The Influence of Corporate Brand Experience on Employees´ Corporate Brand Pride, Brand-related and Service-related Behaviour

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List of Abbreviations

AET	Affective-Events-Theory
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMV	Common Method Variance
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CR	Composite reliability
DCBE	Direct Corporate Brand Experience
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
e.g.	Exempli gratia
et al.	Et alia
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
H	Hypothesis
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
HR	Human Resources
IBM	Internal Brand Management
ICBE	Indirect Corporate Brand Experience
i.e.	Id est
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient
NFI	Normed Fit Index
n.s.	Not Significant
n/a	Not Applicable
PLS	Partial Least Squares

RMSEA	Root-Mean-Square-Error of Approximation
RQ	Research Question
SD	Standard Deviation
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
TLI	Tucker-Lewis-Index
TV	Television
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WOM	Word-of-mouth

List of Symbols

α	Cronbach´s Alpha
β	Standardized Path Coefficient
df	Degrees of Freedom
N	Sample Size
p	Significance Value
R^2	Coefficient of Determination
X^2	Qui-Square
Q^2	Stone–Geisser Q^2 value

1. Introduction

1.1 Relevance and Scope

In nowadays complex and competitive business environment corporations and their brands need to focus on relevant resources (Iglesias et al., 2019). As such employees represent a strategically important resource for firm success, contributing to the achievement of corporate brand objectives (Viitala et al., 2020). Moreover, employees depict an essential resource in a service context, fulfilling the brand promise and being core part of the product (Afshardoost et al., 2021). Hence, in the past years research focuses on the question how the bond between the corporation or brands and the employee can be strengthened, fostering desirable attitudes (e.g. commitment) and behaviour (e.g. organizational-citizenship behaviour). Focussing on the marketing domain literature suggests that internal branding receives increasing attention during the last decade (e.g. Barros-Arrieta & Garcia-Cali, 2021), especially after the widely considered work of Burmann et al. (2009). Hereby, internal branding "aims at inducing employees` behavioral changes to support the delivery of the brand promise" (Punjaisri et al., 2009, p. 213).

Following this theoretical approach, Mercedes-Benz started several years ago a long-term initiative with regard to employees and managers, including a virtual brand academy and a Mercedes-Benz brand book. The book was given to 13 000 managers highlighting the pioneering work of the Mercedes-Benz founder and communicating the brand values. Such branding initiatives are important, as they usually positively influence brand commitment (e.g. Taku et al., 2022; Afshardoost et al., 2021; Du Preez et. al., 2017; Piehler, 2018), brand-citizenship behaviour (e.g. Afshardoost et al., 2021; Ngo et al., 2019; Ragheb et al., 2018), brand identification (e.g. Taku et al., 2022; Boukis et al., 2014), brand equity (Iyer et al., 2018; Du Preez et al., 2017), brand-supporting behaviour (e.g. Taku et al., 2022), besides others. Thereby, internal branding research highlights several approaches for turning employees into brand champion. For example, brand communication (e.g. Punjaisri et al., 2009), brand-focused human resource practices (e.g. Burmann et al., 2009), and brand oriented leadership (e.g. Du Preez et al., 2017) have been investigated as potential sources of employees´ brand-supporting behaviour.

Interestingly, a lately published meta-analysis of Afshardoost et al. (2021) regarding internal branding showed that internal branding conceptualisations only rarely developed over the past decade and a critical assessment or new theoretical evaluation of the used construct misses. Here, literature provides support that other elements than internal communications, brand-centred human resource management

practices or brand leadership might play a crucial role in internal branding, especially when considering other research disciplines. For example, Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) recommend to include elements of the (wider) work environment in future research. In the field of consumer research, the power of experience with a brand or firm as well as the understanding of how consumers experience brands are well documented and play a central role in developing successful marketing strategies (e.g. Shahid et al., 2022; Rather et al., 2022; Pina & Dias, 2021; Kim & Song, 2019). In doing so, literature encompasses various forms of consumer brand experience. For example, product experience (Hoch & Ha, 1986), consumption experience (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), customer experience (e.g. Biedenbach & Marell, 2010), service experience (e.g. Hui & Bateson, 1991; Kerin et al., 1992), online (corporate) brand experience (e.g. Ashraf et al., 2018; Cleff et al., 2018), luxury brand experience (de Kerviler & Rodriguez, 2019), innovative brand experience (e.g. Lin, 2015), retailer brand experience (e.g. Ishida & Taylor, 2012). Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53), the most widely cited scale, define brand experience as "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand´s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments". Similarly, Cliffe and Motion (2005, p. 1069) define brand experience as the "spectrum of events or interactions that a customer has with a brand. Thus, a brand experience can include customer direct use of a product and/or service, as well as indirect brand images, associations, and events". However, this diffuse classification of a corporate brand experience might be insufficient in an employee context. In particular, as conceptual frameworks in the field of employer brand experience specify a variety of touch points. For example, human resources practices, leadership, values, communication, besides others (e.g. Mosley, 2007). Here, simply transferring the employer brand experience concept seems not appropriate, as the concept of employer brand experience and corporate brand experience differ in their inner nature (Foster et al., 2010). The corporate brand experience concept in this thesis does not solely focus on the experiences provided by the organization as an employer (i.e. employer brand experience), but also on the experience an employee can have by using the products for example. This approach is more holistic in nature, as it incorporates the wider work environment of an employee. In doing so, it is more realistic as it represents a real-world-scenario. Moreover, employees often times seek for a meaning in their job (Helm, 2013). Here, the experience of products from the corporation an employee work for might contribute to positive outcomes.

Therefore, this thesis aims to conceptualise corporate brand experience and validate the developed scale in an employee context due to the absence of a

considerable and diverse discussion in literature (e.g. Andreini et al., 2018). Though, this thesis should also identify potential facets of employees´ corporate brand experience to provide a holistic view on this research question. By doing so, this thesis aims to answer the following overarching research question:

RQ 1: How can employee corporate brand experience be conceptualised and which internal as well as external facets should be incorporated in the construct?

In answering the question of how a new corporate brand experience construct should look like and what facets might be included in an employee setting, this thesis focusses on the central aspect of every corporate brand, namely its identity (Balmer & Gray, 2003). On the one hand a corporate identity approach offers the possibility to categorize employees´ corporate brand experience (i.e. internal and external), following earlier assumptions of brand experience research (Brakus et al., 2009), and on the other hand it provides further guidance regarding the facets of employees´ corporate brand experience. In doing so, the concept of corporate identity includes both tangible (i.e. products) and intangible elements (i.e. values) (Tomo et al., 2022). As this differentiation is also reflected by the brand experience definition of Cliffe and Motion (2005), it supports the conceptualization in Chapter 2. Moreover, latest research of Pina and Dias (2021) stated that (corporate) brand identity plays an essential role in the creation of (consumer) brand experience, supporting a corporate identity approach. Hereby, corporate identity can be defined as the "embodiment of the organization" (Bick et al., 2003, p. 839) - persisting of values, behaviour, communications and product or services (Balmer, 1998). Similarly, Tomo et al. (2022, p. 39) lately described corporate identity as "the sum of all factors that define and project "what the organization is", "what it stands for", "what it does", "how it does it" and "where it is going".". However, Tomo´s et al. (2022) description of corporate identity also includes future-oriented elements such as the mission and vision of the corporation, extending Balmer´s (1998) earlier definition. Thus, the concept of corporate identity provides multiple touch points, which might play a role in an employee context (see Figure 1).
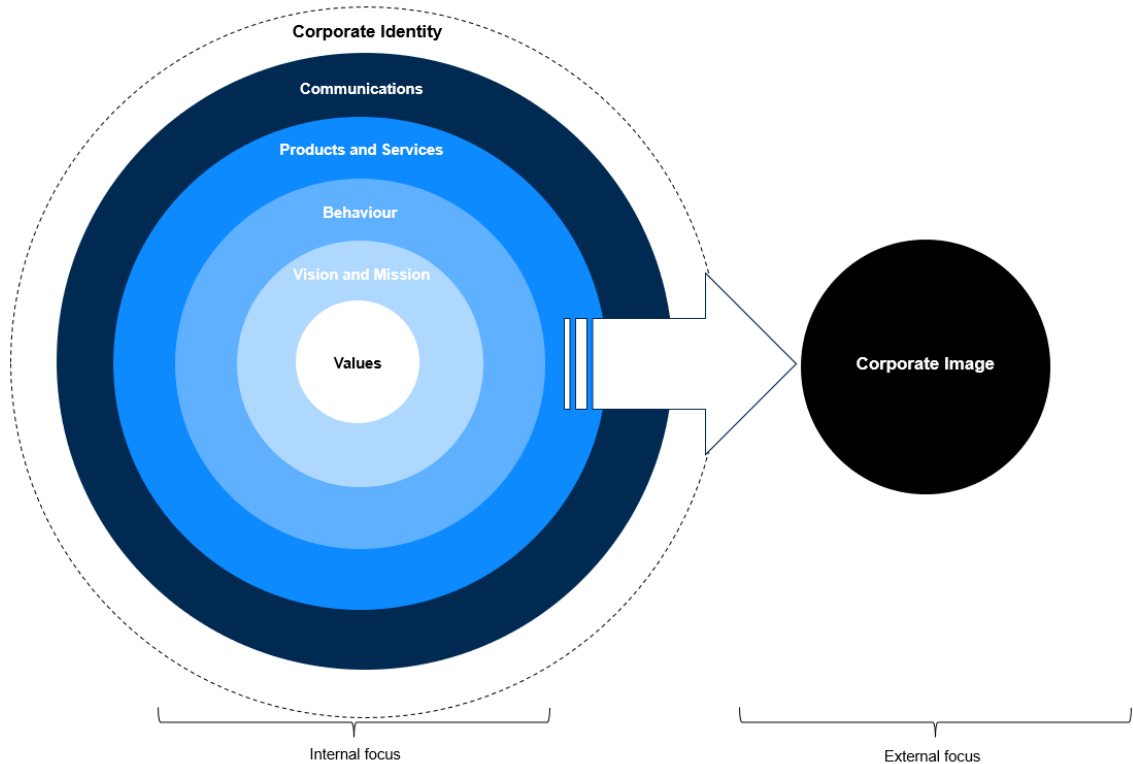
Figure 1: Touchpoints of corporate identity

De Chernatony et al. (2006) values are an enduring belief that guides corporate behaviour. In doing so, literature shows that values strongly influence employees´ attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Gabler et al., 2020), providing further support for this approach with regard to an employee setting. Cable and Turban (2003) state that this circumstance relates to the fact that the employer represents a central aspect of peoples´ self-concept. For this reason, values also play a central role in corporate branding (Hamzah et al., 2014). Focusing more on an organizational level, Balmer and Gray (2003) depict that values are especially important when theorising about corporate brands. This relates to the fact that corporate brands are built on identity, whereas product brands often solely focus on product properties. So, values play a crucial role with regard to corporate brand experience in an employee context. This is in line with Pina and Dias (2021, p. 101), who state that "the brand experience concept captures the very essence of a brand", like values. Following these assumptions literature provide evidence that values represent an indirect form of employees´ corporate brand experience, compared to the direct use of a product or service (Brakus et al., 2009). Here, the experience of values draws on the question what a brand stands for. So, indirect forms of employees´ corporate brand experience go beyond the solely experience of products or services.

Besides values, the mission and vision of a corporation represents relatively central elements of the corporate identity, too (Tomo et al., 2022). Here, mission and vision refer to the strategy of the corporate brand (Bick et al., 2003) answering the

question what does the corporation and where it is going. Similarly, to values, the mission and vision of a corporation influence employees, too (Baker et al., 2014). Internal branding literature shows that brand knowledge dissemination, as a well-established construct, represents an indirect form of employees´ corporate brand experience (Baker et al., 2014). However, as this construct does not solely focus on values it represents a discrete indirect form of corporate brand experience.

Another element of corporate identity refers to the corporation´s products or services (Balmer, 1998). This element is probably the most common, when theorising about brand experience. Hoch and Ha (1986) as well as Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were the first highlighting product or consumption experience in a consumer context. Here, brand experience refers to the direct use of a product or service. In an employee setting the use of a product can occur when employees experience the products from the organization, they work for in a work-related context, but also, in a private setting. For example, when employees of a corporate brand use a power tool at home from the firm, they work for.

Drawing on the earlier definition of Tomo et al. (2022), corporate identity seems to focus on internal aspects of a corporation (e.g. values). However, Balmer (1998) illustrate that corporate identity and its elements are directly linked to corporate image, which depicts an external interface. Meyer and Schwager (2007) support this view stating that also external encounters with the brand such as news reports are forms of indirect brand experience, leading to the assumption that corporate brand publicity depicts an indirect facet of employees´ corporate brand experience. This external embodiment of corporate identity and its understanding evolved over time according to Iglesias et al. (2020). The traditional view suggest that corporate brand identity is a stable and a unilaterally concept (Essamri et al., 2019; Kapferer, 2012). In contrast, emerging literature argues that corporate brand identity is not stable and not only determined by internal stakeholders (Iglesias et al., 2020). Hence, corporate identity has an internal and external orientation. See Figure 2 for a better overview of the corporate identity facets.

Figure 2: Facets of corporate identity and focus of the thesis

The link between employees´ facets of corporate brand experience and corporate brand pride, brand-related and service-related behaviour

Research on brand experience largely focus on consumer context, as explicated in the previous section. Thereby, literature aims to answer the overall question how the bond between the corporation or brand and the customer can be strengthened, fostering desirable emotions, attitudes and behaviour. In the brand experience domain studies mainly focus on satisfaction (e.g. Ashraf et al., 2018; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014; Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013) and loyalty (e.g. Shahid et al., 2022; Pina & Dias, 2021; Ashraf et al., 2018), which have been primarily examined by Brakus et al. (2009). In contrast, human resource management and marketing research often focus on (brand) commitment as a central construct (e.g. Taku et al., 2022; Afshardoost et al., 2021). However, research regarding employees´ corporate brand experience and its effects on employee outcomes is scarce. Although, employees represent a crucial resource for firm success (Viitala et al., 2020).

Focusing on publicity, representing an external facet of corporate brand experience, it is surprising that literature has neglected its effects in an employee setting. In particular, as media coverage about corporate brands increase. This circumstance relates to the fact that various stakeholders pay increasing attention to aspects of corporate behaviour (Cleeren et al., 2013; Brammer & Pavelin, 2006) and that these stakeholders receive information and news much faster than years ago due to new technologies and online-based communications (Zhu & Chang 2013; Zhou & Whittla, 2013; Eisingerich et al., 2011; Monga & John, 2008). So, employees´ perception of the firm´s status or its glory might be easily affected by negative corporate brand publicity. Based on literature, these aspects are highly linked to feelings of pride (Boons et al., 2015; Salerno et al., 2015), which in turn can influence

brand-oriented and customer-oriented behaviour according to Affective-Events-Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) - making it necessary to further explore potential effects in this thesis.

Direct corporate brand experience focusses on the experience or usage of products or service. Hereby, direct product or service experiences in a consumer context can lead to hedonic outcomes such as emotions and feelings (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Brakus et al. (2009) further depict that besides the solely product use also specific product-related stimuli or attributes (e.g. product design) affect consumer emotions, such as pride. Transferring the concept of direct corporate brand experience to an employee setting, the question arises if an employee driving an automobile from the corporation, he/she works for, instil feelings of pride in the same way as consumer research suppose (e. g. Pina & Dias, 2021). Here, literature provides support for the assumption that employees can experience corporate brand pride when driving an automobile from the company, he/she work for (e. g. Iglesias et al., 2019). Moreover, feelings of pride can also occur "when one is publicly complimented by others" (Verbeke et al., 2004, p. 387), besides the direct experience driving the automobile. Transferring this finding in an employee context, the publicly appraisal of others, such as through family or friends, when driving for example a premium automobile from the corporation the person works for can further enhance the person´s pride through positive WOM (e. g. Yim & Fock, 2013). . Thus, this thesis investigates effects of employees´ direct corporate brand experience on corporate brand pride. Following AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) work events in form of direct corporate brand experience can lead to downstream consequences, which may influence brand-related and service-related behaviour.

Indirect corporate brand experience occurs when employees of a corporate brand experience the values a corporate brand stands for, e. g., through internal communications (Brakus et al., 2009). Internal branding literature provides various evidence that general forms of communication affect employees' emotions, attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Barros-Arrieta & García-Cali, 2021). However, these general forms of communications do not focus on the experience of the firms' values. Instead, internal brand communication often times focuses on improving the employees "understanding and knowledge about the role they play in delivering the brand promise" (Barros-Arrieta & García-Cali, 2021, p. 141). This is surprising as values represent the glue that hold the organization together (Gilani, 2019). Based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) the experience of corporate values should elicit employee feelings of pride as the affiliation to an organization with favourable reputation, reflected in desirable values, usually instil pride. Also, Helm (2013, p. 544)

provides support for this view, stating that (collective) pride describes a "pleasure taken in being associated with one´s employer". Similarly, brand knowledge dissemination – as another facet of internal corporate brand experience with a lower value orientation than indirect corporate brand experience – may act in the same way (see Chapter 4). Baker et al. (2014) showed that brand knowledge dissemination focusses more on a general experience of the values, mission, and vision of a brand. Following social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) the experience of these key elements of a brand´s being, should instil pride, too. Literature provide evidence that indirect forms of brand information affect employee brand-related behaviour (Baker et al., 2014). Similarly, AET provide further theoretical support, that indirect corporate brand experience might influence behaviour, whether directly or indirectly (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Thus, it is necessary to reveal potential effects of indirect corporate brand experience on corporate brand pride and behaviour.

Overall, research largely neglected the influence of employees´ corporate brand experience and its facets on employees´ affective and cognitive reactions (i.e. corporate brand pride). For this reason, this thesis strives to answer the following additional research questions:

RQ 2: Does employees´ direct corporate brand experience influence corporate brand pride and brand-related behaviour?

RQ 3: Does employees´ indirect corporate brand experience influence corporate brand pride and brand-related behaviour?

RQ 4: Does employees´ brand knowledge dissemination, as a mixed facet of indirect corporate brand experience, influence corporate brand pride, brand-related and service-related behaviour?

RQ 5: Does employees´ external corporate brand experience influence corporate brand pride and brand-related behaviour?

1.2 Contributions to Research

In answering the research questions, this thesis makes three main contributions, primarily to the fields of human resource and marketing management.

First, by analysing corporate brand experience through a dualistic approach (i.e., internal and external perspective) in relation to affective and cognitive outcomes (i.e., corporate brand pride), the thesis provides a theoretical basis for future conceptualisation and contributes to a better understanding regarding the role of corporate brand experience and their impact on employees. In response to recent calls for further research, stating that brand experience literature still suffers from conceptual work and a broader conceptualization of brand experience (e.g. Zha et al.,

2020; Coelho et al., 2020), this thesis responds to the calls by developing an employee-based approach on brand experience which is different from previous employer brand experience frameworks (e.g. Mosley, 2007; Edwards & Edwards, 2003) or pure consumer brand experience scales (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009). Moreover, this work reveals that employees´ corporate brand experience can serve as a strong enabler with regard to employees´ corporate brand pride (i.e. indirect corporate brand experience) and brand- or customer-oriented behaviour. Further, in contrast to earlier brand experience research in a consumer context Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this work depicts that not all corporate brand experiences are equally effective in an employee setting. Overall, the thesis advances current view on brand experience and highlights the essential role corporate brand experience play in an employee-context.

