

**The Impact of Supportive Leadership on Employee Brand Building  
Behavior and Brand Image**

**Lishan Xie, Yaoqi Li, Haizhong Wang**

**(School of Business, Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China)**

***Authors:***

***Lishan Xie:*** Professor and Doctor of Sun Yat-Sen University

Address: No. 135, Xingang Road West, Haizhu District, Guangzhou, China

Zip Code: 510275

Tel: +86-20-13600059669

Fax: +86-20-84036924

Email: mnsxls@mail.sysu.edu.cn

***Yaoqi Li:*** PHD student of Sun Yat-Sen University

***Haizhong Wang:*** Professor and Doctor of Sun Yat-Sen University

# **The Impact of Supportive Leadership on Employee Brand Building Behavior and Brand Image\***

**Objective:** Due to the characters of service, such as intangibility and high personal interaction between customers and firm's employees during the service delivery process, the employee brand building behavior, which is the bridge between the organization internal brand communications and customers perceived brand image, is an essential factor to a successful service brand. The study examines the effects of the supportive leadership to the employee brand building behavior, and tests the relationship between the employee brand building behavior and customers' perceived brand image.

**Methods:** Questionnaires were administered to over 1400 participants, consisted of 400 employees and over 1000 customers in 4 hotels in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, China. The authors conducted HLM path analysis to test the effect of organizational climate of supportive leadership on the employee brand building behavior and test the cross-level effect of employee brand building behavior on the customers perceived brand image.

**Results:** The authors conducted a series of HLM analysis of random coefficients regression models, intercepts-as-outcomes models, and slopes-as-outcomes models to investigate the consequences of both organizational climates and employee characters. The results of data analysis reveal that (1) employee's brand building behavior concluded 4 components instead of 3 components in the initial scale: retention, in-role brand building behavior, participation and positive word-of-mouth; (2) organizational supportive leadership has a significant effects on the employee brand building behavior; (3) organizational leadership climates have a trickle-down effect on customers level, such as the influence of organizational leadership flow to customers perceived brand image through the employee behavior.

**Conclusions:** This study enriches the theory about employee's brand building behavior. The findings contribute to help the service firm pay more attention to the employees' role in brand building process. The firm should mould a supportive leadership climate to encourage the employee brand building behavior which will lead to a positive brand image.

---

\*The study is funded by the major issues of philosophy and social research projects by the ministry of education of China (08JZD0019).

**Keywords:** Supportive Leadership, Employee Brand Building Behavior, Brand Image, Hierarchical Linear Modeling

## **Introduction**

Most of the service companies are labor-intensive or emotion-intensive enterprises. An enterprise's success depends on its service quality, which is offered by the front line employees. Their services skills, attitude and the capabilities of handling the emergency in the services delivery process have important influence on the customers perceive brand image. Therefore, the services companies' managers should build the companies' brand image not only by the external brand communications, but also by the internal ones, and the employee brand building behavior is one of the most essential internal brand communications which has positive effect on customers' perceived brand image.

Different from physical goods, services are intangibility and inseparability of production and consumption—so the consumers face a greater risk when they purchase the service. The brand image as a physical evidence can reduce the consumers' perceived risk from service intangibility through expressing a quality signal. Furthermore, because of the inseparability of production and consumption, the consumers have to participate in the service delivery process when they consume it. During the participation process, the services front line people contact with the customers deeply, so their behavior will affect the customers' understanding of the service company. What's to say, the front line employees are the representatives of the services providers, the services provider should pay attention to their role in their brand building communication strategy.

In the management reviews, we found lots of research focused on the topic that how consumers perceive and understand the brands, while it lack of research about how the services people's behaviors will influence the consumers' brand image perception and what style of managers' leadership can motivate the employee brand building behaviors. Therefore, we discuss the front line services people's role on the company brand communication policy, and explore the relationship between the supportive leadership and employee brand building behavior, and the impact of employee brand building behavior on customers perceived brand image.

## **Literature review**

### **Supportive Leadership**

There are lots of researches on the leadership theories filed. As the representative of the company, the managers should guide and assess the subordinates' jobs, and the leadership styles of the manager have a great influence on the employees' behavior (Li & Wang, 2009). Ohio school scholars consider that the managers' leadership contains two dimensions: leader initiating structure and leader consideration. Leader initiating structure relates to the way in which a supervisor guides service employees, provides a psychological framework that clarifies roles, monitors subordinates' activities, and stimulates them to display better performance. Thus, the initiating structure dimension is primarily concerned with task-specific issues (Bass, 1981; Kerr & Schriesheim, 1974; Weissenberg & Kavanagh, 1972). The second dimension, leader consideration, is the degree to which a supervisor creates an atmosphere of affective support and socioemotional concern for the wellbeing of subordinates (Bass, 1981 ; Judge, Piccolo & Ilies , 2004 ; Kerr & Schriesheim , 1974). Leader consideration is primarily oriented toward creating good relationships with workers (Wetzels , Ruyter & Lemmink, 1999).

