training programs that are consistent with the organizational culture in order to increase the effectiveness of the training. The company is not rigid in its training material delivery and recommends that trainers continue to use their experience to adapt training materials to the needs of employees.

Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010) remarked that a brand-oriented culture leads to brand-supporting behaviors by employees that are consistent with the brand identity and express the brand values. The trainers emphasized that although the IB program and the core values were standardized, the delivery of the program and the training materials had to reflect the culture in which the hotel operated. Cultural influences reflect the brand orientation, a type of organizational culture that ensures that the brand has a dominant role in the organization's market strategies; it has also been described as an inside-out, identity-driven approach that puts the brand at the centre of an organization and its strategies (Urde et al., 2013).

Environmental influence extends to the work environment, where the organizational culture and employment context shape the ways that people think and behave (Schein, 2008). Cultural influence in the preparation and training of core values is particularly important in the Chinese hotel market because most hotels, to have any chance of surviving the increasingly competitive landscape, must provide quality service that reinforces delivery of the brand promise (King et al., 2014).

Training programs should include standard portfolios with training scenarios that businesses should use as a centralized scheme to maximize training consistency (Hughes & Rog, 2008). Hughes and Rog (2008) recommended the use of regional portfolios for different parts of the world so that trainers can select the most relevant modules for local groups. Program delivery includes time lines and schedules, train-the-trainer camps, executive and employee sessions, and feedback opportunities (Sahinidis & Bouris, 2008).

SRQ4: How effective is the transfer of the content of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors? Twenty-one (95.6%) participants thought that the transfer of training content could be achieved by adapting the training materials. The successful transfer of content depends on many factors, including training design, supervisor and peer support, relevance, and transfer climate (Hutchins et al., 2010). The results also revealed the level of expertise of the trainers and their multicultural experience allowed them to "read" the employees participating in the training and play to their personal variables. Rowold (2007) asserted that causal factors such as self-efficacy, motivation to learn, employee conscientiousness, and anxiety can affect the transfer of training.

Personal variables and situational factors played a key factor in employees' participation in the IB training. When there was a gap between ineffective and effective employee behaviors, it typically was because the trainer was not using relevant techniques or materials (Sahinidis & Bouris, 2009). For example, organizations that operate overseas and their HR practitioners should consider the complexity of differences while managing employee training in culturally diverse settings (Hassi & Storti, 2011). The transfer of training can be difficult if employee motivation is lacking from the outset and the training materials do not reflect the needs of the employees. In a hotel environment, service brand image formation and sustainability depend on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010).

SRQ5: How do employees rate the training materials used? What is the effect of the training materials on employees' perceptions of corporate core values? Twenty

(90.9%) participants responded to this question, two participants from corporate head office in Geneva could not answer the question. Trainers mentioned that employees enjoyed the IB program if they felt engaged with the training materials and could relate to the company's core values. Capps and Capps (2005) mentioned that a successful IB training program relies on input from employees and trainers. Examples of training tools are needs assessments that measure the level of understanding of corporate core values, reveal which core values are important to employees, and illustrate how employees engage with their organization's core values. Integrating and coordinating pretraining, during training, and posttraining activities enhance the success of the transfer of training (Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Jaidev & Chirayath, 2012).

As mentioned previously, storytelling was a popular method used in the delivery of the core values. Schein (2008) noted that all cultures have stories that are passed from one generation to another. For trainers, it is imperative that they reinforce that interactions between employees and customers are the essence of service industries and that employees' commitment to delivering brand value is a key facilitator of the external brand experience (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013). In this sense, employees have been referred to as brand ambassadors, which means that they are expected to deliver brand-consistent behaviors and as assume the role of brand builders (de Chernatony et al., 2006). The trainers stated they tried to promote a better understanding of how the core values would help employees to deliver the brand promise to customers.

Conclusion

The HR practitioners and trainers who participated in this study seemed to understand the importance of IB in defining the hotel's identity and transferring brand knowledge to employees and customers, thereby increasing the loyalty of both and creating a competitive advantage. Results confirmed that the definition of IB in the literature was generally equivalent to how the HR practitioners perceived it. Except for a few differences in the level of detail, the HR practitioners demonstrated very similar views as to what IB is, depending on their experience with the concept, especially in dealing with the training materials. Perhaps this congruence was the result of similar approaches to IB and core values among the hotel chain's HR practitioners and trainers. On the other hand, the participants had a minimum of 5 years of experience in the hospitality industry, so their perceptions might have been shaped by what the industry needs IB to be. Therefore, the PRQs and SRQs were designed to capture the perceptions of 22 HR practitioners and trainers about IB.