Second, previous research criticised that brand experience constructs are conceptualized in a static manner, suppressing the dynamic environment and interaction between layers of experience (Zha et al., 2020). For this reason, this thesis analyses in Chapter 3 the interplay of three types of employee corporate brand experience (i.e., indirect corporate brand experience through internal communications, indirect corporate brand experience through external communications and perceived negative corporate brand publicity). Here, it is found that effects of external corporate brand experience (i.e., publicity) can be mitigated by indirect corporate brand experience through internal communications. Besides the insight that corporate brand experience can exhibit a more dynamic aspect, the study also sheds light on the detrimental effect of perceived negative corporate brand publicity – as a part of external corporate brand experience. In doing so, this paper is the first analysing effects of corporate brand publicity on employee emotions, attitudes (i.e., corporate brand pride) and brand-supporting behaviour (i.e., employee referrals and WOM), answering calls for further research (Kraemer et al., 2020).

Third, by analysing corporate brand pride in various employee settings, this thesis is going beyond the traditional research stream, often focusing on commitment. In doing so, the present thesis enriches human resource management literature as well as marketing literature and provides answers to previous calls for further research with regard to further antecedents as well as consequences of pride (e.g. Kraemer et al., 2020; Kraemer et al., 2016; Helm, 2011). Literature criticises in particular that little is known what determinants lead to (organizational) pride and what effects pride has on employee's behaviour. In addition, Gouthier and Rhein (2011) depict that (organizational) pride has a stronger influence on work-related behaviour than commitment. However, this noteworthy finding seems to be overlooked – as until now only few studies investigate (corporate brand) pride in more detail. Results of the main

studies of this thesis reveal various determinants leading to feelings of pride. Moreover, this thesis show that corporate brand pride is a strong intrinsic motivator fostering desirable behavioural outcomes of employees.

1.3 Structure

This thesis contains 6 chapters to address the identified research gap and answering the research questions. To clarify the focus of this work, its main chapters are incorporated into the classification scheme presented in Chapter 1 (see Figure 2).

Chapter 1 highlights the relevance and scope of the research domain, and then specifies the particular research questions based on the current state of research. It also provides a brief description of the theoretical contribution this thesis makes.

Chapter 2 proceeds with the conceptualization and validation of a multidimensional employee corporate brand experience scale. Based on a literature review and 15 qualitative interviews with professionals, working in diverse sectors, an initial item pool was generated highlighting possible brand touch points of employees. Focussing on the gained input, a validation study with 195 professionals working for product based corporate brands is performed. The process included item development as well as tests regarding the scale´s construct, discriminant and incremental validity. Furthermore, this section includes another study of 282 employees revealing effects of the previously developed corporate brand experience scale on corporate brand pride and brand-supporting behaviour.

Advancing the idea of the newly developed corporate brand experience scale Chapter 3 investigates the effect of perceived negative corporate brand publicity, representing an external form of corporate brand experience, on corporate brand pride and brand-supporting behaviour, by conducting a quantitative study with 763 employees. Drawing on lately critics of Zha et al. (2020), stating that the brand experience construct must reflect a more dynamic nature, this paper also reveals the interplay between various brand experience an employee can have (i.e., corporate brand experience through internal communications, corporate brand experience through external communications and perceived negative corporate brand publicity).

Chapter 4 analyses the impact of brand knowledge dissemination, as a more simplistic and unidimensional approach of indirect internal corporate brand experience, on corporate brand pride and related service-oriented as well as brand-oriented behaviour of frontline employees. The analysis is performed on survey data collected from 325 frontline employees.

Chapter 5 comprise a general discussion regarding the focus points of this thesis, namely facets of internal and external facets of employees´ corporate brand experience. The section includes theoretical and managerial implications as well as thesis´s limitations.

Finally, Chapter 6 gives the closing remarks.

2. Corporate Brand Experience as a New Construct and Its Effects on Employees´ Corporate Brand Pride and Brand-Supporting Behaviour[1]

Abstract

Employee corporate brand experience is conceptualised as any contact employees have with a corporate brand along the wide range of brand touch points. To investigate this topic, this paper provides two studies. In Study 1 (n = 195), an employee corporate brand experience scale for direct and indirect corporate brand experiences (DCBEs and ICBEs, respectively) has been developed and validated. In doing so, this paper shows that these scales are distinct from existing experience measures in consumer and organisational behaviour research. Study 2 investigates how these different types of brand experiences generate employee corporate brand pride and turn employees into brand champions. A multivariate data analysis technique (partial least squares) is used to analyse data from 283 employees in Germany. By building on and advancing the assumptions of affective events theory, Study 2 shows that only ICBEs trigger emotional and attitudinal brand pride, which in turn affect brand-supporting behaviours.

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2.1 Introduction

Internal branding refers to focussed organisational efforts to promote a brand to employees, thereby motivating them to strengthen the corporate brand and become brand ambassadors (Morhart et al., 2009). Since internal branding has a major influence on brand performance (Punjaisri et al., 2008) and not only motivates employees to exert brand building behaviours (Morhart et al., 2009) but even more leads to enhanced customer-related outcomes (Backhaus, 2016), companies worldwide are increasingly investing vast amounts of money and resources in internal branding efforts (e.g. Caterpillar and Mercedes-Benz) (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010). For example, in recent years, Mercedes-Benz has started several long-term initiatives for employees and managers, including a virtual brand academy on their intranet and a Mercedes-Benz brand book specifically designed for managers. The virtual brand academy includes an interactive training tool for employees (Pearlman, 2010), and the book, which was given to 13 000 managers, recounts the pioneering work of the Mercedes-Benz founder and communicates the meaning of brand values to managers in an emotionally moving context. In addition, training workshops complement the international brand ambassador programme. Such branding initiatives are relevant to brand success because employees are said to reinforce an organisation's brand building efforts (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014), both on the job (in-role behaviour) and off the job. Furthermore, these efforts come with behaviours that go beyond prescribed roles (extra-role behaviour), for example, as brand representatives to friends, family, customers or even potential hires (Bloemer, 2010; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014).

Internal branding research applies several levers for turning employees into brand ambassadors. For example, Morhart et al. (2009) investigated the role of leadership for accomplishing this. In another study, the employee brand fit, brand knowledge or belief in the brand was investigated (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014) as potential sources of employee brand-supporting behaviours. However, to date, the employee corporate brand experience has widely been neglected as a potential antecedent of employee brand-supporting behaviours. This negligence is interesting because internal branding emerged from consumer branding. In consumer branding, the power of experience with a brand or company and understanding of how consumers experience brands (Klein et al., 2016) are well documented and play crucial roles in developing effective marketing strategies (Verhoef et al., 2009). Hence, consumer research is especially investigating how to establish an emotional bond between the brand and customer (Brakus et al., 2009). One potential source for strengthening the emotional bond between employees and the brand is employee

brand-related experience. Experiences are especially relevant as — according to affective events theory (AET) — they trigger emotions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As a result, emotionally attached employees are more likely to exert brand citizenship behaviour (Piehler et al., 2016). Moreover, in the same way that 'consumers look for brands that provide them with unique and memorable experiences', corporate brands that manage their employee-related experiences could attract potential hires (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010, p. 532). One reason that internal branding research has hitherto lacked evidence regarding the role of brand-related experiences may be the lack of an employee corporate brand experience scale. For this reason, the aim of this study is to define, clarify, conceptualise, and examine the role of brand-related experiences, especially by focussing on the question of how employees can be turned into brand champions. In this paper, using a multivariate data analysis technique (partial least squares, PLS), both the conceptual development of a new employee corporate brand experience scale and an empirical analysis of the consequences of employees' corporate brand experience is presented.

For defining and conceptualising employee corporate brand experience and its underlying dimensions, at first a literature review of consumer and marketing research was conducted. Then, an employee corporate brand experience scale that is different from related constructs, such as existing brand experience scales from consumer or organisational research (Brakus et al., 2009; Edwards & Edwards, 2013) is developed. Next, the scales were tested using standard validation procedures for scale development. Furthermore, this study tested whether corporate brand experience elicits emotional (corporate brand) pride, responding to calls for further research (Helm, 2012; Kraemer et al., 2016; Kraemer et al., 2020). Since AET postulates that emotions arise from experiences, this theory was used as a theoretical groundwork.

Overall, the present study adds several contributions to the existing literature. First, it is the only research so far to explicitly define, measure, and examine the consequences of employees' corporate brand experience. In doing so, this paper enriches brand experience literature as new conceptual work in this field is quite rare (e.g. Andreini et al., 2018; Zha et al., 2020). Drawing on and adapting the concept of customer brand touch points both direct and indirect corporate brand experiences (DCBEs and ICBEs, respectively) have been implemented as work events. Thereby study 2 broadens the theoretical view of AET as no prior AET studies have investigated whether work events could be either direct or indirect. Second, by investigating how corporate brand pride could be triggered, study 2 shows that DBCE and IBCE are not equally relevant in building corporate brand pride. The findings

presented illustrate that ICBE triggers brand pride, which in turn increases brand citizenship behaviour and has a major effect on how branding activities should be designed. Finally, as the third contribution, this paper shows that corporate brand pride is an important driver in brand building behaviours. Consequently, against the backdrop of prior research — which predominantly emphasises brand commitment as a central driver of brand-supporting behaviour — study 2 identifies the psychological mechanisms of reinforcing brand building. In contrast to prior studies (e.g. Helm et al., 2016), an explanation is provided for the underlying effects (especially antecedents) of corporate brand pride by applying AET. However, based on the findings of the studies performed, this research enriches the current view of this theory by proving that its assumptions are also applicable to an internal branding context and that it can serve as a framework for brand-building behaviours.

2.2 Study 1: Developing and Validating the Corporate Brand Experience Scale

2.2.1 Literature Review

In consumer marketing research, 'marketers recognise the power of experience[s] [...] to create value for consumers' (Schouten et al., 2007, p. 357) and to establish an emotional bond between the brand and customer (Brakus et al., 2009). Consumer research scholars have identified a multitude of possible experiences individuals can have. In line with Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010), these can include the product (Hoch, 2002), brand (Brakus et al., 2009), shopping (Klein et al., 2016), customer (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010), online brand (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013) or even corporate brand experience (Hamzah et al., 2014).

Previous internal branding research has lacked evidence regarding the role of brand-related experiences, especially in turning employees into brand ambassadors. This is interesting because the emotional bond between employees and a (corporate) brand has been a major topic in several brand and organisational studies (e.g. Burmann et al., 2009). These studies have frequently investigated the antecedents and outcomes of brand commitment. Yet, none of them alluded to employee brand-related experiences. In a recent investigation the role of emotions in decision making on employer brands using insights from functional magnetic resonance imaging, Rampl et al. (2014) argued that generating emotional experiences with the organisation could become increasingly important for an employee — brand context; thus, this research tries to fill the gap in the literature by considering this topic.

2.2.2 Corporate Brand Experience: Conceptual Definition

In the absence of a considerable and diverse discussion of employee (corporate) brand experience in internal branding or marketing research (e.g. Andreini et al., 2018), a new corporate brand experience construct using the insights from

previously performed marketing and consumer research is conceptualised. According to customer marketing research, 'brand experience includes the spectrum of events or interactions that a customer has with a brand. Thus, a brand experience can include customers direct use of a product and/or service, as well as indirect brand images, associations, and events' (Cliffe & Motion, 2005, p. 1069). Product experiences can therefore either be direct respectively product-related (e.g. if consumers have physical contact with the product) or indirect (e.g. if the company is virtually presented in an advertisement) (Kempf & Smith, 1998; Hoch, 2002; Brakus et al., 2009). These experiences can also occur during the interaction with the brand's products. For e.g. the shopping or service experience occurs when a consumer interacts with the employees or physical environment of a store and its policies or practices (Hui & Bateson, 1991; Kerin et al., 1992; Holbrook, 2000). Based on this, we acknowledge that brand experiences can either be tangible or intangible.

In line with prior conceptualisations from consumer and internal branding research employees can have both direct (product-related) and indirect (non-product-related) experiences with a corporate brand (e.g. Iglesias et al., 2019). Based on this assumption, the brand experience is not only about experiencing the companies' products but also about experiencing what a brand stands for, the values and norms it is based on and which attributes (in the case of a product brand) it offers. Here, direct experiences occur when employees experience the products from the company they work for, for example, when employees work for an automobile company and use a company car to drive to business appointments (i.e. direct organisational corporate brand experience). Direct experiences can also occur when employees experience the brand's products in private settings like using a refrigerator at home (i.e. direct private corporate brand experience). Similar to the consumer context, in which direct experiences mostly occur during interactions with brand touch points, such as the brand's physical elements (e.g. packaging) (Klein et al., 2016), employees' DCBEs are shaped by experiencing the concrete attributes of the brand's products. Hence, DCBE is conceptualised as a construct comprising two dimensions, namely, organisational and private product-related corporate brand experiences (see Figure 3). In a consumer context, definitions of brand experience range from detailed descriptions to more general definitions, such as 'internal and subjective direct [...] or indirect contact with the company', where direct experiences occur during the product use and indirect experiences for example involves encounters with brand representatives (Meyer & Schwager, 2007, p. 118). Consequently, we define DCBE as an employee's subjective experience of the brand benefits through any product-related direct contact with the corporate brand products occurring in an organisational or private setting.
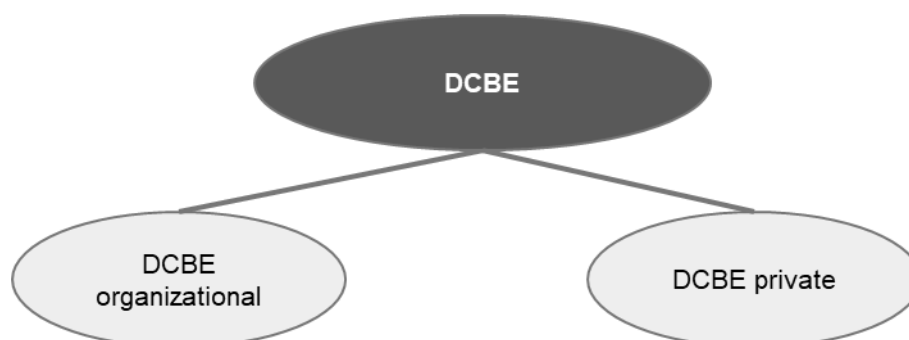
Figure 3: Direct corporate brand experience

Besides experiencing the (corporate) brand through the companies' products employees of a company can also experience the brand and its values indirectly or non-product-related. Thereby, various brand touch points exist and need to be managed to deliver a consistent (corporate) brand experience in an employee context — likewise in consumer marketing (Mosley, 2007). Following this assumption and drawing on branding literature employee brand touch points can be mainly divided into the following dimensions: people-related (e.g. supervisors, colleagues, friends and family), media-related (e.g. internal and external communications) and HR-related (e.g. empowerment, hiring, leadership, training) (Burmann et al., 2009; Burmann & König, 2011; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; Chiang et al., 2013). With regard to people-related aspects a reference is often made to the importance of managers or leaders to exemplify the values of a (corporate) brand and demonstrate the values internally and externally by acting as role models (Mosley, 2007; Morhart et al., 2009). In a similar way, employees can experience the (corporate) brand and its values through external feedback, e.g. through friends and acquaintances. Media-related elements such as internal and external communications are also frequently included in models of (internal) branding as both forms of communication significantly shape employees´ perceptions of the (corporate) brand and its values (e.g. Burmann & König, 2011). Brand centered HR activities such as (brand) empowerment, (brand) incentives, (brand) selective hiring, (brand) leadership or (brand) training exhibit further brand touch points of employees (Burmann et al., 2009; Burmann & König, 2011; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; Chiang et al., 2013).

Complementing the construct development and preempting the validation section, various brand-related HR practices were included in the pre-test (empowerment, information sharing, selective hiring, training, competitive compensation, job security and leadership). However, none of these HR practices revealed to be part of the nonproduct-related brand experience dimensions. This might relate to the fact that core aspects of branding such as brand communication refer to the brand's identity (e.g. values) itself and employees consider these facets

as closer connected to the corporate brand compared to HR-related facets. This potential explanation is in line with findings of Burmann et al. (2009) who showed that brand centered HR practices exhibit lower effects on brand commitment compared to internal brand communication focusing on (brand) values. Thus, ICBE describes brand experiences through internal and external communication, colleagues, supervisors, and even feedback from friends and family with the focus on experiencing the values of the corporate brand. Consequently, we define ICBE as the employees' subjective experience of brands benefitting from any non-product-related indirect contact with the corporate brand, which is initiated by colleagues, supervisors, internal and external communication and external feedback from friends and family (see Figure 4).
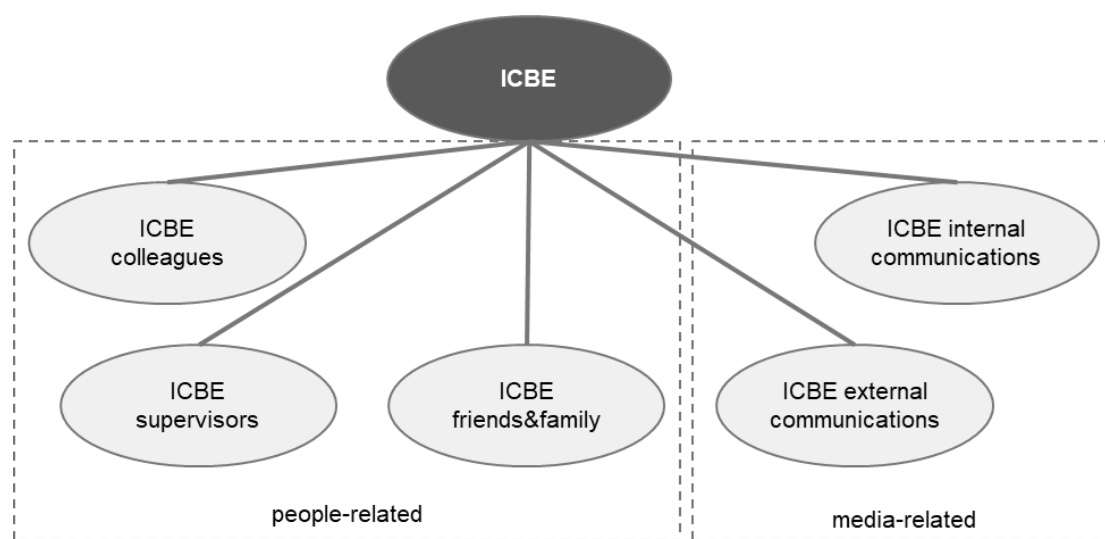
Figure 4: Indirect corporate brand experience

2.2.3 Corporate Brand Experience and Related Constructs

Like existing brand experience constructs in consumer research, employee corporate brand experience involves both direct and indirect experiences. However, the employee corporate brand experience differs from concepts like product (Hoch, 2002), brand (Brakus et al., 2009) or corporate brand experience (Hamzah et al., 2014) because the employee is the central aspect and not the costumer (as it is with brand experience in consumer marketing research).