Oldham & Cummings made a conclusion that the leader initiating structure and leader consideration dimensions could be summarized supportive leadership. They defined the supportive leadership as all the organizational managers' behaviors which support their subordinates' job. It includes four characters: concerned about the feelings and needs of employees, encouraged employees to raise their concerns, praised the employees' achievement and gave the positive feedback to them, and helped them to improve their job skills. They argued that the managers' supportive behavior could increase staffs awareness of self-determination and their job proactiveness (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Although lots of researches have been conducted on the role of the supportive leadership, it lacks on the topic about how to measure the supportive leadership reliability and validity. In 2007, Rooney & Gottlieb explored the supportive leadership scale through focus groups and questionnaire. Their empirical study showed that the supportive leadership contains two attributes, which is the supportive behavior to the job and to the relationship (Rooney & Gottlieb, 2007). The supportive behavior to the job is a task-orientation support, it can guide and motivate the subordinates work hardly and finish their in-role job. The supportive behavior to the relationship requires the managers listen to the subordinates' and respect their advice, and assist the employees to achieve their individual goal (Schaubroeck & Fink, 1998). Therefore, different kinds of companies should take different supportive leadership to shape the employees' behavior basing on the nature of the jobs and the companies goal.

## **Employee brand building behavior**

According to different classification rules, employee behaviors can be divided in different type such as employee citizen behavior, employee brand building behavior and brand sabotage behavior. In our research, we focus on the employee brand building behavior.

There is some notable work on the role of frontline employees in shaping customers' experience in the service context. The employee brand building behavior concept is derived from the employee branding theory. Miles & Mangold (2004) defined the employee branding idea as customer-contact employees' actions determining the image of a service firm in customers' minds. Employee branding is an inside out process. The organization raises the job expectations to the employees basing on its goal. One of the job expectations from the organization is to shape a positive company brand to the consumers. The organization trains the employees to improve their job skills and orient them to have a commitment to organization, which helps the employees connect a psychological contract with organization. With effective training and orientation, the employees are willing to connect their job performance and personal image with the company expected image. Some studies showed that the organization which implemented the employee branding has a low turnover rate and a high job satisfaction (Michae l& David, 2004). Depending on an extensive literature review over a mixed body of knowledge comprising work from services marketing, relationship marketing, employee branding, brand communities, and organizational citizenship behavior, Morhart et. al. (2009) proposed the employee brand building behavior as employees' contribution (both on and off the job) to an organization's customer-oriented branding efforts (Morhart, Herzog & Tomczak, 2009).

As the organization brand's spokesman, the brand building employees transform brand vision into brand reality (Berry, 2000). The employee brand building behaviors do not demarcate by the time or location whether at work or not, but demarcate by the behaviors' effect. No matter during the working hour or leisure time, no matter which situations, all the behaviors benefit to build the company brand are defined as employee brand building behavior. Therefore, Morhart et al. (2009) suggested that employee brand building behavior should be classified into three categories, which is retention, in-role brand building behavior and extra-role brand building behavior (Morhart, Herzog & Tomczak, 2009).

"Retention" refers to employees' upholding their professional relationship with the corporate brand. A service firm's ability to maintain stability in its customer-contact staff is crucial. Frontline employees

humanize a service brand and help customers connect emotionally to it. Long-lasting relationships are likely to spark feelings of closeness, affection, and trust of customers toward brand representatives, all of which pay into a brand's competitive advantage. However, when customers are confronted with ever-changing contact personnel, they have difficulty in developing such a relationship with the corporate brand (Miles & Mangold, 2004). "In-role brand building behavior" refers to frontline employees' meeting the standards prescribed by their organizational roles as brand representatives (either written in behavioral codices, manuals, display rules, and so forth, or unwritten). Specifically in the service context, customers' brand experience depends on frontline employees' behavior. Thus, it is crucial that representatives treat customers in a way that is consistent with the brand promise the organization conveys through its public messages. "Extra-role brand building behavior" refers to employee actions that go beyond the prescribed roles for the good of the corporate brand and are discretionary. In this category, the most important in terms of branding efforts are participation (on the job) and positive word of mouth (off the job). Participation means the employees communicate with their supervisor proactively, they contribute to the brand building policies through providing the consumers' need information to the decision maker (Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Harber, Marriott & Idrus, 1991). Positive word of mouth (WOM) means the employees spontaneously recommend their company during their daily life. Because the WOM does not exist the commercial purpose, it's more reliable and credible than the company marketing communications (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991). In our research, the positive WOM is from employees but not consumers. The extra-role brand building behavior is valuable to the company. First, employees who actively participate in brand development (e.g., by internally passing on branding-relevant customer feedback from customer touch points) provide a company with high-quality input for its brand management. Second, employees' personal advocacy of the organization's product and service brands outside the job context is a credible form of advertising for actual and potential customers.