Results suggested an increasing acceptance and understanding of IB among HR practitioners and trainers. Results also indicated that the functions of HR departments are fundamentally changing. They confirmed the ambiguous definition within the application of IB, perhaps because it is still a young field of study (Punjaisri et al, 2008). The hesitation toward a more fully rounded approach to IB, often due to the complexity it seems to involve, is diminishing (Mosley, 2007).

In addressing the need for IB to be implemented successfully across a diverse cultural landscape with standardized core values to promote brand consistency and a

service brand orientation, this study makes a number of contributions to the literature. First, I discussed the commitment of participants at the organizational level to the two PRQs. This discussion built on previous research mentioned in the literature and in Chapter 5. Second, this study built on prior research (Burmann et al., 2009; King et al., 2013) to establish that IB, core values, and delivery of the brand promise are connected.

Limitations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to assess the effectiveness of corporate training designs in instilling IB corporate values into the global employees of a multinational hotel chain. The single-case study approach dictated that the findings had to be limited to the institution that was studied. Interviews were conducted with senior personnel in the company's headquarters in Geneva and trainers in Europe and the Eastern hemisphere. The study did not collect the views of operational staff.

One limitation that I had during the course of this dissertation was my location. Being stationed in Switzerland for the duration of the writing and research process, I had to conduct Skype interviews with participants located in the Eastern Hemisphere. This could have had an effect on the real live body language of the trainers at the properties. I also needed to address the RQs, which were oriented to examine aspects of Punjaisri et al.'s (2008) model; however, not all aspects of the model were adequately explored to include groupings and interrelationships among the elements. There needed to be more careful consideration of the interview questions and the way they addressed these interrelations of the model, something that could have provided useful information in the findings.

The two PRQs used in the interviews might have been worded in a way that could have skewed the participants' responses, so rather than use the opening of "How does," it would have been preferable to use just "does." As an example, PRQ1 perhaps should have been worded, "Does an international hotel organization benefit from an IB program?" This recommendation also could have been applicable to PRQ2, which was worded originally as, "How does commitment to core values help an organization?" The question could have been worded as, "Does commitment to core values help an organization?"

Future researchers should consider developing the above PRQs and delve more deeply into how HR practitioners and trainers really understand the impact of IB and standardized core values on employees in different cultures. It is recommended that future researchers delve more deeply into finding out the respondents' experiences of the cultural dynamics and diversity of employees in their properties. The SRQs on reflection and analysis could also have been worded more effectively.

As the results indicated, cultural considerations were a factor in determining how IB and the training materials impacted the employees. However, because the study was conducted with 22 participants across various countries to fully understand how the training materials impacted employees culturally, especially the differential effect, a more vigorous questioning technique needs to be conducted.

Recommendations for Further Research

Some of the perceptions of the HR practitioners implied that the benefits of IB are not wholly tangible. Inspired by LePla (2013), more research could be conducted to

prove whether employees' beliefs in core values have a direct impact on their commitment. LePla found that employee commitment to an organization was directly linked to more knowledge of the organization's core values. This finding raises queries about the importance and relevance of employees' beliefs in core values and their influence on attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. In addition, implementation of an on-site IB management team was deemed beneficial, so long as the related costs were not obstructive. Therefore, developing a way to quantify IB's return on investment would be valuable.

Such an attempt was made by Murray and Efendioglu (2007) as well as King et al. (2012). Further research could strive to validate these findings. Both groups of researchers found that because almost all investments result in benefits received months and/or years later, the benefits that are received sooner than others are valued more highly. In addition, both groups of researchers recommended that because trainers cannot and normally do not quantify return on training expenditure, training expenditure should be evaluated in terms of their overall contribution to the organization's value by using either internal rate of return, if using ratios for comparison, or net present value, if monetary comparisons are preferred by the organization.

I suggest that IB has been and continues to be a valuable tool in promoting the corporate core values of the hotel in its globally dispersed properties. Some of the hotel's properties might already be functioning in such a synergized manner that IB could easily be implemented. Hence, comparing the implementation of IB among different sizes of hotels also might provide interesting insight.

Because the study was limited to one luxury hotel chain spread out over a large geographic area and with very particular types of managers, it is worthwhile considering another study of a similar nature on a larger scale with different hotel chains. In addition, because the role of HR remains unclear, researchers could take a multiple-case approach to compare the perceptions of HR, marketing, and management in multiple properties. Finally, the results of my study showed that the corporate head office, particularly the HR department, often still dictates on-site behaviors, despite not having a physical presence on the hotel properties. Results confirmed that even though the IB training was standardized, trainers had discretion in how they used and adapted the training materials.