In addition to physical contact with the brand's products, employees have a psychological contract with the employing organisation. This contract consists of certain beliefs about the employee—employer reciprocal obligations (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). According to this, and in line with the definition of an employer brand provided by Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) as the 'package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment', one may argue that

experiencing a corporate brand is also characterised by employer brand-related predictors, such as the provision of unique employment experiences (Edwards & Edwards, 2013). According to Edwards and Edwards (2013), such predictors can be tangible or intangible, which is in line with the terms direct and indirect, respectively, in our research. Furthermore, they state that a unique employment experience consists of terms and conditions that the employer offers, such as the compensation package, autonomy or developmental opportunities. This is in line with Backhaus (2016) who show that objective information about the work environment are relevant in an employer branding context, even more when the brand experience is consistent with the estimated brand experience. According to Backhaus (2016, p. 193), 'the employer brand makes a promise to its prospective and current employees about the experience they will have in the organization'. In contrast to the study of Edwards and Edwards (2013) and their unique employment experience scale, the developed corporate brand experience construct in this paper focusses not only on the experiences provided by the organisation as an employer (brand) but also the experiences that employees can have by using the products their companies offer and experiencing the symbolic brand benefits, such as the values a company stands for.

As the corporate brand experience scale in this paper concentrates on the exposure of utilitarian attributes of the corporate brand and relevant brand-employee stimuli, study 1 additionally includes the most highly cited and well-known brand experience scale developed by Brakus et al. (2009). This paper focusses on the major sources of an employee's subjective and internal response to DCBEs and ICBEs. In contrast, Brakus et al.'s (2009) scale focusses on subjective and internal consumer responses evoked by brand-related stimuli, considering sensory, affective, behavioural or intellectual consumer reactions.

2.2.4 Scale development

For the corporate brand experience, as a novel construct in internal branding research, inspired by previous research focusing on the consumer context (Brakus et al., 2009), a new measure is developed and conceptualised as a two-dimensional construct comprising direct and indirect experiences. Here, established procedures were followed as described in the previous literature (Churchill, 1979; Crawford & Kelder, 2018).

2.2.4.1 Item generation and reduction

Based on 15 exploratory in-depth interviews with professionals of diverse sectors and the comprehensive literature search that has been conducted regarding branding and concepts related to (corporate brand) experience, an initial item pool of

75 scale items intended to cover multiple aspects of the corporate brand experience was created. Various brand touch points an employee can have with the corporate brand were included (e.g. Burmann et al., 2009; Burmann & König, 2011; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011; Chiang et al., 2013). After generating this initial item pool, all the items were conceptually (pre-)grouped according to the pre-identified brand touch points to simplify the following review by marketing research scholars. These touch points or dimensions represent the relevant aspects of (internal) branding literature and are important in an employee brand context. Next, several marketing research scholars (two marketing faculty members and 11 doctoral students) — who were familiar with the branding literature but unaware of the specific focus of this research project — reviewed the item selection and evaluated the content validity of each item based on the definition of the corporate brand experience. The wording was slightly adapted, and redundant items were eliminated. As a result, a semi-final set of 39 items remained.

2.2.4.2 Initial Validation (Pre-Test)

The item set was first intensively tested and pre-validated in a pre-test consisting of 88 employees working for product-based (42; 47.7%) and service-based (46; 52%) companies. Of all the respondents, 54 (61.4%) were female and 34 (38.6%) were male. Furthermore, 64 (72.7%) were young professionals with less than six years of work experience. After the descriptive analysis of the data, exploratory factor analysis (EFA; oblimin rotation) was conducted. Oblique rotation was chosen at this early stage due to its higher sensitivity in highlighting correlations among factors, compared to orthogonal rotation technique (Fabrigar et al., 1999). The results showed that the DCBE scale revealed a two-factor structure (eigenvalue > 1) explaining 77.60% of the total variance (KMO = 0.76, χ^2 = 527.56, df = 55, p = 0.00). Next, analysis of the ICBE scale comprised five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. These factors explained 87.03% of the total variance (KMO = 0.82, χ^2 = 1967.91, df = 171, p = 0.00). Together, obtained data were found appropriate for factor analysis after calculating the fulfilled relevant criteria with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and execution of the Bartlett test of sphericity (Field, 2005).

As a second step, the internal reliability of each corporate brand experience dimension was assessed by calculating Cronbach's α. All the values exceeded the recommended criteria of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The results were as follows: DCBE organisational = 0.84, DCBE private = 0.97, ICBE supervisors = 0.94, ICBE colleagues = 0.95, ICBE friends & family = 0.85, ICBE internal communication = 0.94, and ICBE external communication = 0.94. An analysis of the item-to-total correlations

revealed that only one item (Item 1, DCBE organisational) did not meet the threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, this item was eliminated from further studies.

As the third step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used for assessing the dataset of the pre-test. The aim of the analysis was identifying potential issues regarding low factor loadings at the early stage of this research. The results showed adequate values (especially for the small sample size) exceeding mostly the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010) — DCBE organisational = 0.46-0.98, DCBE private = 0.86-0.97, ICBE supervisors = 0.88-0.91, ICBE colleagues = 0.83-0.95, ICBE friends & family = 0.660.94, ICBE internal communication = 0.75-0.98, and ICBE external communication = 0.81-0.98. Based on the DCBE organisational and ICBE friends & family, the wording was adapted slightly. The brand centered HR activities — as described in section 'corporate brand experience: conceptual definition' — have been excluded from further research for the following reasons. Factor analyses revealed that the brand centered HR activities (e.g. brand empowerment, brand selective hiring, brand training and brand competitive compensation) did not appear as distinct factors performing EFA (varimax and oblique rotation). A further analysis of the inter-item-correlations depict very low values compared to the other ICBE dimensions. Additionally, CFA results exhibit inadequate factor loadings with regard to the HR-related aspects compared to the other ICBE aspects.

2.2.4.3 Validation of the Measurement Model

The validation dataset was collected to confirm the measurement model and its validity. The data were collected from 195 professionals working for German companies. Of the respondents, 78 (40.0%) were female and 117 (60.0%) were male. Almost half the respondents (45.6%) were senior professionals with more than six years of work experience. In addition, 157 (80.5%) respondents were working for organisations with more than 500 employees. Most of the employees held a university degree (157; 80.5%).

Prior to EFA, the appropriateness for factor analysis was examined. Here, the KMO coefficient was calculated and the Bartlett test of sphericity was performed. The results indicated that the data were appropriate for factor analysis (KMO = 0.90, χ^2 = 6260.79, df = 406, p = 0.00) (Field, 2005). Then, EFA was conducted using oblique rotation (oblimin). The results showed that the corporate brand experience scale comprised seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. In the next step, the internal reliability of each corporate brand experience dimension was assessed by calculating Cronbach's α. All the obtained values exceeded the recommended criteria of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), with the following results: DCBE organisational = 0.89, DCBE

private = 0.97, ICBE supervisors = 0.95, ICBE colleagues = 0.91, ICBE friends & family = 0.94, ICBE internal communication = 0.90, and ICBE external communication = 0.94. Then, analysis of the item-to-total correlations revealed that all the items reached the threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010).

The following step involved CFA using AMOS 24 to assess the dimensionality, reliability and validity of the developed scale. First, a model in which all the items loaded on a single corporate brand experience construct (first-order one-factor model) was analysed, followed by the analysis of a one-factor model with seven subdimensions (second-order) and a two-factor model with seven subdimensions (second-order) as well as a null model. CFA showed that the two-factor model with seven subdimensions (second order) was the most optimal one (see Table 1). The fit measures comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) for this model suggested a good fit (CFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.82, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.08). Second, the reliability of each scale included in the validation study was assessed by calculating the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The CR for each construct was greater than 0.70, and the AVE was greater than 0.50, thereby exceeding the common threshold as shown in Table 2 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010). Then, the factor loadings were examined as the third step. The results showed that they were all statistically significant. Except for two items (Item 1, ICBE internal communications; Item 5, DCBE organisational), all factor loadings were greater than 0.70, indicating convergent validity. As the values were close to the threshold of 0.70, it was decided to keep them. Finally, in the fourth step, the discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the AVE of each factor with the shared variance between each pair of factors (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The results showed that the AVE levels for all constructs included in Study 1 were higher than all the combinations of shared variance (see Table 3).

	CFI	NFI	GFI	RMSEA	CMIN/df
Two-factor model with 7 subdimensions (2nd order)	0.95	0.90	0.82	0.06	1746
One-factor model with 7 subdimensions (2nd order)	0.93	0.88	0.78	0.07	2153
Null model	0.89	0.84	0.69	0.09	2782
One-factor model	0.44	0.42	0.34	0.21	10 267

Notes: CFI = comparative fit index, NFI = normed fit index, GFI = goodness of fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, CMIN/df = relative chi-square

Table 1: Model comparison (validation of study 1)

	Mean	SD	CR	AVE
1. DCBE organisational	3.65	1.07	0.89	0.63
2. DCBE private	2.88	1.44	0.97	0.87
3. ICBE colleagues	3.22	0.87	0.92	0.74
4. ICBE supervisors	3.14	1.08	0.95	0.85
5. ICBE internal communications	3.50	1.03	0.91	0.72
6. ICBE external communications	2.77	1.23	0.94	0.80
7. ICBE friends & family	3.45	1.17	0.94	0.85
8. Employment experience	3.24	1.08	0.84	0.57
9. Brand experience (sensory)	2.88	1.24	0.95	0.86
10. Brand experience (affective)	2.96	1.23	0.89	0.73
11. Brand experience (behavioural)	2.29	1.17	0.93	0.82
12. Brand experience (intellectual)	2.50	1.05	0.91	0.77
13. WOM	3.69	1.10	0.95	0.86
14. Attitudinal corporate brand pride	3.82	1.08	0.94	0.81

Notes: DCBE = direct product-related corporate brand experience, ICBE = indirect product-related corporate brand experience, WOM = word of mouth, SD = standard deviation, CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation, scale reliability and AVE (validation of study 1)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. DCBE organisational	0.80													
2. DCBE private	0.40	0.93												
3. ICBE colleagues	0.33	0.32	0.86											
4. ICBE supervisors	0.32	0.33	0.66	0.92										
5. ICBE internal communications	0.23	0.41	0.52	0.46	0.85									
6. ICBE external communications	0.24	0.61	0.30	0.32	0.57	0.89								
7. ICBE friends & family	0.20	0.45	0.47	0.45	0.60	0.52	0.92							
8. Employment experience	0.25	0.50	0.56	0.59	0.68	0.56	0.60	0.76						
9. Brand experience (sensory)	0.32	0.60	0.39	0.35	0.51	0.54	0.46	0.54	0.93					
10. Brand experience (affective)	0.21	0.56	0.31	0.29	0.50	0.54	0.45	0.51	0.85	0.86				
11. Brand experience (behavioural)	0.19	0.45	0.26	0.29	0.32	0.35	0.34	0.41	0.54	0.54	0.91			
12. Brand experience (intellectual)	0.15	0.34	0.26	0.25	0.33	0.31	0.27	0.40	0.60	0.61	0.47	0.88		
13. WOM	0.39	0.44	0.62	0.62	0.53	0.38	0.54	0.67	0.58	0.47	0.34	0.44	0.93	
14. Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.38	0.44	0.62	0.61	0.53	0.38	0.52	0.69	0.57	0.43	0.35	0.41	0.83	0.90

DCBE = direct product-related corporate brand experience, ICBE = indirect product-related corporate brand experience, WOM = word of mouth

Table 3: Correlations (validation of study 1)

Construct	CR	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. DCBE	n/a	n/a	1												
2. DCBE organisational	0.93	0.91	0.87	*0.73*											
3. DCBE private	0.97	0.96	0.81	0.43	*0.86*										
4. non-PCBE	n/a	n/a	0.43	0.33	0.37	1									
5. ICBE colleagues	0.96	0.95	0.29	0.24	0.22	0.87	*0.86*								
6. ICBE supervisors	0.96	0.95	0.30	0.25	0.24	0.78	0.72	*0.87*							
7. ICBE internal communication	0.97	0.96	0.46	0.36	0.40	0.74	0.52	0.49	*0.92*						
8. ICBE external communication	0.96	0.94	0.61	0.39	0.64	0.58	0.38	0.37	0.60	*0.85*					
9. ICBE friends & family	0.96	0.93	0.37	0.25	0.36	0.78	0.48	0.42	0.52	0.53	*0.88*				
10. Emotional corporate brand pride	0.96	0.94	0.37	0.31	0.29	0.70	0.60	0.54	0.51	0.40	0.54	*0.84*			
11. Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.97	0.95	0.42	0.33	0.35	0.78	0.66	0.61	0.60	0.48	0.60	0.84	*0.87*		
12. WOM	0.97	0.95	0.42	0.32	0.36	0.74	0.61	0.55	0.53	0.44	0.61	0.73	0.81	*0.90*	
13. Employee referrals	0.95	0.94	0.38	0.29	0.32	0.68	0.61	0.53	0.52	0.41	0.50	0.66	0.72	0.72	*0.79*

Notes: Average variance extracted (AVE) appears on the diagonal in italics, DCBE = direct product-related corporate brand experience, ICBE = indirect product-related corporate brand experience, WOM = word of mouth, CR = composite reliability, α = Cronbach's α, n/a = not applicable (because it uses a formative indicator specification).

Table 4: Correlations and quality criteria measurement models of study 2

Relationship	Direct Effect (*t*-value)	Indirect Effect (*t*-value)	Interpretation	Conclusion
DCBE → Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.02 [n.s.] (0.72)	0.02 [n.s.] (0.59)	No mediation No effect	H1a not supported
ICBE → Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.37*** (7.16)	0.39*** (9.17)	Complementary partial mediation	H1b supported

Notes: Significant at: *** $p < 0.001$; DCBE = direct product-related corporate brand experience, ICBE = indirect product-related corporate brand experience, n.s.: not significant.

Table 5: Mediation analysis results of study 2

Hypothesis	Path	Standardised Coefficient	Conclusion
	DCBE → Emotional corporate brand pride	0.03[n.s.]	
	ICBE → Emotional corporate brand pride	0.67***	
	Emotional corporate brand pride → Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.84***	
2a	Attitudinal corporate brand pride → WOM	0.81***	Supported
2b	Attitudinal corporate brand pride → Employee referrals	0.72***	Supported

Notes: Significant at: *** $p < 0.001$; DCBE = direct product-related corporate brand experience, ICBE = indirect product-related corporate brand experience, WOM = word of mouth, n.s.: not significant.

Table 6: Direct relationships results of study 2

HTMT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. DCBE organisational											
2. DCBE private	0.46										
3 ICBE colleagues	0.25	0.23									
4 ICBE supervisors	0.27	0.25	0.76								
5 ICBE internal communications	0.38	0.42	0.55	0.52							
6 ICBE external communications	0.42	0.68	0.39	0.39	0.62						
7 ICBE friends & family	0.27	0.39	0.51	0.44	0.56	0.56					
8 Emotional corporate brand pride	0.33	0.30	0.64	0.57	0.54	0.42	0.58				
9 Attitudinal pride	0.35	0.37	0.69	0.65	0.63	0.49	0.63	**0.89**			
10 WOM	0.35	0.38	0.64	0.58	0.55	0.46	0.65	0.77	**0.86**		
11 Employee referrals	0.31	0.34	0.64	0.55	0.54	0.43	0.53	0.69	0.75	0.75	

Notes: Bold = HTMT > 0.85, DCBE = direct product-related corporate brand experience, ICBE = indirect product-related corporate brand experience, WOM = word of mouth; HTMT = heterotrait–monotrait ratio

Table 7: Results of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio analysis of study 2

Nomological validity was also evaluated. Since corporate brand experience, whether direct or indirect, is usually positive, it was expected that each dimension would positively relate to constructs measuring forms of (employee) satisfaction or loyalty. Prior studies have reported significant relationships between forms of (brand)

experience and satisfaction or loyalty perceptions (Brakus et al., 2009; Klein et al., 2016). Therefore, each dimension of the (new) corporate brand experience scale should relate positively to (attitudinal) corporate brand pride and word of mouth (WOM) for the scale to possess nomological validity (Turhan, 2014). The results showed that the dimensions of corporate brand experience were significant predictors of corporate brand pride and WOM (see Table 2). In addition, the r² values of (attitudinal) corporate brand pride and WOM (dependent variables) were analysed. Here, ICBE showed the highest r² value regarding brand pride ($r^2 = 0.45$) and WOM ($r^2 = 0.47$) compared with the constructs of Brakus et al. (2009) ($r^2 = 0.26$ brand pride; $r^2 = 0.28$ WOM) or Edwards and Edwards (2013) ($r^2 = 0.38$ brand pride; $r^2 = 0.36$ WOM). Based on the results, the ICBE scale showed adequate nomological validity.

2.3 Study 2: Impact of Corporate Brand Experience on Employees' Corporate Brand Pride and Brand Supporting Behaviours

2.3.1 Integrating Employee Corporate Brand Pride and into Internal Branding Research

In line with AET, the marketing literature suggests that experiences evoke emotions (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011). One emotion that has received an increasing amount of attention in organisational research is the employee's pride (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011; Brosi et al., 2018; Lythreatis et al., 2019; Ritzenhöfer et al., 2019; Kraemer et al., 2020). Thus, the aim of the second study was investigating whether employee corporate brand experience results in the emotion of pride in employees. Pride is among the most important employee emotions (e.g. Verbeke et al., 2004), and it represents a valuable attitude in the organisational context (Lea & Webley, 1997), fostering positive employee behaviour. In study 2 it is assumed that pride is also important for the corporate brand as it strongly motivates employee behaviour, with an emphasis on brand citizenship behaviour (Helm et al., 2016). Among the diverse classifications of pride in literature, the focus is within the emotional and attitudinal corporate brand pride.

Emotional pride in organisational research is defined as a short-lived, discreet, and intensely felt self-conscious emotion (Verbeke et al., 2004), typically triggered by a specific event. Employees can feel emotional pride due to an event (e.g. when a new product is launched and presented to the employees or winning a design or best employee award) (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). In addition, employees can be proud of their colleagues' achievements (e.g. winning an important new customer) (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Helm et al. (2016, p. 62) state that emotional corporate brand pride arises 'when brand attributes exceed expectations in comparison with competitor brands or past brand performance'. Therefore, this paper suggests that emotional corporate brand pride can result from a successful achievement for a corporate brand.