### **Brand Image**

Brand image theory was first proposed in the 60s by Ogilvy. Ogilvy considered brand image as a series of associations that the consumers link to the product's quality, price, history and other elements (Ogilvy, 1983). From the relationship benefits perspective, Park et al. (1986) defined brand image as the customers' overall view and feeling to the brand's symbolic, functional and experiential benefits (Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986). According to an associative network memory model, Keller (1993) raised the

customer-based brand equity model. He defined the brand image refers to the set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory (Keller, 1993). Brand image is formatted during the process of customers developing the relationship with the brand. Brand image is set of minds of consumers associated with the brand name, associations and attributes (Aaker, 1991). It is an overall awareness to the brand basing on the reactions to the brand associations (Keller, 1993). Keller and Aaker's researches arouse the marketing scholars and practitioners' attention to the brand image field, such as how to define the brand image, how to measure it and how to build valuable brand equity (Walgren, Ruble & Donthu, 1995; Lassar, Mittal & Sharma, 1995; Aaker, 1996; Dyson, Farr & Hollis, 1996; Berry, 2000; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Kim & Kim, 2005; Grace & Cass, 2003). A great number of studies were focus on measurement models of the brand image, such as Aaker's brand equity model (Aaker, 1991), Keller's customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993), Yoo & Donthu's multidimensional customer-based brand equity scale (Yoo & Donthu, 2001), Kim & Kim's four element brand equity model (Kim & Kim, 2005) and Grace & Cass's service brand association model (Grace & Cass, 2003).

According to the summary of the existing researches, Martinez et al. (2008) judged the scholars should measure brand image in two aspects: general brand image and product brand image (Martinez, Polo & de Chernatony, 2008). General brand image (GBI) refers to the general values, functions and associations to different product categories. All the products or services should be measure brand image using association/differentiation measures based on some general aspects: value, brand personality, organizational associations and differentiation (Aaker, 1996). It's to say GBI scale cover different categories (García & Bergantiños, 2001). Recent studies have measured brand images for products recognising that not only the physical attributes of the products should be considered but also functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits (Low & Lamb, 2000; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Hsieh, 2002; Davis, 2002). This way of measuring brand image, is what we refer to as "product brand image" (PBI), is linked to the attributes of the product being sold (Martinez & Polo, 2008). They argued the consumers will perceive and assess the brand image by both GBI and PBI. In the study, we defined brand image as the customers' overall view to the brand basing on the reactions to the brand associations, and we measure brand image through two categories: general brand image and product brand image.

## **Research Framework and Hypothesis**

The study discussed the relationships among supportive leadership, employee brand building behavior

and customer perceived brand image. Based on the above literature review, we proposed the research framework as showed in Figure 1. The framework is about the impact of supportive leadership to employee brand building behavior and the cross-level effects between employee brand building behavior and customer perceived brand image.

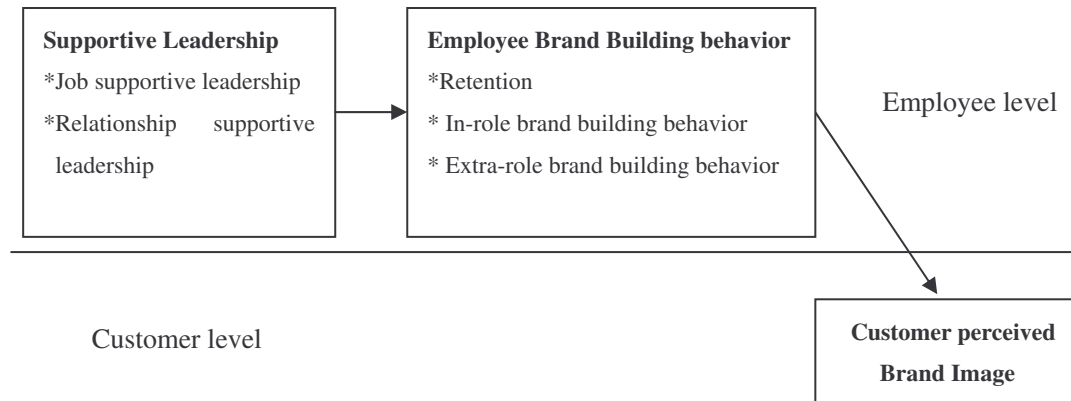


Figure 1 Research Framework

### **The impact of supportive leadership on employee brand building behavior**

Managers' leadership behaviors may impose great influence on the working attitudes, behaviors and performance of employees. In particular, supportive leadership can give rise to employees' reaction, generating significant and positive relationship with employees' working behavior and attitudes (Yukl, 1989, 1999; Judge, Piccolo and Ilies, 2004). Supportive leadership involves support to relationship and jobs. When managers emphasize and support the demand of employees, and keep good relationship with them, the psychological contract will be established between employees and organization (or managers), which is positively related to employees' attitudes and further engenders positive influence on employees' behaviors (Henkel et al., 2007). The empirical study conducted by Schalk et al. (1998) shows that psychological contract may form series of psychological liability for the employees and managers, and then yield to mutual obligation for each, and finally affect employees' behaviors and attitudes. Based on all these arguments, employees motivated by supportive leadership regard it as the obligation to complete the in-role work, keep long relationship with the organization, positively participate in the organizational management and decision-making, and perform positive word of mouth marketing in the proper occasions.

