Implementing Modern Human Resources Strategies in the Public Sector:
The Case of Implementing Internal Branding in Large Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of modern human resources concepts to public sector large organizations is still a relatively new topic for researchers and practitioners. Moreover, although branding has become more prominent in the public sector, its role with employees is under explored. By means of a multi-dimensional procedure, the authors have developed a scale of measurement of the internal branding antecedents and consequences in the public sector through 35 items grouped into six dimensions: (1) external customer orientation, (2) internal customer orientation, (3) internal service quality, (4) interdepartmental connectedness, (5) customer satisfaction, and (6) employee satisfaction. The importance of the proposed constructs was theoretically discussed and justified. Using a sample of 304 public sector employees, the constructs are then tested and validated. Amos 27 is used for this purpose. The overall results from the empirical assessment were positive, thus reflecting the appropriateness of the proposed constructs. This study provides new theoretical grounds for studying internal branding in the public sector. It also supplies public sector organizations with a number of operative factors that may be essential if they are to provide enhanced satisfaction to public needs. It is probably the first to provide an integrative perspective of internal branding constructs in the public sector.

KEYWORDS

Abu Dhabi, Internal Branding, Public Sector, Scale Development

INTRODUCTION

In general, the application of Modern Human Resources concepts to public sector large organizations is still a relatively new subject for academics and practitioners (Eid et al., 2019; Kotler and Lee, 2007a). However, organizations, public or private, strive toward excellence seeking customer satisfaction; hence, different new strategies such as internal online communications and internal branding has become a major element in ensuring quality and consistency. Recent branding initiatives have shifted their promotional focus on internal organizational context by engaging employees in the culture and strategy development to better understand the brand, live it and be committed to it (Eid and Elgohary 2015; Keller, 2008).

Internal marketing has been proposed as a suitable tool for communicating internal branding within an organization by creating successful relationships with employees (Bergstrom et al., 2003; George, 1990). It uses the same marketing tools used for an organization external brand image,

internally with its employees (Greene et al., 1994) mainly the communication practices to highly motivate employees making them customer centric (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993). Being a sub-field of internal marketing as stated by Gronroos (1985), Bergstrom et al. (2003), Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Mahnert and Torres (2007) internal branding requires employees' understanding and acceptance of marketing programs and efforts that can be seen as type of management strategy that develops the organization (Gronroos, 1985).

Undoubtedly, considering internal branding in the public sector large organizations has many reasons. Firstly, according to De Chernatony and Cottam (2006) and Wallace and De Chernatony (2008) customer touch points employees will act as brand ambassadors and their interaction with customers will in turn shape the external view of the brand. Secondly, previous studies proved a close relationship between customer and employee perspectives (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Davies and Miles, 1998). Thirdly, internal Branding ensures the strategic alignment of human capital with organizational goals by continuously connecting employees to the organization's vision and values. Finally, favorable interaction is likely to take place if customer touch points employees share a positive view of the organization with customers (Chun and Davies, 2006).

However, although academics have built considerable theoretical knowledge on the conceptualization of internal branding, previous research focused more on different private sectors such as the service industry sector (Eid et al., 2019; Erkmen and Hancer, 2015), retail banking sector (Chebat et al., 2002; De Chernatony and Cottam, 2006), healthcare sector (Gapp and Merrilees, 2006) non-profitable UK charities (Hankinson, 2004), and tourism and hospitality industry (Bowen, 1997). Moreover, no studies seem to have been made of the suggested antecedents that enable internal branding and the consequences that arise, either in the UAE context or in the wider world. Therefore, the present study will enrich and contribute to the internal branding concept and the literature by expanding its insightful knowledge beyond that of the Western school of thought to the UAE public sector.

To bridge this gap various conceptual and empirical studies investigating the antecedents and consequences of internal branding were studied. Model, definitions, techniques and discussion of these factors and how could they affect internal branding implementation and success in the public sector context are described. Clearly, this study has three objectives: (1) to establish a structure for the internal branding antecedents and consequences in the public sector; (2) to empirically validate the scales of these perspectives; (3) to provide researchers and practitioners with a set of items to measure internal branding antecedents and consequences in the public sector.

The reminder of this paper is organized as follow. First, a review of relevant internal branding literature is presented. This is followed by identification of internal branding antecedents and consequences and development of related scales. Empirical validation of the scales is presented next. Based on of the exploratory analysis of the statistical relationships among various internal branding dimensions, managerial implications are offered. The paper concludes with recommendations for future extension of this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abu Dhabi government has taken measurable steps towards economy diversification with major focus on long-term comprehensive economic plans such as the Policy Agenda and Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 to create a prominent position and to position itself among the world's best governments. Achieving this ambitious goal needs highly competitive performing departments; in terms of customer centricity, service quality and customer satisfaction. Lately there has been a continuous emphasis on Abu Dhabi government departments to improve their public sector operations and services, and they began to develop on the grounds of professionalism. In particular, Abu Dhabi government has directed organizations in public sector to become more responsive to the customer and his/her needs, in other words, to become more customer-oriented, rather than to increase the number of customers.

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