Pride can also be an attitude. Here, pride does not stem from the evaluation of specific corporate achievements but rather from general organisational successes, such as being associated with a prestigious corporate brand (e.g. Google, Apple or Porsche) (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011; Helm et al., 2016). Attitudinal corporate brand pride is a consequence of repeatedly felt emotional corporate brand pride; it is more stable, and thus, more suitable for predicting employee behaviours (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Emotions are closely linked to attitudes, which sometimes leads to both being equated in organisational research (Weiss, 2002), making it necessary to delineate the terms of emotional and attitudinal corporate brand pride. Attitudes are overall evaluations, characterised not only by a set of feelings and emotions towards an attitude object but also the underlying affective experiences (i.e. emotions) (Breckler & Wiggins, 1989). In contrast, emotions result from single events, and for repeatedly felt emotions, cause attitudes (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). In sum, 'since emotions have downstream consequences for attitudes and behaviours, attitudes are post-emotional responses' (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011, p. 636).

2.3.2 Affective Events Theory as a Theoretical Framework for Developing Hypotheses

AET is used to explain the interplay of experiences, emotions, attitudes and behaviours (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The theory 'explains the structure, causes and consequences of employees' affective experiences at work' (Matta et al., 2014, p. 922). Work events, such as corporate brand experiences, are proximal causes of these affective reactions (i.e. emotional corporate brand pride) (Herrbach & Mignonac, 2004); these, in turn, influence work-related attitudes (i.e. attitudinal corporate brand pride) and behaviours (i.e. brand-supporting behavior) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Following Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), in this paper a work event is defined as an event that occurs in a work-related setting during a certain period; it can be either direct or indirect.

As an emotion, pride is said to be caused by a specific stimulus or event (e.g. Decrop & Derbaix, 2010). Arnett et al. (2002, p. 90) state that 'pride in an organisation results from specific perceptions of the organisation and from experiences with that organisation'. Since marketing research has found that emotions result from brand experience (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009), it is postulated that a brand-based experience could be a work-related event. Similarly, in a consumer-brand context, Decrop and Derbaix (2010, p. 588) state that 'pride is presented as an emotion arising from a range of buying and consumption situations'. Since consumers and employees are both stakeholders of a corporate brand — where employees are not only employed at a corporation but are often also its consumers — the results indicate that the more employees experience the corporate brand, the more they will feel the emotion of

pride. Furthermore, 'attitudes typically result from experiences; they are learnable' (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011, p. 636). By definition, emotions and attitudes are interrelated, and attitudinal corporate brand pride could emerge from repeatedly felt emotional corporate brand pride. This assumption is in line with AET, as well as several studies showing that affective experiences at work lead to attitudes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Consequently, in an employee brand context, emotions have downstream consequences for attitudes and behaviours, and attitudinal corporate brand pride stems from the repeatedly felt emotional pride for one's corporation. In this vein, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1: Emotional corporate brand pride mediates the positive effects of (a) DCBEs and (b) ICBEs on attitudinal corporate brand pride

To provide a full model, including outcomes of brand pride, frequently investigated positive employee behaviours, such as WOM and employee referrals were used. According to AET, attitudes influence cognitively driven behaviours. Therefore, in an internal branding context, corporate brand pride and commitment positively influence the employees' brand-supporting behaviours, which contribute to the company's branding efforts (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014). In addition, since a few of these relationships have already been shown (i.e. the relationships between attitudinal corporate brand pride and brand commitment and brand commitment and WOM/employee referrals), we did not establish hypotheses for them (marked in Figure 5 with dotted lines). According to Arnett et al. (2002), pride can be seen as a motivator for positive employee behaviours. Therefore:

H2: Attitudinal corporate brand pride positively influences (a) employees' WOM and (b) employee referrals

However, to test the effects of brand pride over and above brand commitment, and since brand pride positively affects brand commitment, it was included in this research.

2.3.3 Method

2.3.3.1 Participants

Data was obtained through a large-scale online survey of companies operating in Germany, which resulted in a dataset with 370 completed surveys. The dataset was checked for careless responses (Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014) and deleted missing values (Roth et al., 1999). To identify data with careless responses, half the average processing time (median), which was 14 min and 5 seconds, was used as the minimal response time. As such, a processing time shorter than 7 minutes and 3 seconds indicated that there was only a superficial reading by the respondent, with no study of

the questions. Next missing values were checked and as Roth et al. (1999) suggest, those sets in which more than 30% of the data were missing were deleted; this resulted in a usable sample of 282 observations. In total, 128 (45.4%) of the employees who participated were female and 152 were male (53%). Two participants did not indicate their sex (0.70%). Most of the participants were employees (197; 69.9%), and 57 (20.2%) were leaders. In addition, most of the participants worked for companies with more than 500 employees (234; 83%) and had a bachelor's degree as the lowest education level (208, 72.7%).

2.3.3.2 Measures

Whenever possible, existing and validated scales to measure the conceptually defined constructs were used. Emotional corporate brand pride was measured with a five-item scale adapted from Gouthier and Rhein (2011). To assess the level of attitudinal corporate brand pride, the scale was adapted and used a three-item scale, also by Gouthier and Rhein (2011), adding one item to the existing scale to ensure reliability ('I'm proud to be part of [corporate brand name]'). For measuring brand-supporting employee behaviours, WOM, consisting of three items adapted from Morhart et al. (2009), and employee referrals was used, which was measured with five items by drawing on Bloemer (2010). Tables give an overview of the final item set used in this study.

Items	Constructs	Items Inspired by	Factor Loadings Study 1	Factor Loadings Study 2
	DCBE organisational			
I experience products of [corporate brand name] in a vocational setting.			0.89	0.87
I come in contact with products of [corporate brand name] in an occupational context.			0.91	0.87
I experience products of [corporate brand name] in a professional context with my senses (i.e. hearing, sight, touch, etc.).			0.80	0.87
There are many opportunities at [corporate brand name] to experience products, and I use them often.			0.70	0.86
I use existing offers to experience products in the context of work.			0.66	0.81
	DCBE private			
I often perceive products of our corporate brand in a private context.			0.89	0.91
I experience products of [corporate brand name] in a private context.			0.94	0.95
I come in contact with products of [corporate brand name] in a private setting.			0.95	0.94
I experience products of [corporate brand name] in a private surrounding with my senses (i.e. hearing, sight, touch, etc.).			0.95	0.94
I use the possibility to experience products of [corporate brand name] in a private context.			0.93	0.91
	ICBE colleagues			
I experience the values [corporate brand name] stands for through my colleagues.			0.91	0.94
I experience the values of [corporate brand name] by dealing with my colleagues.			0.91	0.94
My colleagues compellingly exemplify the values of [corporate brand name] inside and outside the organisation and act as role models.			0.83	0.92
In conversations with my colleagues, I experience the values [corporate brand name] stands for.			0.78	0.91

Table 8: Measures Table 1

Items	Constructs	Items Inspired by	Factor Loadings Study 1	Factor Loadings Study 2
	ICBE supervisors			
I experience the values [corporate brand name] stands for through my supervisor (i.e. in conversations, etc.).			0.92	0.92
I experience the values of [corporate brand name] by dealing with senior management.			0.96	0.95
Senior management compellingly exemplifies the values of the company inside and outside the organisation and act as a role model.			0.90	0.93
In meetings with senior management, I experience the values [corporate brand name] stands for.			0.91	0.93
	ICBE internal communications			
There are stories and anecdotes circulating around the company that support what our corporate brand stands for.			*0.68*	*eliminated*
Through information in our internal communications, I experience what our corporate brand stands for.			*0.90*	0.95
I experience the corporate brand through editorial content in our internal communications.			*0.95*	0.97
I come in contact with the corporate brand through available media in our internal communications.			*0.87*	0.96
	ICBE external communications			
Through information on the Internet (i.e. blogs, video, pictures, etc.), I experience what our corporate brand stands for.			0.75	0.87
I experience the corporate brand through editorial content in external communications (i.e. television, radio, etc.).			0.87	0.92
I experience our corporate brand in a private setting through external communication activities.			0.97	0.96
I come in contact with the corporate brand in a private context through the actions of external communication.			0.97	0.96

Table 9: Measures Table 2

Items	Constructs	Items Inspired by	Factor Loadings Study 1	Factor Loadings Study 2
	ICBE friends & family			
In my private surroundings, [corporate brand name] is often talked about in a positive way.			0.99	0.96
I often notice that people in my private surroundings speak positively about [corporate brand name].			0.96	0.96
I often perceive that [corporate brand name] has a good reputation.			0.82	0.89
	Employment experience	Edwards and		
[Corporate brand name] offers me an employment experience that would be difficult to get elsewhere.		Edwards	*eliminated*	n/a
As an employer, [corporate brand name] offers terms and conditions that would be difficult to find elsewhere.		(2013)	0.75	n/a
As an employer, [corporate brand name] provides me with a compensation package that would be difficult to find elsewhere.			0.72	n/a
As an employer, [corporate brand name] provides me with the autonomy that it would be difficult to find elsewhere.			*eliminated*	n/a
As an employer, [corporate brand name] is more supportive of employees than you would expect to find elsewhere.			0.82	n/a
As an employer, [corporate brand name] provides me with developmental opportunities that would be difficult to find elsewhere.			0.74	n/a

Table 10: Measures Table 3

Items	Constructs	Items Inspired by	Factor Loadings Study 1	Factor Loadings Study 2
	Brand experience (sensory)	Brakus *et al*, (2009)		
This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.			0.94	n/a
I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.			0.94	n/a
This brand does not appeal to my senses (R).			0.91	n/a
	Brand experience (affective)	Brakus *et al*, (2009)		
This brand induces feelings and sentiments.			0.89	n/a
I do not have strong emotions for this brand (R).			0.82	n/a
This brand is an emotional brand.			0.86	n/a
	Brand experience (behavioural)	Brakus *et al*, (2009)		
I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand.			0.91	n/a
This brand results in bodily experiences.			0.97	n/a
This brand is not action oriented (R).			0.85	n/a
	Brand experience (intellectual)	Brakus et al, (2009)		
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.			0.95	n/a
This brand does not make me think (R).			0.95	n/a
This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.			0.73	n/a

Table 11: Measures Table 4

Items	Constructs	Items Inspired by	Factor Loadings Study 1	Factor Loadings Study 2
	Emotional corporate brand pride	Gouthier and Rhein (2011)		
Please remember an event in which [corporate brand name] was most recently successful. Please evaluate what you are feeling in such moments.				
In these moments, I am happy to be a member of [corporate brand name].			n/a	0.95
In these moments, I have a feeling of joy to be a part of [corporate brand name].			n/a	0.94
In these moments, I am proud of what [corporate brand name] has achieved.			n/a	0.94
In these moments, I have the feeling that [corporate brand name] is doing something meaningful.			n/a	0.84
	Attitudinal corporate brand pride	Gouthier and Rhein		
I feel proud to work for [corporate brand name].		(2011)	0.94	0.95
I feel proud to contribute to [corporate brand name]'s success.			0.88	0.89
I feel proud to tell others I am working for [corporate brand name].			0.87	0.93
I feel proud to be a part of [corporate brand name].		(add. Item)	0.93	0.97
	WOM	Morhart *et al*, (2009)		
I talk up [corporate brand name] to people I know.			0.93	0.95
I bring up [corporate brand name] in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.			0.96	0.96
In social situations, I often speak favourably about [corporate brand name].			0.91	0.94

Table 12: Measures Table 5

Items	Constructs	Items Inspired by	Factor Loadings Study 1	Factor Loadings Study 2
	Employee referrals	Bloemer (2010)		
I recommend my organisation to someone who seeks employment advice.			n/a	0.89
I encourage friends to apply for a job at my organisation.			n/a	0.93
I approach friends when I have the feeling that my employer offers an interesting job, which suits them.			n/a	0.88
I forward job postings to friends who are seeking employment.			n/a	0.86
I approach friends when I have the feeling that my employer is offering an interesting job in a similar domain to that in which they are currently working.			n/a	0.89

Notes: DCBE = product-related corporate brand experience, WOM = word of mouth, n/a = not applicable because items are not part of the study.

Table 13: Measures Table 6

2.3.3.3 Methodological Procedures

Structural equation modelling was applied using the PLS procedure (Lohmöller, 1989) to test the hypotheses. PLS has several benefits, making it a valuable tool in this second study (Hair et al., 2013). First, it functions with complex models, especially if these contain higher order variables and formative measures (Hair et al., 2012), making it possible to evaluate the independent variables — DCBE and ICBE, which are type-II, second-order constructs consisting of reflective first-order and formative second-order indicators that cannot be estimated through covariance-based structural equation modelling (Jarvis et al., 2003). Second, PLS is especially useful when the model contains mode b composites (Hair et al., 2012). For estimating the paths, SmartPLS3.0 (Henseler et al., 2015) was used, while bootstrap resampling (5000 replications) helped assess the estimates' stability (Chin et al., 2003). Moreover, the guidelines provided by Becker et al. (2012) for developing higher order constructs were followed, specifically, for specifying formative hierarchical construct models by an indicator replication approach using mode b. Since employees' individual perceptions and attitudes is in the interest of study 2, self-reported data for all the variables were used. Self-reported surveys are one of the most frequently used forms of collecting empirical data, leading to a 'great deal of debate, but limited consensus, on the extent of common method variance (CMV) associated with them' (Nedkovski et al., 2017, p. 22). Therefore, several precautions for detecting, minimising, and estimating the effects of CMV were taken. In line with prior research (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and state-of-the-art directions, different procedural remedies were used and tested statistically for determining whether CMV affected the data. In addition, for minimising the social desirability bias, the participants were guaranteed full anonymity, and only the required personal data were collected, which was also explained and done at the end of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the question order was counterbalanced to disrupt the logical flow. Harman's one-factor test was applied to all latent variables, and no single factor explained a substantial amount of covariance. Due to the limitations of Harman's one-factor test, Lindell and Whitney (2001) approach was also used. The 'organisational performance demands' were used as a marker variable according to the study of Homburg and Pflesser (2000). Finally, based on all the correlations, which remained significant after controlling for the marker variable effect, CMV was unlikely to affect the conclusions.

2.3.4 Analysis and Results

2.3.4.1 The Measurement Model and Structural Model Fit

All the latent variables, including the type-II second-order constructs featuring a reflective first-order measurement, used reflective measurement models. According

to Chin (2010), factor loadings and CR should exceed a cut-off criterion of 0.7, and the AVE should be above 0.5, while the highest squared correlation with any other construct should be lower than the AVE (Fornell/Larcker criterion). Furthermore, Cronbach's α values should exceed 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), and the Stone–Geisser Q^2 communality should be above 0 (Fornell & Cha, 1994) for assessing predictive validity. Overall, after eliminating one item due to a factor loading below 0.7, all the data fitted the abovementioned criteria, with the smallest in the data at 0.40. In addition to the Fornell/Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), we checked the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) criterion for discriminant validity, representing a useful measure for first-order composites. The robust cut-off value was found at 0.85 and the maximum HTMT value at 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). Only two relationships exceeded the HTMT value at 0.85 but remained below 0.90 (see Table 7), namely, the relationships between emotional and attitudinal corporate brand pride (HTMT = 0.89) and between attitudinal corporate brand pride and WOM (HTMT = 0.86). Since emotional corporate brand pride and attitudinal corporate brand pride are relatively closely related constructs, both procedures — the Fornell/Larker and HTMT value — were used for assessing discriminant validity; according to both tests, this was found to be positive.

All the reflective measurement models were tested using AMOS 23. All the criteria for convergent validity Cronbach's α, CR and AVE values — exceeded the common thresholds (as stated above). Together, since all criteria fitted the thresholds, the validity and reliability — especially discriminant validity — were assumed for all reflective measures.

As type-II second-order constructs have formative second-order measurement models, formative quality criteria were used for assessing their validity and reliability. In this regard, the factor weights require significance and must exceed 0.1 (Lohmöller, 1989). In addition, the latent variable correlations — for assessing discriminant validity — should be below 0.9, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) values should be below 5 to represent strong quality criteria (Hair et al., 2013). The highest VIF value was found at 2.34. Therefore, the formative variable criteria were met (see also Table 4).

For assessing structural model fit, r^2 values should exceed 0.33 for endogenous latent variables (Chin, 1998). This is given for all variables (see Figure 5). Furthermore, for assessing multicollinearity, VIF and the Stone-Geisser Q^2 for reductive validity were analysed. All the values for VIF were below 2.4, indicating no multicollinearity. In addition, all the values for Q^2 exceeded 0, ensuring predictive relevance.

2.3.4.2 Results of direct and mediating effects

The analysis revealed that most of the hypotheses (i.e. H1b, H2a and H2b) could be confirmed, and only one hypothesis (H1a) needed to be rejected.

For performing mediation analysis, the procedure provided by Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010) was followed, which Hair et al. (2017) also suggest to use for mediator analysis in PLS structural equation modelling. First, the indirect effect must be checked for significance (see Table 5). If the indirect effect is not significant — which is the case for the indirect effect from DCBE on attitudinal corporate brand pride — the direct effect needs to be checked (see Table 6). If the direct effect is not significant either, no effect (including mediation) does exist. This is the case for the effect of DCBE on attitudinal corporate brand pride, hence H1a needs to be rejected. However, the direct effect of ICBE on attitudinal corporate brand pride as well as the indirect effect (via emotional corporate brand pride) is significant, so that partial mediation exists. According to Zhao et al. (2010) it is to be classified as complementary partial mediation since both effects exhibit the same direction.