The relationship supportive leadership may not only induce employees' positive emotion, but also indicates managers' recognition and love to employees (Rafferty and M.Griffin, 2006; Wofford and Liska,



1993). Employees encouraged by relationship supportive leadership will see it as obligation to support the manager's work, keep long-term relationship with the supervisor, work hard to accomplish the in-role job, positively participate in the managerial decision, provide first-hand information and compliment their supervisors in the interpersonal association (Grandey, 2000). The desire to keep long relationship with the organization indicates that managers' work and leadership behaviors receive employees' recognition and make employees generate the commitment to follow managers, keep long-range relationship with the organization and support the managers' work (Lastovicka and Gardner, 1978; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005; Ceridwyn King and Debra Grace, 2006; Burmann, Zeplin and Riley, 2009). As to employees' brand building behavior, employees' commitment behaves as keeping long relationship with the brand, working hard to complete the in-role job and trying their best to improve the team's and firm's performance. Employees will try hard to do the in-role and extra-role job better, take better advantage of direct access to customers to provide efficient information for the managerial decision, and conduct more positive word of mouth marketing to repay the trust and support of their supervisors.

The relationship supportive leadership can improve the working efficiency and performance of employees and, promote their willingness to keep a long-term relationship with the organization. Moreover, employees will feel more obliged to do their in-role work better and make full use of their consumers' knowledge to provide information assistance for managerial decision owing to the extra support from the managers. Babin and Boles (1996) indicate that managers' support to employees' work such as providing important resources, which is a central factor for improving employees' working performance, can stimulate employees' enthusiasm to complete their work. If managers provide the working resources and build psychological contract between the employees and managers, employees will be more likely to perform anticipated behaviors of managers, accomplish working tasks in the requirements of managers to reciprocate managers' support (Dansereau, Alutto and Yammarino, 1984; T. Keller and Dansereau, 1995). As is shown in some studies that managers' support to the work is an important approach for employees to improve their performance (W. Gardner and Schermerhorn, 2004; Luthans et al., 2008). In the light of social exchange theory, employees tend to repay managers' support through those approaches which are helpful to business development, such as positively participating in the managerial decision and performing positive word of mouth marketing, etc. Specifically, the word of mouth marketing behavior may display some differences in different situations: when inside, employees will compliment managers; when outside,

employees will praise the corporation in order to indirectly compliment their managers due to the corporation has a higher popularity compared with the managers. In view of the above analysis, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The supportive leadership perceived by employees is positively related to employees' brand building behavior.

### **The cross-level effect of employee brand building behavior to customer perceived brand image**

Employee brand building behavior includes four dimensions: retention, in-role brand building behavior and extra-role brand building behavior (Morhart, Herzog & Tomczak, 2009). The extra-role brand building behavior consists of two sub-components: participation in management and positive WOM. Because of the personal benefits connected with the organization's performance, the employees who are willing to keep long-term relationship with service organization will be more enthusiastic to finish their in-role work and persuade the people around them to purchase their company production or service. As the representative of the organization image, the attitude to organization of front line employee affects the customers' assessment to the organization's image. The service company which commits to endue its employees as brand builder tends to make some related behavior standards to normalize their in-role behaviors. With these standards, the employees are likely to keep their personal demeanors consistent with the company image. The customers will connect the service people image with the company image. Besides, the front line service people know what customers exactly want. In the service design process, without the employees' participation, the decision makers may misunderstand what the customers' needs. O'Cass & Grace study indicated employee participation and positive WOM have a positive effect on service brand associations (O'Cass & Grace, 2003). Therefore, based on the above analysis, we propose the follow hypothesis:

**H<sub>2</sub>** : Employee brand building behavior has a positive effect on customer perceived brand image.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Measure Development**

In our study, we measured supportive leadership using two dimensions scale which contains 16 items developed by Rooney and Gottlieb (2007). We adapted three dimensions scale which contain 12 items to measure the employee brand building behavior from prior study by Morhart et al. (2009). We used an

existing scale (Martinez & Polo, 2008) as a basis to develop a 5 items to measure brand image.

Table 1 Measurement scale

Concept	Dimensions	Origins
Supportive leadership	job supportive leadership	Ronney & Gottlieb, 2007
	relationship supportive leadership	
Employee brand building behavior	retention	Morhart, Herzog & Tomczak, 2009
	in-role brand building behavior	
	extra-role brand building behavior	
Brand image	general brand image	Martinez & Polo, 2008
	product brand image	

### Sample Characteristics and Data Collection

In order to test research model, we conducted a questionnaire survey in 4 high class hotels in Guangzhou and Shenzhen—two cities in China by using the systematic sampling method. The participants were the hotels' front line services people who have direct high contact with the customers and the customers they had just served. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: one part filling by employees and another part filling by customers. The questionnaires used to measure the supportive leadership and employee brand building behavior concepts were filled by the service people, while the customers filled the questionnaires used to measure the brand image concept. All the questions are measured by likert 7-points scale. We handed out 630 employee copies and received 386 completed copies. With 61.27% responses rate, 369 copies meet the standard that each employee copy match at least 3 customer copies. So the valid rate was 58.57%. In the meantime, we gave out 3150 customer copies and received 1392 completed copies. With 44.19% responses rate, 1181 copies were meet the standard mentioned above. So the valid rate was 37.49%. In the employee samples, 71.5% were female, 28.5% were male, and 72.5% respondents aged between of 20-40. Most of them worked in the hotel beyond 1 year. In the customer samples, it's almost equal in the gender, and 87.2% respondents aged between of 20-50.