Many situational factors pose a challenge for IB efforts. Having cohesive relationships in organizations is a major goal for IB programs because the comfort levels among peers and managers contribute to employees' commitment level, production level, and intention to stay (Carter et al., 2013; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Employment length, absenteeism rates, collaboration rates, and innovation are influenced by the strength of the value congruence between employees and managers (Leblebici, 2012).

Implementation of core values is a top-down approach. Senior managers and leaders need to model the company's core values in their professional daily routine as an example to employees (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011). When an organization communicates its values to employees through diverse means, the organization maximizes employees' identification with the organizational culture, their managers, and their peers (Green, 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Visible and collective values result in mutual trust between leaders and employees, and they maximize employee satisfaction, loyalty, and

commitment (Dahlgaard-Park, 2012). Further research would illuminate the unique challenges presented in an industry that is dominated by Western cultural values but is developing in an Eastern cultural context.

Impact of Positive Social Change

The impact of positive social change in this study addressed three dimensions: impact on the organization, impact on employees, and impact on customers.

Impact on the Organization

Because the properties that were studied were high-end, 5-star hotels with individual characteristics, standardizing its IB philosophy and training gives the company the commitment to increase its competitive advantage and also engage employees in delivering the brand promise to customers. This impact on the company could further enhance it becoming an employer of choice for potential and existing employees because the results of the study showed how employees' understanding of the core values would increase commitment and intention to stay with the organization while also reducing turnover.

Impact on Employees

As mentioned previously, the findings could help to promote more effective global brand recognition and provide HR specialists with knowledge to educate trainers about better techniques to deliver training across different cultures and engage employees on the company's core values. Employees would be happier performing their roles, have increased job satisfaction, and demonstrate improved levels of productivity. Results suggested that the fairness of personal outcomes that employees receive might have more

impact on turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior than the perceived fairness of the company's procedures.

Results also indicated that trainers have to be aware of cultural differences, along with age and educational levels, when delivering the training. This awareness would enable the employees to understand how the core values impact their role in the properties. In addition, as research progresses in regard to IB, especially in a global context, professionals will be able to implement new aspects of training into their daily practices in order to achieve the best outcomes.

Impact on Customers

Good service training on IB and its core values has a significant effect on delivering the brand promise to meet customers' expectations. The service experienced is a major marketing tool for companies to ensure high ratings from consumers. Customers can be important resources for the company. They can actively participate in the company's activities as coproducers of the service. As buyers, customers can develop a relationship with the service organization, and as recipients, they can register evaluations of their encounters.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. No one declined to be recorded. For your information, only the researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes that will be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Part 1: General Questions

1. Name and current position:
2. Name of hotel

Part 2 Primary Questions

3. PRQ1: How does an international hotel organization benefit from an internal branding program?
4. PRQ2: How does commitment to core values increase organizational commitment to the brand?

Part 3 Secondary Questions

5. SRQ1: How does the trainer rate the various training material used to gain organizational commitment to the core values?
6. SRQ2: What does the trainer think of the training material used does it enable the trainees' to identify with the core values?

7. SRQ3: What cultural factors affect the choice of training material used?
8. SRQ4: How effective is the transfer of the content of the training materials in changing employees' attitudes and behaviors?
9. SRQ5: How do employees rate the training material used? What is the effect of the training materials on employees' perception of the core values?

Appendix B: Participant Position and Location Listing

The following list shows the respective organizational positions and geographic locations of the 22 participants.

- #1 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #2 based in a hotel in Budapest, Hungary
- #3 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #4 based in a hotel in Hamburg, Germany.
- #5 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #6 based in a hotel in Munich, Germany.
- #7 based in hotel in Berlin, Germany.
- #8 based in a hotel in Vienna, Austria.
- #9 based in a hotel in Beijing, China.
- #10 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #11 based in a hotel in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- #12 based in a hotel in Beijing, China.
- #13 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #14 based in a hotel in Munich, Germany.
- #15 based in a hotel in Wuxi Jiangsu, China.
- #16 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #17 based in a hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, Africa.
- #18 based in a hotel in Chad, Africa.
- #19 based in a hotel in Moscow, Russia.
- #20 based in head office in Geneva, Switzerland.
- #21 based in a hotel in Dubai, UAE.
- #22 based in a hotel in Djibouti, Africa.