In accordance with H2a and H2b, corporate brand pride was found to trigger the brand-supporting behaviours WOM (β =0.61, $p < 0.001$) and employee referrals ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$). The results are shown in Table 5, Table 6 and Figure 5.
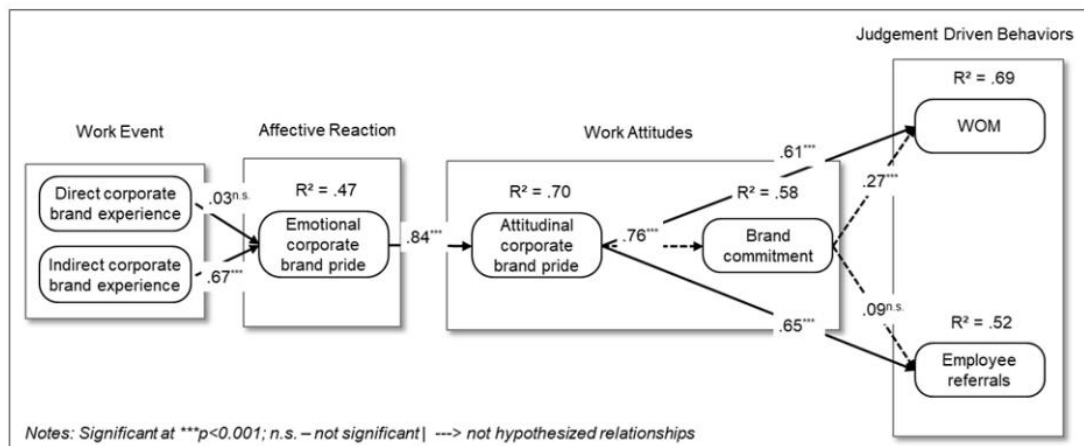
Figure 5: Structural model for study 2 (Chapter 2)

2.3.5 Discussion and Further Research

In line with AET, this research shows that ICBE through work-related events leads to brand-related emotions, such as corporate brand pride. The results show that emotions should be considered, when theorizing about brands. However, this paper stated that ICBE and DCBE trigger emotions, such as corporate brand pride, which could only be confirmed for ICBE. Based on these findings, habituation was tested to determine whether it could provide a possible explanation for the lack of effect

regarding DCBE on brand pride. In addition, it is estimated whether the relationship between corporate brand experiences and emotional corporate brand pride differs between employees who often have direct experiences with the corporate brand (divisions closer to products) and those with only a few or no direct corporate brand experiences (divisions far from products), or if tenure would have an effect. Here, such a difference would most likely result from a habituation effect, which occurs when a stimulus is often repeated, and thus, becomes familiar (Horn & Hinde, 1970). Together, the test results for group differences revealed no influence regarding individuals working in a product-related division nor on the path between DCBE (or even ICBE) and emotional brand pride, making habituation seem unlikely. Another possible explanation for why DCBE could not be confirmed is that such experience is inherently personal, and two individuals cannot have the same DCBE (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Decrop and Derbaix (2010, p. 587) argue that 'pride is presented as an achievement-related effect that arises when the achievement is publicly complimented by others'. Similarly, Helm et al. (2016) suggest that corporate brand pride is instigated by a reflected judgement, that is, when others find that something exceeds expectations. Thus, this research suggests that the reflected judgement about the corporate brand by external sources is more important than the subjective experience of the product. However, the nature of DCBE can be seen as strictly personal and 'private', something in the mind of an individual who has embarked on the experience at an emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual level (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). For example, with ICBE, if a product that has repeatedly won a prize is announced by internal communication, employees may assume this is known within or even outside the company. However, if the employees experience the product, for example, by driving an automobile (DCBE), they can hardly share this experience with others. Similarly, Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 99) assume that 'experiences are inherently personal, only in the mind of an individual [...] and the individual's state of mind'. Therefore, ICBE may trigger corporate brand pride more than DCBE does, as other people can perceive and judge ICBE (rather than the 'feeling' of using a product). In addition, past research examined that (corporate) brand experiences differ in terms of strength and intensity (Brakus et al., 2009, Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013). Besides the potential causes of differing effects of ICBE and DCBE it can also be that values are more crucial to employees compared to the solely experience of a (corporate) brand´s product. This assumption is in line with the social identity theory, which explains how and why people categorize themselves into different social categories. In doing so, employees weight values as significant when these are significant to them self. Therefore, it can be assumed that employees perceive the

corporate brand experience through indirect forms stronger, as it is related to their personal values.

Another noteworthy contribution is that corporate brand pride is a strong motivational force that triggers positive employee behaviours such as WOM or employee referrals. Results reveal that differences exist between men and women, in that proud women tend to engage more in employee referrals ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$).

The findings extend AET, demonstrating that work events can either be direct or indirect. In doing so, this paper is the first to differentiate between diverse types of work events. This differentiation is in line with AET research and defines work events as general incidents that stimulate an emotional reaction to a job-related agent, object or event (Basch & Fisher, 2000). The distinction between various types of work events enables novel options for reasoning, especially for consumer research (studies investigating direct customer encounters in a store and indirect stimulus with the brand).

Although this study provides essential insights, further research is required to overcome its limitations. First, the use of employees from only a single country (Germany) restrains the worldwide generalisability. Here, further studies can include cultural dimensions for example 'collectivism—individualism' to provide an explanation for whether the perception of (product) corporate brand experience differs across cultures. Thereby, collectivistic cultures might focus more on collectivistic forms of (brand) pride (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Second, experience with one corporate brand was examined, which may be a limitation, since many companies have now adopted multiple brand strategies. Thus, further research should investigate pride's influence on attitudes and behaviours towards sub-brands. Like the concept of multiple commitments (Baruch & Winkelmann-Gleed, 2002), further research could investigate whether employees would be proud of different brands in a multi-brand company, such as Volkswagen. Third, the influence of dispositions was neglected in our research as postulated by AET regarding the relationship of work events and affective experiences. Therefore, future research should include dispositions like the main dimensions of the Big Five personality traits (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1991). Fourth, prospective studies regarding (corporate) brand experience should include various forms of emotions (e.g. trust) — examining differences in the way multiple (corporate) brand experiences are perceived by employees. Finally, similar to recent research regarding multiple commitments (Baruch & Winkelmann-Gleed, 2002), future related studies should incorporate multiple forms of pride. Since this paper is the first to empirically assess the effects of corporate brand experience in an employee context and research on employee emotions is still scarce, this paper calls

for further research regarding those topics. For example, further research could investigate whether negative corporate brand experiences explicitly decrease employees' brand pride. In addition, further research is required to investigate the nature of DBCE and ICBE. Thus, future research could test whether employees are prouder after truly experiencing the respective product in an experimental setting. This could, for example, be tested similarly as the so-called 'car clinics', where car manufacturers present their novel cars to a peer group and determine how this group experiences the product. Accordingly, products could be presented and tested by employees, and their pride level could be measured before and after the experience.

2.3.6 Managerial Implications

The corporate brand experience scale and further insights of the second study will not only be useful for academic research but also for marketing and human resource management practices. In fact, many (corporate) brands and corporations face difficulties finding qualified employees. Numerous studies on human resource management have addressed this topic, highlighting central drivers for attracting and retaining talents (van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). From this perspective, this research provides insights showing that corporate brand pride plays a central role in turning employees into brand champions. Furthermore, it showed that corporate brand pride is an important construct as employees who exhibit higher levels of corporate brand pride engage more often in talking positively about the corporate brand and specifically refer jobs with that corporate brand to friends and acquaintances, which is an important factor because employee referrals represent a crucial hiring source Bloemer (2010). Moreover, study 2 clearly shows that managers play an important role in the creation of ICBE. Managers have an especially important role as they are simultaneously enablers and part of the ICBE. Hence, this research contributes to a better understanding of their specific roles, highlighting that they should promote and exemplify the values of the corporate brand to create a unique corporate brand experience. At the same time, they should foster the exchange of brand-related information between their team members. This finding is in line with the theoretical work of Burmann and König (2011) who stated that brand-oriented empowerment and brand knowledge dissemination are important for brand building.

This research clearly shows that the marketing management should focus on the creation of ICBE using internal and external communications. By doing so, the marketing management can promote the brand values via the Internet, intranet or social media. The findings are especially interesting for marketing management practitioners as the creation of a corporate brand experience is often expensive and

resources are generally limited. As such, this paper will contribute to decision making, where one should invest in the ICBE facets than in the DCBE ones.

Although no significant relationship between DCBE and corporate brand pride was found, this paper shows that DCBE positively correlates with brand-supporting behaviours. For this reason, the marketing management of a corporate brand should also include DCBE in their strategies, and for example, create possibilities for employees to experience the corporate brand products — whether in an occupational or private context. Interestingly, some (corporate) brands already recognised the power of experience in relation to their employees. For instance, in 2004, BMW built a 'brand experience centre' where external and internal stakeholders can experience the brand product attributes.

2.3.7 References

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3. Should Corporations Care about Negative Brand Publicity? Understanding the Impact of Negative Brand Publicity on Employees' Corporate Brand Pride[2]

Abstract

This article examines the effects of perceived negative brand publicity on employee emotions, attitudes and brand-supporting behaviors. Drawing on Affective-Events-Theory (AET) it attempts to identify underlying affective and cognitive processes leading to behavioral change. Using data gathered from a largescale survey of employees in Germany, our results show that perceived negative brand publicity affects emotional and attitudinal corporate brand pride of employees. In addition, higher levels of perceived negative brand publicity were negatively associated with brand-supporting behavior, such as employee referrals and word-of-mouth (WOM). We show that corporate brand experience through internal communications can be an effective tool in mitigating harmful effects of perceived negative brand publicity.

Keywords:

Negative brand publicity; corporate brand pride; Affective-Events-Theory; internal branding; brand experience; brand-supporting behavior

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3.1 Introduction

Publicity relating to corporate (brand) behavior is on the rise in recent years (Hock & Raithel, 2019). Corporate brand publicity can be defined as any information about a corporate brand, its products, services or behavior "communicated through editorial media that is not paid for" by the corporation (Collins & Stevens, 2002, p.1123). It typically involves non-personal mass communication such as TV news items, radio broadcasts or newspaper articles (Lee et al., 2013; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005).

Corporate brands that have recently been the subject of negative brand publicity in Germany include, for example, Deutsche Bank and Volkswagen. The latter is receiving bad press around the world due to its manipulation of emissions. Deutsche Bank is in the media as a result of planning mass lay-offs and because of continuous misbehavior. In general, poor work conditions, poor management decision making, or quality issues are often matters of media coverage (Monga & John, 2008; Woo et al., 2020).

Negative (brand) publicity can have detrimental effects on multiple corporate or brand aspects. The literature provides evidence that sales (e.g. Berger et al., 2010), image (e.g. Zhu & Chang, 2013), consumer purchase intention (e.g. Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019), consumer trust and consumer affective identification (e.g. Lin et al., 2011), brand equity (e.g. Woo et al., 2020), share price as well as firm net value (e.g. Hock & Raithel, 2019) can be adversely affected. Moreover, negative press can lead to a lower perceived organizational attractiveness and reduced job pursuit intentions of job applicants (Jaidi et al., 2011).

Previous research on (brand) publicity focused mainly on attitudes and behaviors of consumers and job applicants. To the best of our knowledge, no research has focused on how publicity regarding corporate brands affects employees. More precisely, a deeper understanding of how corporate brand publicity might influence work-related attitudes and behavior of employees is missing from the literature. This is surprising as employees represent a crucial part of brands' success and competitive advantage (e.g. Boukis et al., 2014; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014).

This paper answers the following research questions. First, does negative corporate brand publicity affect employees' corporate brand pride and subsequent brand-supporting behavior? Second, can corporations mitigate the potentially devastating effect of perceived negative corporate brand publicity on employees through corporate brand experience, i.e. internal or external communications?

3.2 Theoretical Background

Affective-Events-Theory (AET) described by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) provides us with a macrostructure to understand how brand publicity affects emotional corporate brand pride (emotion), attitudinal corporate brand pride (attitude), and brand-supporting behavior such as word-of-mouth (WOM) and employee referrals (judgement-driven behavior). Corporate brand pride has been chosen because research shows that pride affects employee behavior (e.g. turnover intention) much stronger than other work-related attitudes (e.g. commitment), making it necessary to further investigate this construct in a brand-employee context (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Moreover, several brands already include (brand) pride as central drivers for success, for example "I'm proud to be Ritz-Carlton" (Appleberg, 2005, p.3). In general, AET helps to explain the interplay of work events, work environment features, emotions, attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, the theory "explains the structure, causes, and consequences of employees' affective experiences at work" (Matta et al., 2014, p.922). According to AET, certain work-events (e.g. negative corporate brand publicity) are proximal causes of employees' emotional reactions (e.g. emotional corporate brand pride) which in turn influence work-related attitudes (e.g. attitudinal corporate brand pride) and behavior (e.g. brand-supporting behavior) (Herrbach et al., 2004; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Following Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) we define a work-event as something that occurs in a work-related setting during a particular period, like corporate brand publicity.

3.2.1 Linking perceived negative corporate brand publicity and emotional corporate brand pride

Following AET, we propose that perceived negative corporate brand publicity is linked to a number of actual and perceived events that cause intense emotional responses (Rosen et al., 2009). Negative brand publicity is likely to evoke affective responses regarding employees due to various reasons. First, negative corporate brand publicity has usually a surprising character (Cleeren et al., 2013). Brands have, in contrast to other forms of communication, no direct control over publicity (Collins & Stevens, 2002). So, publicity exhibits a sort of an unexpected event with regard to the corporate brand and its members. For example, employees working for Volkswagen have been shocked when they read the embarrassing headlines about the emission scandal without any advance warning.

In line with findings of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), who state that work events are usually sudden changes in circumstances eliciting emotions, we argue that the surprising occurrence of negative brand publicity should influence employees' affective reactions (e.g. emotional corporate brand pride). Second, negative publicity adversely affects the status of a corporate brand, highlighting for instance quality

issues or misbehavior. Previous research showed that feelings of pride are directly linked to the organization's reflected glory or achievements (Salerno et al., 2015). Boons et al. (2015) stated that media, communicating organization level status information elicit feelings of pride. Similarly, Appleberg (2005) concluded that various aspects of organizational image can instil pride. Hence, we argue that employees working for a corporate brand with a poor reputation (reflected in negative stories in the media) should exhibit diminished feelings of emotional corporate brand pride (Helm, 2013). These reflections result in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Perceived negative corporate brand publicity is negatively associated with emotional corporate brand pride experienced by employees

3.2.2 Linking perceived negative corporate brand publicity, WOM and employee referrals

Previous research on negative (brand) publicity revealed detrimental effects on various attitudes (e.g. Braxton et al., 2019; Zhou & Whitla, 2013), behavioral intentions (e.g. Müller & Gaus, 2015; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019) and actual behavior (Jaidi et al., 2011, e.g.). Specifically, perceived negative publicity adversely affects consumer trust and affective identification (Lin et al., 2011; Müller & Gaus, 2015). As trust and identification are antecedents of WOM and (employee) referrals, we suppose that negative corporate brand publicity influences employee WOM and referrals, too (Bloemer, 2010; De Matos & Rossi, 2008). Even though the proposed direct effects are not explicitly specified in Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), we found support for this approach. Zhao et al. (2007) showed, drawing on AET, that work events can have a direct impact on employee behavior. Similarly, Müller and Gaus (2015) revealed that negative media information directly affected behavioral intentions of consumers. Hence, we propose:

Hypothesis 2a. Perceived negative corporate brand publicity has a negative influence on employee WOM

Hypothesis 2b. Perceived negative corporate brand publicity has a negative influence on employee referrals

3.2.3 Linking emotional corporate brand pride and attitudinal corporate brand pride

Corporate brand pride emotions are, as all emotions, short-lived mental experiences (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000). Therefore, pride emotions have downstream consequences with regard to attitudes and behaviors (Elfenbein, 2007). This assumption is in line with AET's suggestion of causality between emotions and work-related attitudes. Moreover, we argue that employees who remain in the same corporation for a certain period can experience corporate brand pride emotions

repeatedly, which should lead to a more durable state, namely attitudinal corporate brand pride (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3. Corporate brand pride emotions have a positive influence on attitudinal corporate brand pride

3.2.4 Linking attitudinal corporate brand pride and WOM/Employee referrals

Previous research on brand-supporting behavior such as WOM and (employee) referrals identified multiple antecedents, such as brand passion (Albert et al., 2013), positive emotions (Lovett et al., 2013), satisfaction (Hagenbuch et al., 2008; Wangenheim & Ba´on, 2007), brand commitment (Albert et al., 2013), product (Wangenheim & Ba´on, 2007; Wolny & Mueller, 2013) or brand involvement (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). WOM can be defined as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (Harrison, 2001, p.63). In contrast to these more general forms, employee referrals represent an internal recruitment method whereby an actual employee of the corporate brand proactively identifies and provides specific information about vacancies to persons he or she knows (Breaugh & Starke, 2000).

Based on earlier findings of Kraemer et al. (2020) and Lythreatis et al. (2019), we assume that corporate brand pride is a strong intrinsic motivator leading to WOM and employee referrals due to various reasons. First, proud employees have a strong bond with the corporate brand leading to extraordinary intrinsic motivation (Kraemer et al., 2020; Lythreatis et al., 2019). This is in line with findings of Verbeke et al. (2004) who stated that pride (emotion) leads to greater effort of salespeople. Similarly, Baer et al. (2015) revealed that high levels of pride are positively related to reputation maintenance concerns of employees (e.g. WOM). Second, (organizational) pride is found to be negatively related to turnover intention of employees (Kraemer & Gouthier, 2014). As turnover intention is in general known as a form of loyalty, similar to WOM and employee referrals, we expect employees with higher levels of corporate brand pride to show stronger brand-supporting behavior:

Hypothesis 4a. Attitudinal corporate brand pride has a positive influence on WOM

Hypothesis 4b. Attitudinal corporate brand pride has a positive influence on employee referrals

3.2.5 Linking corporate brand experience through internal/external communications and perceived negative corporate brand publicity

Marketing literature often emphasize synergy effects of advertising and publicity, although both aspects need to exhibit the same valence (e.g. Stammerjohan

et al., 2005; Wang, 2006). Research analyzing a situation where the two sources of information differ in their valence is scarce, especially with regard to an employee context. To date only few studies show how negative publicity can be mitigated. For example, Van Hoye and Lievens (2005) showed that performance-based negative publicity can be compensated through recruitment advertising, and Stammerjohan et al. (2005) found that effects of negative news stories can be mitigated through radio and print advertising in a consumer context.

As nowadays many corporate brands extensively use new technologies in order to create an appealing internet and intranet appearance, we assume that employees' corporate brand experience through internal and external communications can reduce perceptions of negative brand publicity. An indepth analysis of the existing literature provide support for this assumption. First, communication of brand values guides employee behavior (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001). This, in turn, may lead to reduced misbehavior of employees, which is one potential cause of negative brand publicity. Second, drawing on findings of Eisingerich et al. (2011) we state that the extent to which employees experience the corporate brand through internal and external communications as a great place to work (e.g. corporate brand values) can induce resistance to negative information. This case relates to the goodwill of employees. Thereby, individuals are less likely to blame the corporate brand for misbehavior, wrongdoings or product failures, because the corporate brand signals its good intentions through both communication channels, which in turn helps the brand to insulate itself from scrutiny when negative publicity occurs (Peloza, 2006; Yoon et al., 2006). Theoretical support for this assumption provides the information integration theory, which states that inconsistent information will receive a decreased weight compared to consistent information. These reflections result in the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a. Corporate brand experience through external communications has a negative influence on perceived negative corporate brand publicity

Hypothesis 5b. Corporate brand experience through internal communications has a negative influence on perceived negative corporate brand publicity

3.2.6 Linking corporate brand experience through internal/external communications and emotional corporate brand pride

Employees can experience corporate brand in various ways. Obviously, in their daily work environment dealing with colleagues or management (Morhart et al., 2009). It is also possible to experience the corporate brand through internal and external communications (Aurand et al., 2005; Burmann et al., 2009; Harris & De Chernatony, 2001; King & Grace, 2010). As (emotional) corporate brand pride refers

to a positive evaluation of status, reputation, or achievements of the corporate brand, we suggest that a corporation that makes stories about the corporate brand accessible to their employees (e.g. testimonials, brand values, etc.) instil corporate brand pride in their workforce. This assumption is in line with AET, which posits that work environment features (e.g. internal communication) can directly affect employee emotions (e.g. corporate brand pride). Research from Boons et al. (2015) supports this assumption, stating that the communication of status-related information positively affects pride in a consumer context. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 6a. Corporate brand experience through external communications has a positive influence on emotional corporate brand pride

Hypothesis 6b. Corporate brand experience through internal communications has a positive influence on emotional corporate brand pride

The theoretical framework and associated hypotheses developed in this section are depicted in Figure 6.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Sample and Procedure

Data reported in this article were drawn from a large-scale online survey distributed in the largest business network of Germany (XING). The survey investigated employees' responses to various brand and human resources practices in Germany. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and its confidentiality, and were encouraged to participate in the survey. In total, 2,870 employees opened the link and 763 completed the online survey (response rate = 26.59%). Deletion of missing values and careless responses (i.e. eliminating cases with a response time less than twenty-five percent of the average response time) resulted in a usable sample of 608 employees.