### Research Method

Variables in this study included two levels: employees and customers level. Therefore, we adopted a multilevel model to conduct the data analysis using HLM 6.08. In our research model, the customer perceived brand image is the dependent variable while the supportive leadership is the independent, and the

employee brand building behavior is the mediator between supportive leadership and employee brand building behavior. The model equation is as follow:

$$BI = \beta_0 + r$$

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}EBBB + v_0$$

$$EBBB = \beta + \lambda SL + \tau$$

$$BI = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\beta + \lambda SL + \tau) + r + v_0$$

\*BI, EBBB and SL are short for Brand Image, Employee Brand Building Behavior and Supportive Leadership respectively

Owing to the brand image is assessed by the customers, it's necessary to test the with-in-group agreement (Rwg) and intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) before polymerize to the employee level. If the Rwg is too low, individual level cannot polymerize into a high level. If the ICC is too low, the influence from high level to low level may not exist. In order to insure brand image can polymerize into the employee level, the authors check the Rwg and ICC using James et al. (1993) and Bliese (2000) indicator. The ICC (1) and ICC (2) of brand image were 0.363 and 0.735, bigger than the James' (1992) standard 0.12 and 0.6. The mean of Rwg was 0.87, also bigger than the accepted standard 0.7. The results showed that it is reasonable to polymerize the brand image into the employee level.

## Analysis and Results

We examined the reliability by using SPSS 16.0. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  of the scale was from 0.863 to 0.975. It showed that all the factors have acceptable reliability.

Due to the employee brand building behavior scale is a new one, it lacks empirical study. Therefore, a principal components factor analysis was done by using SPSS 16.0. The KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity showed the data suitable to conduct a factors analysis. Results indicated that there were 4 factors which captured 86.65% of the variance. The results were showed in table 2.

Table 2 Rotated Component Matrixes

Variable	Indicator	Component			
		F1	F2	F3	F4
<b>Retention</b>	RE1	.894			
	RE2	.914			
	RE3	.797			
<b>In-role brand building behavior</b>	IR1		.855		
	IR2		.852		
	IR3		.833		
<b>Extra-role</b>	Participation			.824	

<b>brand building behavior</b>		PM2			.853	
		PM3			.779	
	Positive WOM	WOM1				.746
		WOM2				.787
		WOM3				.774

The factor analysis outcome showed that employee brand building behavior included four factors, which are retention, in-role brand building behavior, participation and positive WOM. In Mohart et al.'s research, the participation and positive WOM merge into one factors—extra-role brand building behavior in the literature. However, they divided the extra-role brand building behavior factor into two components in the data analysis. In order to test whether the employee brand building behavior is three factors or four factors concept, the authors conducted the confirmatory factor analysis. The CFA analysis outcomes as shown in table 3.

Table 3 CFA Fit Index

<b>Fit index</b>	<b>Value</b>	
	3 factors model	4 factors model
Df	51	48
$\chi^2$	459.89	141.41
$\chi^2/Df$	9.02	2.94
NFI	0.98	0.98
NNFI	0.91	0.98
CFI	0.93	0.98
GFI	0.77	0.93
AGFI	0.65	0.88
RMR	0.056	0.038
RMSEA	0.18	0.08
$\Delta Df$	3	
$\Delta\chi^2$	318.5	

The CFA outcomes showed that the 4 factors model was better than the 3 factors model. We conduct a second order factors analysis to confirm if the above 4 factors belong to a higher second order factors. The model fit was good ( $\chi^2/Df=3.08$ , NFI=0.98, NNFI=0.98, CFI=0.98, GFI=0.98, AGFI=0.88, RMR=0.048, RMSEA=0.08). Based on the factors analysis, we can concluded that the employee brand building behavior included four factors, which are retention, in-role brand building behavior, participation and positive WOM.

Before estimating the path coefficients of the hypothesized structural model, we proceeded to fit a CFA on all the 3 latent factors: supportive leadership, employee brand building behavior and brand image.

The seven-factor CFA model exhibited a good fit with the data ( $\chi^2/ Df = 3.02$ , RMSEA=0.0805, RMR=0.10, NFI=0.970, NNFI=0.978, CFI=0.980, GFI=0.791, IFI=0.980, RFI=0.967). The standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.74 to 0.97 and were statistically significant (T-value ranged from 14.07 to 28.36 at the  $\alpha = .95$  level). This provided the necessary evidence that all the constructs exhibited convergent validity. We computed the average variance extracted (AVE) by the indicators corresponding to each of the three factors and compared it with the highest variance that each factor shared with the other factors in the model. The average variance extracted for each factor was always greater than the highest shared variance. The outcome showed that all the constructs exhibited convergent validity.