Fifty-one percent of the respondents were female (n = 310) and forty-nine percent were male (n = 298). The majority of the participants hold a university degree (n = 472, 77.6%) and worked in a company with more than five-hundred employees (n = 375, 61.7%), without managerial responsibility (n = 435, 71.55%). They were employed in a variety of occupational fields, including: human resources (n = 97, 16.0%), sales (n = 82, 13.5%), marketing (n = 66, 10.9%), consulting (n = 64, 10.5%), other (n = 58, 9.5%), research and development (n = 49, 8.1%), information technology (n = 40, 6.6%), finance and accounting (n = 36, 5.9%), manufacturing (n = 23, 3.8%), services (n = 20, 3.3%), administration (n = 20, 3.3%), purchasing (n = 17, 2.8%), management (n = 12, 2.0%), logistics (n = 10, 1.6%), legal (n = 10, 1.6%) and design (n = 4, 0.7%).

In terms of corporate tenure, 12.5 percent of employees (n = 76) joined the corporate brand less than a year ago, 21.7 percent of employees (n = 132) joined the brand one to two years ago, 31.9 percent of employees (n = 194) joined the corporate brand three to five years ago, 17.9 percent of employees (n = 109) belonged to the corporate brand between six and ten years, and 16.0 percent of employees (n = 97) joined the corporate brand more than ten years ago.
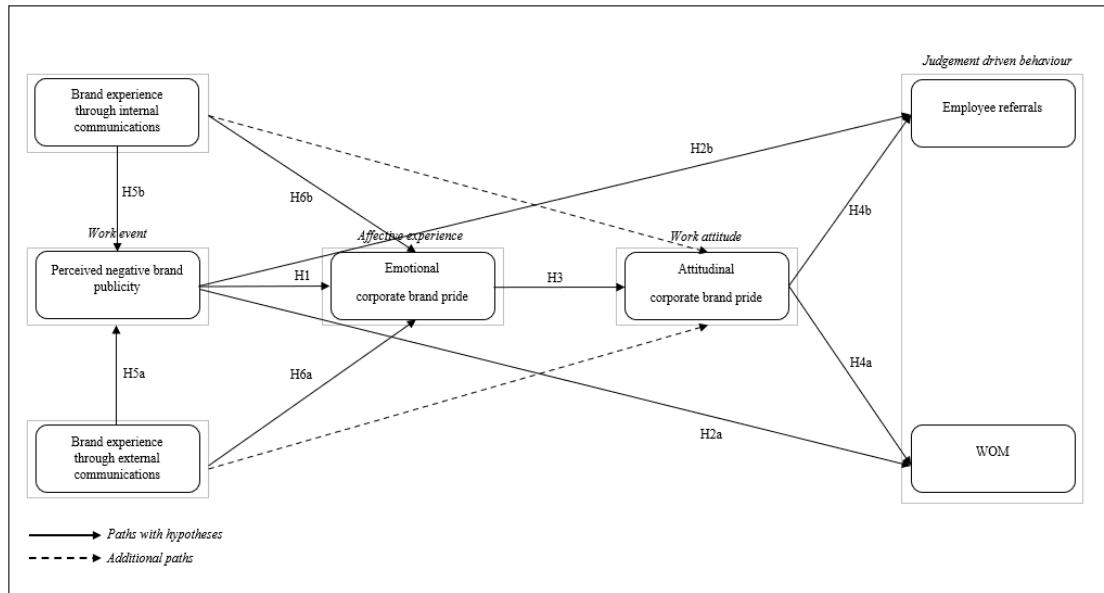
Figure 6: Theoretical framework

3.3.2 Measures

The response scale for each survey item ranged from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'), unless otherwise noted. Because the study was conducted in a German-speaking environment, all measures previously developed in English have been translated into German, using the commonly translation-back translation procedure (Brislin, 1980). Moreover, we intensively pre-tested all used measures regarding reliability, validity and mutual understanding.

We measured perceived negative brand publicity with three items on a bipolar response scale ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). The item development was inspired by Jaidi et al. (2011) as well as (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Items are: 'News coverage in the media regarding [corporate brand name] is mostly. . . ', 'When [corporate brand name] is mentioned in press, it is mostly. . . ' and 'The presentation of [corporate brand name] in television, radio, print- or online media is. . . '. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.93.

To assess the level of emotional corporate brand pride, the four-item scale by Gouthier and Rhein (2011) was used. A sample item is: 'In these moments I am proud

of what the [corporate brand name] has achieved'. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

We measured attitudinal corporate brand pride using Gouthier and Rhein (2011)'s three-item measure. A sample item is: 'I feel proud to work for [corporate brand name]. Due to its central role in our theoretical framework, we added one item to the existing scale to ensure reliability ('I'm proud to be part of [corporate brand name]'). The reliability of this scale was 0.94.

To measure word-of-mouth, the three-item scale by Morhart et al. (2009) was used. A sample item is: 'I talk up [corporate brand name] to people I know'. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

We measured employee referrals with five items. We used two already validated and reliable items developed by Bloemer (2010) and inspired by Zeithaml et al. (1996). In addition, three items were included to ensure the specific nature of referrals and to distinguish this measure from related constructs such as word-of-mouth. The added items are: 'I approach friends, when I have the feeling that my employer offers an interesting job, which suits them.', 'I forward job postings to friends, which seek employment.' and 'I approach friends, when I have the feeling that my employer offers an interesting job in a similar domain, in which they are currently working.' The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.94.

To assess the level of employees' brand experience through internal communications, we used a three-item scale developed by Egeler et al. (2022) and inspired by Aurand et al. (2005). Items are: 'Through information in our internal communications, I experience what our corporate brand stands for.', 'I experience the corporate brand through editorial content in our internal communications.', 'I come in contact with the corporate brand through available media in our internal communications.' The reliability of this scale was 0.94.

Brand experience through external communications. To assess the level of employees' brand experience through external communications we used a three-item scale developed by Egeler et al. (2022) and also inspired by Aurand et al. (2005). Items are: 'I experience the corporate brand through editorial content in external communications (e.g. television, radio, etc.),' 'I experience our corporate brand in a private setting through external communication activities,' 'I come in contact with the corporate brand in a private context, through actions of the external communication.' The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.93.

Consistent with past research, we controlled for several socio-demographic variables, including gender (1 = female 2 = male), corporate tenure (0-1 years, 1-2

years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years), corporate size (0-19 employees, 20-99 employees, 100-499 employees and more than 500 employees), employee status (1 = management board 2 = executive employee 3 = employee 4 = freelancer 5 = trainee 6 = intern/working student/temporary staff), functional area (1 = consulting 2 = design 3 = purchasing 4 = finance and accounting 5 = research and development 6 = IT 7= Services 8 = logistics 9 = marketing 10 = administration 11 = HR 12 = manufacturing 13 = legal 14 = management 15 = sales 16 = other) and education (1 = doctoral and postdoctoral 2 = academic studies 3 = foreman/technician 4 = apprenticeship 5 = university-entrance diploma 6 = general certificate of secondary education 7 = certificate of secondary education 8 = none).

3.4 Analysis

We analysed data following Anderson and Gerbing (1991) two step approach. In a first step we evaluate the psychometric properties of the scales. Moreover, we test for common method bias using established statistical techniques. In a second step, we test the hypothesized relationships using AMOS 25 (Arbuckle, 2003).

To assess the quality of the measurement model, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). We followed common recommendations from Gracia et al. (2013) and Stumpp et al. (2009) and used the following fit indices: goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), tucker lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square error of approximation (SRMR). For GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI and TLI values higher than .90 indicate good fit (Arbuckle, 2003; Bryne, 2001; Hair et al., 2006; Homburg & Giering, 1996; Hu & Bentler, 1998). SRMR values lower than .05 indicate good fit respectively (Hair et al., 1998; Hu & Bentler, 1998). CFA showed a good model fit: CMIN/DF = 1.753, SRMR = .02, RMSEA = .035, GFI = .94, AGFI = .92, NFI = .97, TLI = .98, CFI = .98. In addition, we compared the hypothesized model with three nested models (Table 14). The original model shows a significant better fit than the alternative nested models, providing support for the distinctiveness of the constructs. Besides a satisfactory model fit, scales included in this study should exhibit convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Since the lowest factor loading in our model was 0.75, there is support for convergent validity. For the reliabilities, see Table 15. Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated based on the procedure of Fornell and Larcker (1981). CR and AVE for all constructs were above 0.92 and 0.72 respectively. These values fulfil the recommended cut-off values of CR > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Similarly, all AVE values are greater than the squared correlation between that factor and another factor, suggesting discriminant validity is given.

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	NFI	RMSEA	GFI
Seven-factor Model	436.455	249	0.989	0.974	0.035	0.946
Six-factor model 1:	939.830	255	0.958	0.943	0.067	0.898
WOM and employee referrals combined						
Six-factor model 2:	1067.423	255	0.950	0.930	0.072	0.863
Emotional corporate brand pride						
and attitudinal corporate brand pride combined						
One-factor model	6933.159	270	0.591	0.583	0.202	0.527

Note: CFI - comparative fit index; NFI - normed fit index;
RMSEA - root mean square root error of approximation; GFI - goodness of fit index

Table 14: Results of the confirmatory factor analysis

Data were collected at a single point of time from a single source, which can represent a potential risk regarding to the problem of common method variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). To minimize this bias, we referred to survey design guidelines proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2003) guaranteeing confidentiality, using clear response guidelines, designing focused and specific items, and using different scale endpoints at one of the variables. Moreover, we counterbalanced the question order to disrupt the logical flow. To test statistically for potential common method bias, we conducted a Harman one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Results suggested the presence of 5 factors, indicating that common method effects are no serious problem in the data. In addition, we controlled for common method variance using a marker variable test (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). We selected Felfe's 'transactional leadership' as a marker variable, as it was theoretically uncorrelated to most of the constructs. Analysis showed that none of the significant correlations of the model became nonsignificant or changed their sign. Thus, we assume that CMV is not likely to affect the validity of this study (Doty & Glick, 1998).

3.5 Results

Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities are shown in Table 15. The results are illustrated in Figure 7 and reveal that only one out of ten hypotheses need to be rejected. Perceived negative corporate brand publicity adversely affect emotional corporate brand pride, supporting H1 (β = .19, p < .001). Similarly, perceived negative brand publicity directly affect brand-supporting behavior of employees, namely WOM (H2a, β = −.15, p < .001) and employee referrals (H2b, β = −.08, p < .002). Moreover, we can confirm H3 stating that emotional corporate brand pride leads to attitudinal corporate brand pride (β = .79, p < .001). In accordance with H4a and H4b, we show that attitudinal corporate brand pride significantly

influences WOM (H4a, β = .74, p < .001) and employee referrals (H4b, β = .67, p < .001).

In contrast to our expectations corporate brand experience through internal communications and corporate brand experience through external communications did not act in the same way in compensating perceived negative corporate brand publicity. Corporate brand experience through internal communications mitigates the perception of negative brand publicity (H5b, β = -.22, p < .001), supporting H5b. However, the path between corporate brand experience through external communications and perceived negative brand publicity wasn't significant, leading to a rejection of H5a (β = −.03, n.s.). To test whether emotional corporate brand pride can be triggered by the corporation through specific corporate brand experience, we test H6a and H6b. In line with expectations corporate brand experience through external communications positively affect emotional corporate brand pride (H6a, β = .14, p < .002). Similarly, corporate brand experience through internal communications influences emotional corporate brand pride (H6b, β = .31, p < .001).

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceived negative brand publicity	2.31	0.88	(0.93)						
2. Emotional corporate brand pride	3.86	1.01	-0.27	(0.93)					
3. Attitudinal corporate brand pride	3.74	1.11	-0.29	0.84	(0.94)				
4. WOM	3.62	1.12	-0.36	0.68	0.78	(0.93)			
5. Employee Referrals	3.37	1.23	-0.26	0.58	0.68	0.68	(0.94)		
6. Brand experience through internal communications	3.44	1.15	-0.24	0.41	0.44	0.39	0.42	(0.94)	
7. Brand experience through external communications	2.57	1.30	-0.13	0.30	0.35	0.34	0.34	0.45	(0.93)

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .01$. Coefficient alphas appear on diagonal

Table 15: Descriptive statistics and correlations
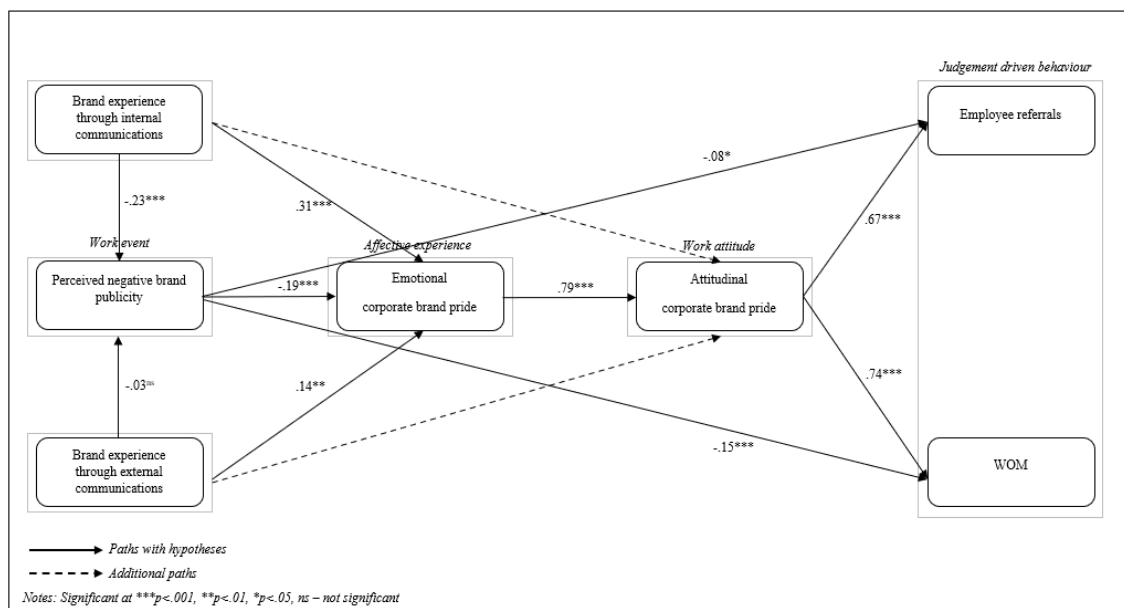
Figure 7: Structural model (Chapter 3)

In addition, we tested for moderators that were not hypothesized. We conducted multi-group analysis as our possible moderators are discrete variables (Eberl, 2010). We applied the procedure that Bryne (2010) proposes to test the difference in our groups. Since Gouthier and Rhein (2011) suggest that women show more (organizational) pride than men, we tested for gender effects. We also tested whether tenure influence the proposed paths as Helm (2013) state that employees with a longer tenure might show higher levels of pride. Analysis showed that, in terms of the relationship between perceived negative corporate brand publicity and employee referrals, gender has a significant effect. Results suggest that men are less likely to recommend job offers. Furthermore, the relationship between corporate brand experience through external communications and emotional corporate brand pride, gender has a significant effect. However, group difference is marginal. Regarding tenure analysis showed that almost all paths did not differ, except for the relationship between attitudinal corporate brand pride and employee referrals. Here, employees with a short tenure tend to show higher employee referrals behavior. Finally, multi-group analysis revealed that management and nonmanagement employees slightly differ in referral behavior ($\beta = .04$, $p < .04$). Results of the multi-group analysis are presented in Tables 16-18.

3.6 Discussion

Although there are several studies providing empirical evidence that negative (brand) publicity has adverse effects on a number of consumer and applicant attitudes and behavioral intentions, it is unclear to what extent perceived negative corporate brand publicity affects employees. The present study reveals that perceived negative corporate brand publicity directly affects employee emotion, namely emotional corporate brand pride. Moreover, perceived negative corporate brand publicity has a direct effect on employees' brand-supporting behavior like WOM and employee referrals. As the latter finding is in contrast to prior studies Müller and Gaus (2015) who did not find significant effects of negative media on actual consumer behavior, we argue that a person's employer (i.e. brand) represent an important part of the individual's self-concept leading to a change in employee behavior (Cable & Turban, 2003).

		Standard coefficent		
				Group
	Path	Male	Female	Difference
BE internal communication	→ Perceived negative brand publicity	−0.23	−0.22	0.01
BE external communication	→ Perceived negative brand publicity	−0.02	−0.02	0.00
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	−0.18	−0.19	0.02
Emotional corporate brand pride	→ Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.81	0.77	0.04
Attitudinal corporate brand pride	→ Employee referrals	0.67	0.67	0.00
Attitudinal corporate brand piride	→ WOM	0.76	0.72	0.04
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ Employee referrals	−0.09	−0.07	0.02*
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ WOM	−0.17	−0.15	0.02
BE internal communication	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	0.28	0.30	0.02
BE external communication	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	0.13	0.14	0.01***

Note: Significant at ***$p < .01$; **$p < 0.5$; *$p < .10$

Table 16: Multi-Group analysis by gender

		Standard coefficent		
		Long	Short	Group
	Path	Tenure	Tenure	Difference
BE internal communication	→ Perceived negative brand publicity	−0.24	−0.27	0.03
BE external communication	→ Perceived negative brand publicity	−0.04	−0.04	0.00
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	−0.15	−0.15	0.00
Emotional corporate brand pride	→ Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.81	0.80	0.01
Attitudinal corporate brand pride	→ Employee referrals	0.63	0.67	0.04*
Attitudinal corporate brand piride	→ WOM	0.72	0.71	0.01
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ Employee referrals	−0.11	−0.09	0.02
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ WOM	−0.16	−0.14	0.02
BE internal communication	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	0.31	0.31	0.01
BE external communication	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	0.12	0.13	0.01***

Note: Significant at ***$p < .01$; **$p < 0.5$; *$p < .10$

Table 17: Multi-Group analysis by tenure

		Standard coefficent		
			Non-	Group
	Path	Management	Management	Difference
BE internal communication	→ Perceived negative brand publicity	−0.23	−0.23	0.00
BE external communication	→ Perceived negative brand publicity	−0.03	−0.03	0.00
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	−0.20	−0.18	0.02
Emotional corporate brand pride	→ Attitudinal corporate brand pride	0.77	0.79	0.02
Attitudinal corporate brand pride	→ Employee referrals	0.65	0.69	0.04**
Attitudinal corporate brand piride	→ WOM	0.74	0.74	0.00
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ Employee referrals	−0.09	−0.07	0.02
Perceived negative brand publicity	→ WOM	−0.15	−0.15	0.00
BE internal communication	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	0.29	0.30	0.02*
BE external communication	→ Emotional corporate brand pride	0.17	0.15	0.02

Note: Significant at ***$p < .01$; **$p < 0.5$; *$p < .10$

Table 18: Multi-Group analysis by management role

In line with AET Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) and earlier findings of Gouthier and Rhein (2011), our results reveal that emotional corporate brand pride has downstream consequences regarding attitudinal corporate brand pride. Similarly, the results demonstrate that attitudinal corporate brand pride strongly influences WOM and employee referrals (brand-supporting behavior). Here, the study helps to broaden the current view on internal branding, which mainly focuses on brand commitment as

a central construct, highlighting the importance of (attitudinal) corporate brand pride in an (internal) branding context.