We had done a correlation analysis using SPSS 16.0 to test the relationship between supportive leadership and employee brand building behavior. The outcome showed that supportive leadership had a significant positive influence to employee brand building behavior (0.549,  $p < 0.00$ ). Hypothesis 1 was supported. In order to examine the cross-level effect between employee brand building behavior and brand image, we conducted the multilevel data analysis by using HLM 6.08. As is shown in table 4, employee brand building behavior has a positive influence on brand image (0.475,  $p < 0.00$ ). Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 4 the cross-level effect between employee brand building behavior and brand image

	Brand image (customer model)	
	Null model	Full model
intercept	4.619(0.00)	4.620(0.00)
employee brand building behavior( employee level)		0.475
$\Delta R^2$		0.03

## Discussion

### Theoretical Contributions

In this study, the authors adopt the employee brand building scale developed by Morhart et al. (2009). Due to the scale was a newest measurement tool and lacked of empirical test, we conducted EFA, CFA and second order factors analysis to confirm the scale's reliability and validity. The data analysis showed the four factors model had a better fit index than the three factors model, what's more, the four factors model had a high convergent validity, discriminate validity and reliability. It's to say that the employee brand building behavior concept included four factors, which are retention, in-role brand building

behavior, participation and positive WOM. Compared to Morhart's research, participation and positive WOM should be divided into two independent factors which merged into extra-role brand building behavior in the prior article.

The traditional views to brand image limit on the customer perspective. The existing research focused on the customers' cognition and reaction to the brand. The scholars have already showed how the customers perceive the company brand and how the company change the customer perceived brand image through external communications. However, the existing researches didn't explore sufficiently how the employees' behaviors influence the customer perceived brand image. This study filled the gap and examined the relationship between employee brand building behavior and customer perceived brand image. Specifically, we tested the correlation relation between supportive leadership and employee brand building behavior and the cross-level influence between employee level brand building behavior and customer level perceived brand image by using the HLM. The data analysis showed that the supportive leadership was useful to help the employees fulfill their in-role job and motivate them to participate into the organization brand building process. In the supportive environment, the employees would like to keep a long-term relationship with the organization and have a positive WOM to others as a return to the supportive leadership. All the employees' brand building behavior had a positive effect on the customer perceived brand image.

### **Managerial Implications**

The customers' perceptions to the brand image mostly come from the service delivery process. The front line service people's behaviors affect the customers' perception in great extent. If the service people provide excellent service to the customers and satisfy their need appropriately, it can make the customers consider the services as a reliable one. Therefore, the service company should pay attention to the organization internal brand building orientation. The external brand communication plays a vital role in persuade the consumers to try the organization's service, but the service delivery by the service employees decides whether the customers will keep a long-term relationship with the company. If the services satisfy the customers' need, they will believe the brand is great and have a repurchase intention. Nowadays, as the superabundant advertisements are glutted with our lives, the advertising effect dropped greatly. The public have already detested the ubiquitous poster. Therefore, it's meaningful and helpful to build the company brand image through the employees' behavior when they delivery services. The managers should reinforce

the organization culture orientation and job skills training to improve the employees' willing to build the company brand. Organization has to transfer the focus from external marketing to internal marketing in order to build a strong and favorite brand image. One of the most effective policies is to foster the employee brand building behavior, which makes the employee keep long-term relationship with organization, fulfill their in-role brand building behavior, participate in the management decision and spread a positive WOM of organization. The customers who have received a brand building service are more likely to perceive the brand image positively.

### **Limitation and Further Research**

The study had not conducted a random sampling, so the estimate to population may have some bias. The authors had not conducted a longitudinal study instead of a cross-section one. The causal relationships among the concepts need to have a further study. What's more, because we sampled in the hotel industry, the results should be tested in other service industries.

The authors had done an empirical research about the relationship between supportive leadership and employee brand building behavior, which is just one of the organization internal brand managements. Scholars should do some more research in the impact of other leadership style to the employee branding behavior. Owing to the inseparability of production and consumption, the customers have to participate in the service delivery process. The service contact extent and consumers' familiarity to the service have a significant influence on the customer perceived brand image. It's necessary to think about the moderated role of the service contact extent and the consumers' familiarity to the service in the further.

### **References**

- [1] Aaker D. A., *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name* [M]. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991
- [2] Aaker D. A., Biel A. L. *Brand Equity and Advertising*[M], Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1993
- [3] Aaker D. A., *Building Strong Brands*[M], New York, NY: Free Press, 1996
- [4] Anderson Neil R. , and Michael A. West, *Measuring Climate for Work Group Innovation: Development and Validation of the Team Climate Inventory*[J],*Journal of Organizational Behavior*,1998,19(3):235-258



- [5] Babin Barry J. and James S. Boles, The Effects of Perceived Co-worker Involvement and Supervisor Support on Service Provider Role Stress, Performance and Job Satisfaction[J],Journal of Retailing, 1996,72(1):57-75
- [6] Bass, Bernard and Stogdill ,Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research [M].New York, NY: The Free Press,1981
- [7] Berry Leonard L. Cultivating Service Brand Equity[J], Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 2000,28(1):128-137
- [8] Burmann Christoph1 , and Zeplin Sabrina, Building brand commitment: A behavioral approach to internal brand management[J], The Journal of Brand Management, 2005,12(4):279-300
- [9] Burmann Christoph, Zeplin Sabrina and Riley Nicola, Key determinants of internal brand management success: An exploratory empirical analysis[J], The Journal of Brand Management, 2009,16(4):264-284
- [10] Cathy J. Cobb-Walgren, Cynthia A. Ruble and Naveen Donthu, Brand Equity, Brand Preference, and Purchase Intent[J],Journal of Advertising,1995,24(3):25-40
- [11] Dansereau Fred Jr., Joseph A. Alutto and Francis J. Yammarino , Theory Testing in Organizational Behavior: The Varient Approach[M],Englewood Cliffs,NJ:Prentice-Hall,1984
- [12] Datta P. R., Chowdhury D. N., Chakraborty B. R. Viral Marketing: New form of Word-of-mouth through Internet[J], The Business Review, 2003,3(2):69-74
- [13] David Ogilvy , Ogilvy on Advertising[M] , New York, NY : Crown, 1983
- [14] Davis S. and Halligan, Extending Your Brand by Optimizing Your Customer Relationship [J], Journal of Consumer Marketing, 2002, 19(1):7-11.
- [15] Dyson P., A. Farr, and N.S. Hollis, Understanding, Measuring, and Using Brand Equity [J], Journal of Advertising Research, 1996, 36(November/December):9-21.
- [16] García Rodríguez María José, and Bergantiños Cid Gustavo, Los componentes del valor de la marca: una aplicación empírica en el segmento alto del mercado automovilístico[J], Revista Europea de Dirección y Economía de la Empresa, 2001, 10(2):161-177
- [17] Grandey Alicia A. , Emotion Regulation in the Workplace: A New Way to Conceptualize Emotional Labor[J],Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 2000,5(1):85-110
- [18] James,L.R.,Demaree,R.J.&Wolf,G.,1993,“Rwg:An Assessment of Within-group Interrater Agreement”, Journal of Applied Psychology,78,pp.306~309.

- [19] Kevin P. Gwinner, and John Eaton, Building Brand Image through Event Sponsorship: The Role of Image Transfer[J], Journal of Advertising,1999,28(4):47-57
- [20] Harber Doug, Marriott Fern, Idrus Nirwan. Employee Participation in TQC: The Effect of Job Levels on Participation and Job Satisfaction[J],International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 1991,8(5):35-54
- [21] Haywood K. Michael. Managing Word of Mouth Communications[J], The Journal of Services Marketing, 1989,3(2):55-67
- [22] Henkel Sven, Tomczak Torsten, Heitmann Mark, etc, Managing Brand Consistent Employee Behavior: Relevance and Managerial Control of Behavioral Branding[J], Journal of Product & Brand Management, 2007,16(5):310-320
- [23] Herr P. M., Kardes F. R., Kim J. Effects of Word-of-mouth and Product-attribute Information on Persuasion: An Accessibility-diagnostics Perspective[J],Journal of Consumer Research, 1991,17(March):454-462
- [24] Hsieh Ming H , Identifying brand image dimensionality and measuring the degree of brand globalization: A cross-national study[J], Journal of International Marketing,2002,10(2):46-67
- [25] House Robert J.,A Path Goal Theory of Leader Effectiveness[J] , Administrative Science Quarterly,1971,16(3):321-352
- [26] Judge Timothy A., Ronald F. Piccolo , and Remus Ilies , The Forgotten Ones? The Validity of Consideration and Initiating Structure in Leadership Research[J], Journal of Applied Psychology,2004,89(1):36-51
- [27] Keller Kevin Lane. Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-based Brand Equity [J]. Journal of Marketing, 1993,57(January):1-22
- [28] Keller Tiffany, and Fred Dansereau, Leadership and Empowerment: A Social Exchange Perspective[J],Human Relations,1995,48(2):127-145
- [29] Kim Hong-bumm,and Kim Woo Gon, The relationship between brand equity and firms' performance in luxury hotels and chain restaurants[J], Tourism Management,2005,6:549-560
- [30] King Ceridwyn, Grace Debra. Exploring Manager's Perspective of the Impact of Brand Management Strategies on Employee Roles within A Service Firm[J], Journal of Service Marketing, 2006,20(6):369-380
- [31] Lassar W., Mittal B. and Sharma A., Measuring customer-based brand equity[J], Journal of Consumer Marketing, 1995,12(4):11-19
- [32] Lastovicka J.L. and Gardner D.M., Low Involvement Versus High Involvement Cognitive Structures[J],Advances in Consumer Research,1978,5:87-92
- [33] Lin meizhen & Wang chunben, The Impact of Supportive Leadership and Empowering Atmosphere to the Employee Role Press and Job Performance [D]. Guangzhou: Sun Yat-sen Press, 2010