Contrary to what we expected, corporate brand experience through external communications did not mitigate the perception of negative brand publicity in the same way brand experience through internal communication does. This finding is noteworthy, because it illustrates that employees of a corporate brand seem to be more prone to brand experience through internal communications. In doing so, the results establish an understanding that in an employee context both communication channels are not equally effective in compensating negative corporate brand publicity. From a theoretical point of view, this circumstance might relate to the accessibility of information amongst others, suggesting that the likelihood that information is used as the basis of an evaluation is determined by the accessibility of that information (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Herr et al., 1991). In the context of our study, employees might use the internal communications more often as accessibility via the intranet is easier and often more detailed compared to external communications. Hence, the information is more present and therefore more effective. In addition, De Roeck et al. (2014) and Gond et al. (2010) showed that employees exhibited stronger feelings from internal CSR actions than from CSR actions towards other stakeholders, which could support our assumption that employees are more amenable to internal forms of communications.

Finally, this paper adds value to the existing research by showing how (emotional) corporate brand pride can be stimulated, responding to calls for further research (Kraemer et al., 2020). Likewise, corporate brand experience through internal communications trigger (emotional) corporate brand pride more strongly. The analysis of control variables (multi-group analysis) revealed only minor differences regarding gender, tenure and employee status. Here, we did not find strong gender effects. In contrast to expectations employees with a short tenure are more likely to recommend specific jobs of the corporation. It is also interesting that non-management employees are more likely to refer specific jobs to persons he or she knows. As management employees usually have a broad social capital and are usually well informed about vacancies, this result is surprising.

3.7 Limitations and implications for further research

Despite the new findings noted here, several limitations should be addressed. First, the sample comprises of German employees, implying that the results cannot be generalized. Second, this research used a cross-sectional design. However, it may be interesting how the influence of perceived brand publicity varies over time, calling

for further research using a longitudinal design. In addition, further studies might use semi-structured interviews to gain insights answering the question what employees of a corporate brand expect in a situation of negative publicity from top management, their supervisors or in general regarding the brand they work for. Third, to provide a holistic view on effects of brand publicity the study used a more general measure, capturing various forms of negative brand publicity. In doing so, we disregard previous research showing that various forms of publicity exist, for example performance-related (Lee et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2011) and value-related publicity (Kanar et al., 2010; Thwaites et al., 2012). To provide further insights, future studies should include differentiated measures to capture specific forms of (brand) publicity. Fourth, this research neglected effects of dispositions. Affective-Events-Theory postulates the importance of dispositions on the relationship of work-events and emotions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). For these reasons, future research should include dispositions. Fifth, nowadays various communication channels exist (e.g. social media) and future studies should try to answer the question if negative brand publicity is similarly harmful in all channels.

3.8 Practical Implications

The findings of this research have several implications for management and marketing practitioners. As employees represent a crucial part of brands' success and competitive advantage, it is important to understand how the detrimental effects of perceived negative brand publicity on employees' corporate brand pride and brand-supporting behavior can be mitigated. The results show that corporation can effectively mitigate effects of perceived negative corporate brand publicity by creating a corporate brand experience. Here, marketing managers may be well advised to highlight corporate brand values through internal communications, which in turn negatively affect the employees' perception of negative brand publicity. Moreover, this study indicates the importance of corporate brand pride as a central driver of brand-supporting behavior, namely employee referrals and employee WOM. As many branding initiatives base upon brand commitment, practitioners might think of including brand pride in their marketing concepts. This research shows how corporate brand pride can be fostered through specific marketing or branding activities, for example highlighting corporate brand values via internal communications.

At the same time, we show that employees with a long tenure are less likely to recommend jobs to friends, compared to employees with a short tenure. As referrals are nowadays an important recruiting source (e.g. Pieper, 2015; Van Hoye, 2013), management and HR practitioners might stimulate employee referrals through incentives targeted at this particular group (e.g. differentiated referral bonuses).

Similarly, managers are less likely to recommend jobs of their corporate brand to friends, compared to non-management employees. So, managers who usually have a large (business) network and know about various job opportunities within the corporation need to be encouraged to act as facilitators.

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4. Does It Pay Off? Brand Knowledge Dissemination and Its Effects on Corporate Brand Pride, Brand- and Service Behaviour of Frontline Personnel[3]

Abstract

This study aims to explore the effects of brand knowledge dissemination and its influence on corporate brand pride as well as subsequent brand and service behaviour of service personnel. To achieve this aim, a survey was carried out on a sample of 325 frontline employees with direct customer contact in Germany. The results show that brand knowledge dissemination, as a central aspect of internal brand management (IBM), positively affects corporate brand pride of employees, which in turn influence brand and service supporting behaviour (e.g. dissemination of service complaints). In addition, moderation analysis revealed that perceived management support for corporate social responsibility (CSR) positively influences the relationship of corporate brand pride and specific brand- and service behaviour. The findings of this study highlight how corporate brand pride of employees can be fostered and how employees can become service champions.

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4.1 Introduction

Success of service organizations depends heavily on the interaction between service employees and customers (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014, Morhart et al., 2009). Here, frontline personnel play a central role as they are responsible for delivering high quality service and shaping customer brand perceptions (Morhart et al., 2009). Keller (2003) emphasize the relevance of service employee behaviour by stating that each contact with the service employee influences the way the consumer experiences the brand. For this reason, many studies try to answer the question how corporations can foster positive attitudes of frontline employees – which in turn shall induce profitable customer and brand interactions (e.g. Jung et al., 2021; Garas et al., 2018; Lages & Piercy, 2012). However, service firms only have partly control over the employee/customer interactions (Baker et al., 2014). Thus, service firms often focus on IBM – as they do have direct control over their brand positioning and advertising. In general, IBM refers to focussed corporate actions to promote a brand to employees, thereby motivating them to strengthen the corporate brand and become brand ambassadors (Morhart et al., 2009). Empirical research on IBM in a service context often highlights job satisfaction, organizational or brand commitment, and identification as central drivers of service success (e.g. Garas et al., 2018; Du Preez et al., 2017). Interestingly, (corporate brand) pride has been widely neglected, which depicts a research gap. Even though corporate brand pride is found to be a strong intrinsic motivator and reliable predictor of brand-supporting and customer-oriented behaviour (Egeler et al., 2022; Abed & Büttgen, 2022, Kraemer et al., 2020; Verbeke et al., 2004). Similarly, service research often focusses on either brand-supporting or service behaviour (e.g. Taku et al., 2022; Jung et al., 2021; Bravo et al., 2021). However, this distinct differentiation might be not adequate as for example service brands strive for excellence in their business and at the same time want to establish a strong service brand. In addition, IBM studies oftentimes use unidimensional measures as a meta-analysis of Afshardoost, Eshaghi and Bowden (2021) lately revealed. Here, specificity regarding particular IBM measures and their dimensions are missing. These limitations depict an avenue for further exploration. Therefore, this research makes a number of contributions. First, this study further investigates how corporate brand pride of frontline employees can be stimulated through particular IBM actions, namely brand knowledge dissemination. In doing so, this paper responds to calls for further research showing how organizations can enhance employees´ pride (e. g. Kraemer et al., 2020). As service corporations need to ensure that their service personnel "both understand the brand promise and are able to deliver it in a consistent manner", we choose brand knowledge dissemination as one way in doing so, "is to communicate brand information directly to employees" (Baker et al., 2014, p. 642).

Literature provides support for this approach, as brand communication is a key dimension of IBM (Deepa & Baral, 2021) and it can represent a central source for employee corporate brand experience (Egeler et al., 2022). Second, the present research overcomes previous limitations in scope and highlight the influence of corporate brand pride on specific customer-oriented behaviour (service orientation and dissemination of service complaints) as well as specific brand-supporting behaviour (participation in brand development and participation in online brand community) of service personnel. Third, according to Du Preez et al. (2017) most of the IBM studies in the service sector are often limited to the hotel or banking industry. As this research comprises frontline employees from various service sectors (e. g. retail), we add value to existing research supporting and enriching findings in case of generalizability. Fourth, moderation analysis highlights the importance of perceived management support for CSR with regard to brand- and service behaviour.

4.2 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

The affective-events-theory (AET) developed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) provide a macro structure for this study. In general, AET provides an explanation for the interaction of work-events, work-environment features, emotions, attitudes and behaviour (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Besides the primary structure of the AET, which highlight "the structure, causes, and consequences of employees´ affective experiences at work" (Matta, Erol-Korkmaz, Johnson & Bicaksiz, 2014, p. 922), the theory illustrates the interplay of work-environment features (e.g. dissemination of brand knowledge) and their direct effect on work-related attitudes (e.g. corporate brand pride), which in turn affect judgement driven behaviour (e.g. participation in brand development).
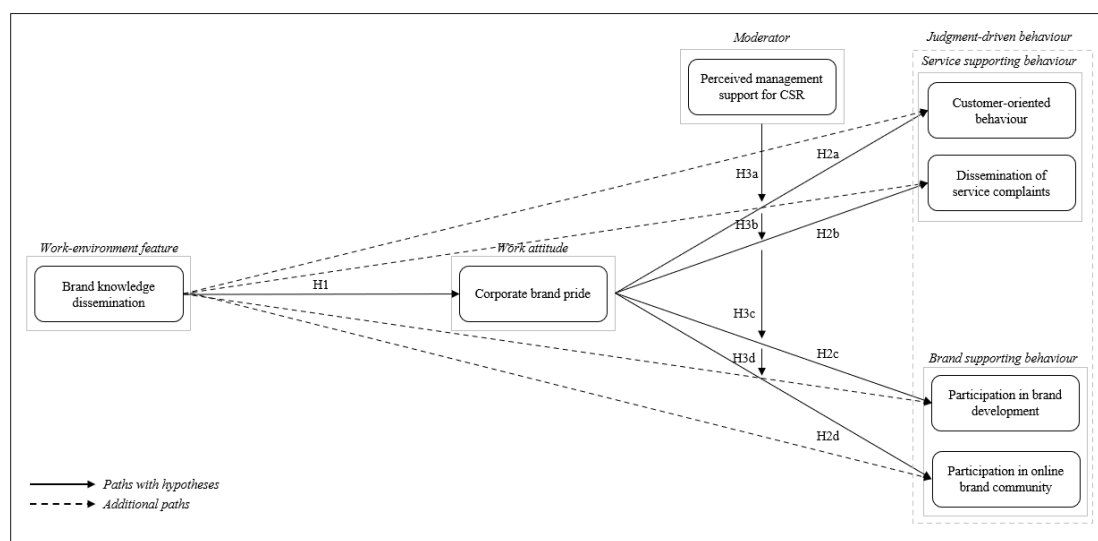

Figure 8: Theoretical model

4.2.1 Linking Brand Knowledge Dissemination and Corporate Brand Pride

As a central part of IBM brand knowledge dissemination can be defined as the transmission of "meaningful and relevant brand information to employees in order to aid in the provision of higher levels of customer service" (Baker et al., 2014, p. 643). In doing so, brand values, brand goals or more general information that helps the employee in understanding the brand and his/her role in delivering the brand message can be part of the employee-focussed brand knowledge dissemination. Previous research found a variety of desirable attitudinal outcomes, for example: brand identification (Ngo et al., 2019), brand involvement (Biedenbach et al., 2022), organizational identification (Bravo et al., 2021), customer identification (Bravo et al., 2021), and brand commitment (King & Grace, 2010). Moreover, direct positive effects on role clarity (King & Grace, 2010) have been found. Focusing on more general IBM measures, job satisfaction (Du Preez et al., 2017), brand awareness (Taku et al., 2022), and brand loyalty (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011) are positively influenced, too.

Hence, the communication of brand related information (e.g. brand goals) is an "attempt to influence employee beliefs about the brand" (Baker et al., 2014, p. 646), aiming to enhance the identification with the corporation. In doing so, a brand or corporation communicate positive status-related information, for example, by using brand books (Burmann & König, 2011). These information or experience in turn should elicit pride of the employees as prior studies reveal that feelings of pride are directly interconnected to firms" achievements and successes (Abed & Büttgen, 2022; Boons et al., 2015; Salerno et al., 2015; Helm, 2013; Decrop & Derbaix, 2010) and work-environment features directly influence employees" attitudes (e.g. corporate brand pride) according to AET. Moreover, the disclosing of goals, values or achievements of a brand can help the employee to better understand the distinct identity of the corporation establishing a mutual understanding what values bind the corporation and recognizing "the clear boundaries that differentiate the own organization from others" (Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014, p. 314). Based on social identity theory this aspect should lead to a higher social identification and therefore to higher levels of corporate brand pride (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Hence, the following hypothesis were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Brand knowledge dissemination positively affects employees´ corporate brand pride

4.2.2 Linking Corporate Brand Pride and Brand/Service Supporting Behaviour

Previous research on brand-supporting behaviour identified multiple antecedents, e.g. brand passion (Albert et al., 2013), positive emotions (Lovett et al., 2013; Ladhari, 2007), satisfaction (Hagenbuch et al., 2008; Wagenheim & Bayón,

2007), brand commitment (Albert et al., 2013), product (Wolny & Mueller, 2013; Wangenheim & Bayon, 2007) or brand involvement (Wolny & Mueller, 2013), and corporate brand pride (Egeler et al., 2022; Abed & Büttgen, 2022). Even though these latter studies focusing on corporate brand pride reveal positive effects of corporate brand pride on word-of-mouth in a brand context – the influence of corporate brand pride on more specific service behaviour still remains unclear.

Drawing on earlier findings (e.g. Egeler et al., 2022; Abed & Büttgen, 2022; Kraemer et al. 2020; Lythreatis et al., 2019; Baer et al., 2015; Kraemer & Gouthier, 2014; Verbeke et al. 2004), we suppose that corporate brand pride is a powerful intrinsic motivator leading to higher levels of brand- and service-oriented behaviour due to various reasons. First, employees with a high level of pride have an intense affiliation with the corporate brand leading to exceptional inner motivation (e.g. Kraemer et al. 2020; Lythreatis et al. 2019). Findings of Verbeke et al. (2004) support this view stating that emotions of pride lead to greater effort of sales personnel. According to Gouthier and Rhein (2011) pride (emotion) positively influences the (attitudinal) commitment to customer service. So, it can be assumed that service personnel with higher levels of corporate brand pride should try to serve the customer best and forward potential customer complaints. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2a: Corporate brand pride has a positive effect on customer-oriented behaviour

Hypothesis 2b: Corporate brand pride has a positive effect on the dissemination of service complaints

Besides the findings mentioned above, pride (emotion) has a positive influence on the creativity of service employees (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011), which is obviously important with regard to the participation in brand development. Moreover, Baer et al. (2015) showed that proud employees show enhanced reputation maintenance concerns, which should lead to an increased participation in online brand community actions. This leads to

Hypothesis 2c: Corporate brand pride has a positive effect on the participation in brand development

Hypothesis 2d: Corporate brand pride has a positive effect on the participation in online brand community

4.2.3 The Moderating Role of Perceived Management Support for CSR

Latest research highlights the relevance of a firms environmental and social orientation on frontline employee outcomes (Gabler et al., 2020). In doing so, Gabler

et al. (2020) show that both firm level orientations affect sales performance, word-of-mouth, turnover intention, and job satisfaction of service personnel. Following these findings, we focus on the perceived management support for CSR – as supervisor behaviour and related perceptions play a crucial role in a service context (e.g. Kraemer et al., 2017; Walsh et al., 2015; Kraemer & Gouthier, 2014). Hereby, perceived management support for CSR can be defined as "The extent to which an employee believes that the company´s executives or other member of management enable, encourage, or embrace the company´s CSR activities" (Korschun et al., 2014, p. 34). Focusing on brand- and customer-oriented behaviour, we suppose that perceived management support for CSR enhance the relationship of corporate brand pride and brand-oriented as well service-oriented behaviour for various reasons. First, a positive assessment of achievements of the corporate brand, reputation or status lead to corporate brand pride (e.g. Salerno et al. 2015; Helm, 2013; Yim & Fock, 2013). As CSR perceptions enhance the image of a corporation or brand, it should lead to higher levels of corporate brand pride (Helm, 2013). This view is theoretically supported drawing on signaling theory (Spence, 1978). Second, pride refers to a high level of identification with the corporation (e.g. Kraemer et al. 2020; Lythreatis et al. 2019). Following social identity theory, employees who perceive their management as more caring about society and environmental aspects should exhibit a higher social identification and vice versa higher levels of corporate brand pride. In particular, as work and the relating employer represent a fundamental part of a persons` self-concept (Gabler et al., 2020). Third, Oh and Kim (2019) show that work engagement is fostered by CSR perceptions, which in turn positively influence motivation and performance. Similarly, Gabler et al. (2020, p. 1000) state that employees "may also become more creative in their jobs". This should help service personnel better adapting to customer actions, increasing service-oriented behaviour. Fourth, Gabler et al. (2020) show that environmental and social orientation can lead to a higher engagement in organizational citizenship behaviours. Therefore, as follows:

Hypothesis 3a: The perceived management support for CSR moderate the relationship between corporate brand pride and customer oriented behaviour

Hypothesis 3b: The perceived management support for CSR moderate the relationship between corporate brand pride and dissemination of service complaints

Hypothesis 3c: The perceived management support for CSR moderate the relationship between corporate brand pride and participation in brand development

Hypothesis 3d: The perceived management support for CSR moderate the relationship between corporate brand pride and participation in online brand community

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Participants

To collect the data for this study, an online survey was conducted. In doing so, we focussed on service personnel with direct customer interaction, working for corporate brands operating in Germany. The survey began with a short introduction on the purpose of the study and its confidentiality. In total 343 completed questionnaire were returned. Following Nysveen and Pedersen`s (2014), we analysed the dataset for careless responses. Hereby, we analysed the average processing time (median), which was 10 min and 30 seconds. Respondents with a completion time shorter than 180 seconds, indicating superficial reading, were removed from the final sample. Next the names of the corporate (service) brands, which must be indicated, were checked. Though, it should be ensured that only persons from corporate brands with own services participate in the study. The final sample comprise 325 observations. Of the service employees who participated, 197 (60.6%) were female and 128 (39.4%) were male. Around half of the respondents (51.7%) were employed at corporation with more than 1.000 employees. Nearly 35% of the participants hold a bachelor´s degree, as the lowest education level (34.5%). In addition, most of the participants are 35 years old or younger (80.6%).