- [34] Low G.S. and Lamb C.W., The Measurement and Dimensionality of Brand Associations[J],*Journal of Product & Brand Management*,2000,9(6):350-68
- [35] Locke Edwin A., and David M. Schweiger, Participation in Decision Making: One more Look: Straw Barry[M],*Research in Organizational Behavior*, 1979,Greenwich, CT:JAI Press, 265-340
- [36] Luthans Fred Steven M. Norman , Bruce J. Avolio, and James B.Avey, The Mediation Role of Psychological Capital in the Supportive Organizational Climate-Employee Performance Relationship[J],*Journal of Organizational Behavior*,2008,29(2):219-238
- [37] Mangold W. G., Miller F., Brockway G. R. Word-of-mouth Communication in the Service Marketplace[J], *The Journal of Services Marketing*, 1999,13(1):73-89
- [38] Martinez Eva, and Polo Yolanda. Effect of Brand Extension Strategies on Brand Image: A Comparative Study of the UK and Spanish Markets[J], *International Marketing Review*, 2008,25(1):107-137
- [39] Michael D. Hartline, and David Bejou , Internal relationship management: linking human resources to marketing [J], *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 2004, 3(2&3):1 - 4.
- [40] Miles Sandra J., and Mangold Glynn, A Conceptualization of the Employee Brand Process [J]. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 2004,3(2-3):65-87
- [41] Morhart Felicitas M., Herzog Walter, and Tomczak Torsten, Brand-Specific Leadership: Turning Employees into Brand Champions [J]. *Journal of Marketing*, 2009,73(September):122-142
- [42] Murray K. B. A Test of Services Marketing Theory: Consumer Information Acquisition Activities[J], *Journal of Marketing*, 1991,55(January):10-25
- [43] O'Cass Aron, Grace Debra. An Exploratory Perspective of Service Brand Associations [J]. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 2003,17(5):452-475
- [44] OldhamGreg R. and Anne Cummings , Employee Creativity: Personal and Contextual Factors at Work[J], *Academy of Management Journal*, 1996,39(3):607-634
- [45] Park C. W., Jaworski B., MacInnis D. J. Strategic Brand Concept-image Management[J], *Journal of Marketing*, 1986,50(October):135-145
- [46] Rafferty Alannah E. and Mark M.Griffin, Refining Individualized Consideration: Distinguishing Developmental Leadership and Supportive Leadership[J],*Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 2006, 79(1):37-61

- [47] Robbins T.L., M.D. Crino, and L.D. Rredendall, An Integrative Model of the Empowerment Process[J], Human Resource Management Review, 2002, 12(3):419-443
- [48] Robert M. Morgan, and Shelby D. Hunt, The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing[J], The Journal of Marketing, 1994, 58(3):20-38
- [49] Roneney Jennifer A., and Benjamin H. Gottlieb, Development and Initial Validation of a Measure of Supportive and Unsupportive Managerial Behavior[J], Journal of Vocational Behavior, 2007, 71(2):186-203
- [50] Schalk Rene, Campbell Jennifer W., and Freese Charissa. Change and Employee Behavior[J], Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 1998, 19(3):157-163
- [51] Schaubroeck John, and Laurence S. Fink, Facilitation and Inhibiting Effects of Job Control and Social Support on Stress Outcomes and Role Behavior: A Contingency Model[J], Journal of Organizational Behavior, 1998, 19(2):167-195
- [52] Steven Kerr, Chester A. Schriesheim, Charles J. Murphy and Ralph M. Stogdill, Toward a contingency theory of leadership based upon the consideration and initiating structure literature[J], Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 1974, 12 ( 1 ) 62-82
- [53] Weissenberg Peter, Michael J. Kavanagh, The Independence of Initiation Structure and Consideration: A Review of the Evidence[J], Personnel Psychology, 1972, 25(1):119-130
- [54] Wen zhonglin, Hou taijie & Zhang lei. Applied of Structure Equation Model[M], Beijing: Education Science Press, 2002
- [55] Westbrook R. A. Product/Consumption-based Effective Responses and Post purchase Process[J], Journal of Marketing Research, 1987, 24(August):258-270
- [56] Wetzels Martin, Ko de Ruyter, and Jos Lemmink, Role Stress in After-sales Services Management[J], Journal of Service Research, 1999, 2(1):50-67
- [57] Wirtz J., Chew P. The Effects of Incentives, Deal Proneness, Satisfaction and Tie-strength on Word-of-mouth Behavior[J], International Journal of Service Industry Management, 2002, 13(2):141-162
- [58] Wofford J.C. and Laurie Z. Liska, Path-goal Theories of Leadership: A Meta-analysis[J], Journal of Management, 1993, 19(4):857-876
- [59] Gardner W.L. and Schermerhorn J.R., Unleashing individual potential: Performance Behavior Gains Through Positive Organizational and Authentic leadership[J], Organizational Dynamics, 2004, 33:270-281

- [60] Yoo B. and Donthu N., „Developing and Validating a Multidimensional Consumer-based Brand Equity Scale, Journal of Business Research,2001,52: 1–14
- [61] Yukl Gary , An Evaluation of Conceptual Weaknesses in Transformational and Charismatic Leadership[J],The Leadership Quarterly,1999, 10(2):285-305
- [62] Yukl Gary , Leadership in Organization,2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall,1989