4.3.2 Measures

All the response scales were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 („strongly disagree") to 7 („strongly agree"). We used the translation-back translation procedure of Brislin (1980) regarding measures previously developed in English, as this study was conducted in Germany. Moreover, all used measured had been pre-tested regarding reliability, validity and mutual understanding. Table 19 in the appendix gives an overview of the complete item set used in this study.

Brand knowledge dissemination: We measured brand knowledge dissemination with the three-item scale used by Baker et al. (2014) and originally developed by King and Grace (2010). A sample item is: [corporate brand name] communicates its brand message well to its employees". The reliability of this scale was 0.86.

Corporate brand pride: Measurement items for corporate brand pride were used from Egeler et al. (2022), which have been originally developed by Gouthier and Rhein (2011). Hereby, the four-item-scale was used to ensure reliability of the central construct in our framework. A sample item is „I´m proud to be part of [corporate brand name]". The Cronbach´s alpha coefficient was 0.93.

Customer-oriented behaviour: We used the four-item scale by Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014). A sample item is: „I always recommend the product or service that is best suited to the customer´s problem". The reliability of the scale was 0.86.

Dissemination of service complaints: The four-item scale by Luria, Gal and Yagil (2009) was employed. A sample item is: „I report to management about incidents in which customers complain about serious problems". The Cronbach´s alpha coefficient was 0.87.

Participation in brand development: We used the three-item scale by Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014). A sample item is: „I participate in building our brand, even when I am not rewarded for doing so". The reliability of this scale was 0.91. Item 1 was deleted due to low factor loadings.

Participation in online brand community: We used the four-item scale by Casaló, Flavián and Guinaliu (2010). A sample item is: „I post messages and responses in the community with great excitement and frequency". Cronbach´s alpha for this scale was 0.94.

Control variables. Following common sense in literature, we controlled for several socio-demographic variables, including age, gender, corporate tenure, corporate size, education, and occupation level.

4.3.3 Analyses

Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we analysed data in a two-step approach. In doing so, we evaluated the psychometric properties of the constructs in a first step. Furthermore, we analysed if common method variance (CMV) is present in the data, applying well-known statistical remedies. In a last step, AMOS 27 have been used to assess hypothesized relationships (Arbuckle, 2003).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the validity of the measurement model, following well-established recommendations (e.g. Gracia et al., 2013; Stumpp et al., 2009). The results of the CFA indicate a good model fit, as values fulfill common thresholds (Arbuckle, 2003; Byrne, 2002; Hair et al., 1998; Hair et al., 2006; Homburg & Giering, 1996; Hu & Bentler, 1998): Comparative fit index (CFI) = .97, normed fit index (NFI) = .93, goodness of fit index (GFI) = .90, adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = .88, tucker lewis index (TLI) = .96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .048, standardized root mean square error of approximation (SRMR) = .03 and CMIN/DF = 1.760. In a next step, the scales were assessed regarding reliability. All Cronbach´s alpha coefficients exceed the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). See Table 20 for reliabilities. Apart from

Cronbach´s alpha analysis, convergent and discriminant validity were assessed (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As all factor loadings meet or exceed the threshold of 0.70, we suppose that convergent validity is given. See Table 19 for an overview. Following the procedure of Fornell and Larcker (1981) composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated. Analysis reveals that CR for all constructs were above 0.86. Similarly, AVE scores for all constructs are larger than the 0.50 criterion. Moreover, the AVE for each construct is greater than the squared correlation coefficient between that construct and any other factor (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), suggesting discriminant validity is not an issue.

Since this study uses self-reported data for dependent and independent variables, the problem of CMV can occur (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In order to mitigate the potential common method bias problem, procedural and statistical remedies recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003) were followed. For example, we guarantee anonymity. To examine the existence of common method bias, we conducted Harman´s one-factor test. No single factor explained the majority of the total variance. However, literature provide evidence that Harman´s one-factor test is not free of criticism (e.g. Temme et al., 2009). Hence, we additionally employed Lindell and Whitney`s (2001) marker variable test. A three-item measure "flat hierarchy" from Nahm, Vonderembse and Koufteros (2003) was selected as a marker variable, as it was theoretically not correlated with the majority of constructs used in this study. Analysis revealed that none of the correlations became non-significant or alter its sign after correcting for method bias. Therefore, results indicate that CMV is not a serious threat in this research.

4.3.4 Results

Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities are shown in Table 20. The results revealed that only one out of 9 hypotheses needs to be rejected.

Brand knowledge dissemination affect corporate brand pride, supporting H1 (β = .70, p < .001). In turn, corporate brand pride positively influence brand-supporting behaviour of employees, namely customer-oriented behaviour (H2a, β = .31, p < .001), dissemination of service complaints (H2b, β = .27, p < .001), participation in brand development (H2c, β = .60, p < .001) and participation in online brand community (H2d, β = .24, p < .001) of frontline personnel. In addition, we tested for moderators. Analysis showed that perceived management support for CSR strongly influence the relationship between corporate brand pride and customer-oriented behaviour (H3a, β = .17, p < .001). Moreover, management support for CSR moderates the link between corporate brand pride and dissemination of service complaint similarly (H3b, β = .17, p < .05). The moderating effect with regard to

participation in brand development cannot be supported (H3c, β = .05, not significant). H3d can be supported as management support for CSR moderate the pride – participation in brand community link (H3d, β = .09, p < .10). See Table 21 for an overview.

Moreover, we conducted a multi-group analysis to test for moderators that were not hypothesized (i.e. discrete variables) (Eberl, 2010). We tested for group differences following the procedure of Byrne (2010). Since previous research possess mixed results regarding gender, we test for gender effects (e.g. Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). We also analysed whether tenure influence the proposed relationships. In particular, as previous studies show that personnel with a longer tenure tend to exhibit higher levels of pride (Helm, 2013). Furthermore, we analysed if the employment status (i.e. management vs. non-management) leads to differences in the strength of relationships.

Results suggest that gender has a significant effect on the relationship between corporate brand pride and customer-oriented behaviour (β = .38, p < .001). Here, proud male are more likely to show customer-oriented behaviour. Tenure analysis showed that employees with a short tenure show higher levels of customer-oriented behaviour than service personnel with a long tenure (β = .32, p < .05). In addition to earlier studies (e.g. Abed & Büttgen, 2022) we found support for differences regarding management and non-management employees. Although, multi-group analysis revealed that management employees show higher levels of customer-oriented behaviour (β = .31, p < .05). See Table 22 for an overview.
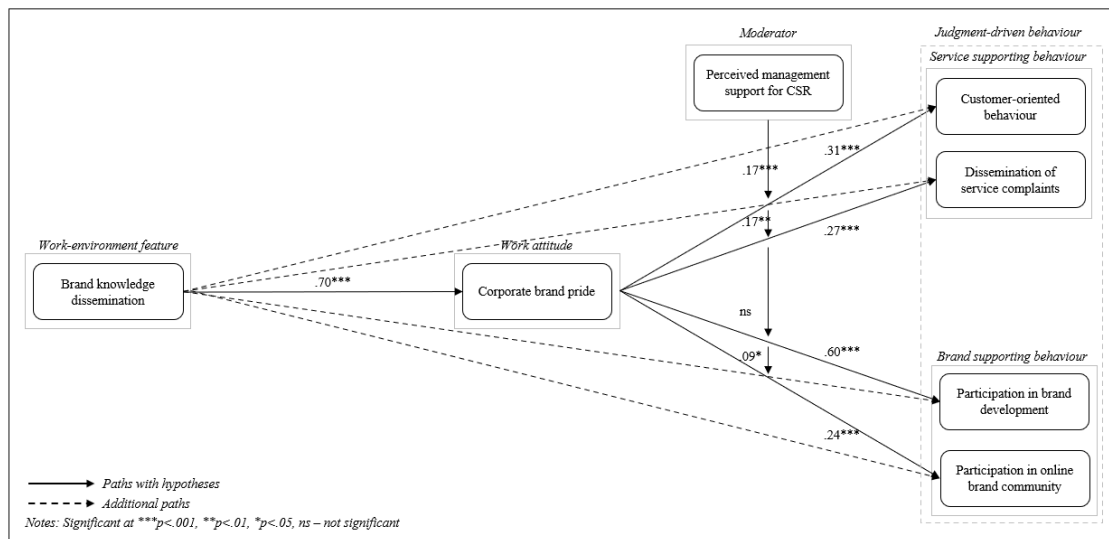

Figure 9: Structural model (Chapter 4)

4.4 Discussion

Literature often explicitly or implicitly postulate that internal branding concepts can act "as an enabler of employees´ delivery of the brand promise through its influences on their attitudes and behaviours" (Punjaisri et al., 2009, p. 217). The present study provides empirical support that brand knowledge dissemination, as a central part of internal branding, positively influence corporate brand pride. In turn, corporate brand pride of service personnel affect customer-oriented behaviour, dissemination of service complaints, participation in brand development and participation in online community.

As CSR perceptions are becoming more important in nowadays employer – employee context (e.g. Ng et al., 2019), we incorporated perceived management support for CSR as a potential moderator in our study. Interestingly, perceived management support for CSR strongly moderates the link between corporate brand pride and employees´ customer-oriented behaviour as well as the dissemination of service complaints. In contrast to our expectations no moderation effect was found regarding the link between corporate brand pride and participation in brand development. Moderation effects regarding corporate brand pride and participation in online brand community were only slightly significant. A possible explanation could be that the first two behavioural outcomes (customer-oriented behaviour and dissemination of service complaints) refer to a higher extent to CSR´s inherent nature of doing the right things. For example, to society or in particular the customer. Participation in brand development and participation in online brand community exhibit more a brand perspective instead of a pure service/society orientation.

The examination of control variables (multi-group analysis) discloses significant gender effects. Thus, male service employees show higher levels of customer-oriented behaviour. This is interesting, as in general women are perceived as more caring and communally oriented, whereas men usually show more self-assertive behaviour (e. g. Biron et al., 2016). These gender-stereotypical expectations can "produce social and economic reprisals, or backlash effects, towards men and women who show deviant (counter-stereotypical) behaviour" (Biron et al., 2016, p. 433), which could be a potential explanation for our findings. In addition, frontline employees with a short tenure exhibit higher levels of customer-oriented behaviour. We assume that service personnel which is new in the job might be higher motivated than a person which exerts the job for a couple of years. Latest research of Abed and Büttgen (2022) support this view. Here, participants with a short tenure tend to show higher employee referral behaviour. Similarly, the present study reveals that management employees show more customer-oriented behaviour than non-

management employees. This circumstance might relate to the fact, that management employees are usually more trained to act in a customer-oriented manner and how this behaviour relate to overall corporate or service success.

4.5 Limitations and Implications for Further Research

Besides the new findings noted here, our study must be considered in light of some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the generalizability of the findings is limited because the sample consists of data from frontline employees of a single country (Germany). As high-power distance cultures might differ in their brand knowledge dissemination practice and its perception, future studies should incorporate data from various countries. Second, data of this study were based on a cross-sectional design. Though, it would be useful to analyse how brand knowledge dissemination affect corporate brand pride of personnel over time. Similarly, the perception of management support for CSR may vary over time, calling for further research using a longitudinal design. Third, corporation can use various channels for the dissemination of brand knowledge (e.g. internal communications). Future studies should try to reveal if brand knowledge dissemination is similarly effective across multiple channels. Latest research regarding corporate brand experience provide insight, that not all forms of brand experience are equally effective in an employee setting (Egeler et al., 2022). It would also be interesting to examine how hierarchy might influence brand knowledge dissemination and its effects on service- and brand-behaviour (Bravo et al., 2021). Moreover, internal branding mechanisms embrace usually brand-focused human resource management practices (Afshardoost et al., 2021). Future studies should incorporate specific human resource management practices examining synergy effects on employees besides internal branding activities.

4.6 Practical Implications

The findings of this research have several implications for (service) management and marketing practitioners. On the one hand our results indicate the importance of corporate brand pride on brand- and service relevant behaviours, e.g. dissemination of service complaints. Here, we show that male employees show more often customer-oriented behaviour. Moreover, multi-group analysis revealed that service personnel with a short tenure show higher levels of customer-oriented behaviour. Similarly, management exhibit higher levels of customer-oriented behaviour than non-management employees. Thus, corporation might stimulate the customer orientation of service personnel with longer tenure or non-management employees by training activities. On the other hand, we offer managers insights of

how corporate brand pride can be stimulated. Here, brand knowledge dissemination acts as a strong facilitator. Marketing- and (service) management practitioners should foster the exchange and experience of brand-related information (e.g. vision) within the corporation and service branches. Moreover, this research highlights the importance of perceived management support for CSR amongst service employees. The perception of management support for CSR enhances all behavioural outcomes, except the relationship between corporate brand pride and participation in brand development. Thus, service brands might think about intensifying their CSR actions or their internal visibility of such initiatives. The latter aspect might be stimulated by internal communications or through brand experience days, where employees internalize a brands vision and mission.

4.7 References

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4.8 Appendix

Items	Constructs	Items inspired by	Factor Loadings	Notes
Dissemination of brand knowledge				
[Corporate brand name] communicates its brand message well to its employees			.80	
[Corporate brand name] explains the importance of my role in delivering the brand message	Baker et al. (2014)		.87	
The information provided to me when I started at [Corporate brand name] helped me understand the goals of the [Corporate brand name] brand.			.80	
Corporate brand pride				
I feel proud to work for [corporate brand name].			.91	
I feel proud to contribute to [corporate brand name]'s success.	Gouthier and Rhein (2011)		.82	
I feel proud to tell others I am working for [corporate brand name].			.86	
I feel proud to be a part of [corporate brand name].			.94	Additional item
Customer oriented behaviour				
I always try to figure out what customer´s needs are.			.70	
I always try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product or service that helps him/her solve that problem.	Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos (2014)		.78	
I always recommend the product or service that is best suited to the customer´s problem.			.80	
I always try to find out what kind of product or service would be most helpful to a customer.			.85	
Dissemination of service complaints				
I report to management about incidents in which customers complain about serious problems.			.72	
I report to my direct manager about problems customer encounter even if a customer has not told me that he or she wants to complain about service.	Luria et al. (2009)		.80	
I feel comfortable discussing problems encountered with a dissatisfied customer with my direct manager.			.79	
I am willing to tell my direct manager about difficulties I had when serving customers.			.88	
Participation in brand development				
If I have a useful idea on how to improve our brand´s performance, I share it with my organization, even when I am not rewarded for doing so.	Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos (2014)			eliminated
I would voluntarily accept extra work if that has a positive effect on our brand image.			.92	
I participate in building our brand, even when I am not rewarded for doing so.			.90	
Participation in online brand community				
I participate actively in the community activities (for example by posting to the page or commenting other´s posts).	Casaló et al. (2010)		.88	
I use to contribute to the community.			.96	
I usually provide useful travel information to other community members.			.85	
I post messages and responses in the community with great excitement and frequency.			.84	
Perceived management support for CSR				
For executives, [company]´s impact on society is a primary concern.	Korschun et al., (2014)			eliminated
Management encourages employees to be involved in [company]´s social responsibility.			.80	
Managers at [company] fully embrace social responsibility.			.86	

Table 19: Overview item set

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Brand knowledge dissemination	5.22	1.45	(.86)					
2. Corporate brand pride	5.58	1.41	.63	(.93)				
3. Customer oriented-behaviour	6.26	.87	.21	.30	(.86)			
4. Dissemination of service complaints	5.99	.96	.17	.23	.34	(.87)		
5. Participation in brand development	5.00	1.57	.35	.56	.15	.28	(.91)	
6. Participation in online brand community	2.72	1.81	.17	.22	$.07^{ns}$	$.01^{ns}$	.31	(.94)
Notes: Correlations are significant at p<.01 unless otherwise stated, coefficient alphas appear on diagonal								

Table 20: Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations

Moderator	Path	Effect
Perceived management support for CSR	Corporate brand pride → customer-oriented behaviour	.17***
	Corporate brand pride → dissemination of service complaints	.17***
	Corporate brand pride → participation in brand development	$.05^{ns}$
	Corporate brand pride → participation in online brand community	.09*
Notes: Significant at ***p<.01; **p<.05; *p<.10; ns – not significant		

Table 21: Results of moderator analysis (CSR)

Path	Standardized coefficient								
	Male	Female	Group diff.	Long tenure	Short tenure	Group diff.	Manage-ment	Non-Manage-ment	Group diff.
Brand knowledge dissemination → Corporate brand pride	.69	.75	$.06^{ns}$	.75	.74	$.01^{ns}$	.63	.73	$.10^{ns}$
Corporate brand pride → customer-oriented behaviour	.55	.17	.38***	.15	.47	.32**	.48	.17	.31**
Corporate brand pride → dissemination of service complaints	.23	.31	$.08^{ns}$	.05	.23	$.18^{ns}$	.07	.14	$.07^{ns}$
Corporate brand pride → participation in brand development	.59	.62	$.03^{ns}$	.56	.63	$.07^{ns}$	.68	.51	$.17^{ns}$
Corporate brand pride → participation in online brand community	.18	.27	$.09^{ns}$	.21	.15	$.06^{ns}$	.28	.24	$.04^{ns}$
Notes: Significant at ***p<.01; **p<.05; *p<.10; ns – not significant									

Table 22: Results of MGA analysis

5. General Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This thesis offers several theoretical contributions with regard to the development, application and management of internal as well as external corporate brand experience in an employee setting.

First, focusing on corporate brand experience in an employee setting, the thesis advances the brand experience approach from a consumer domain into a new field of research, addressing the call to rethink the concept of brand experience and internal branding. As literature does not provide a theoretical framework how employees corporate brand experience might be clustered or what corporate brand experience is important in an employee setting a basic framework was developed, focusing on the heart of every corporation or brand, namely, its identity. To develop this framework an extensive literature review was conducted to identify potential touch points for corporate brand experience in an employee context and to evaluate related concepts such as employment experience. In doing so, external and internal facets of corporate (brand) identity have been revealed, which provide a general differentiation with regard to already identified facets of consumer brand experience.

Within each category (i.e. internal or external), the facets of corporate brand experience can represent a varying extent of value-orientation. For example, within the internal cluster product related direct corporate brand experience exhibits no value-orientation. In contrast, indirect corporate brand experience depicts a high value-orientation. Brand knowledge dissemination represents an indirect internal facet of corporate brand experience with a lower extent of value-orientation, as brand knowledge dissemination comprehend usually information regarding the goals, mission and vision besides values, making it less value-oriented in nature. In contrast to these internal forms of corporate brand experience publicity represent an external facet of corporate brand experience, which is universal and not restricted to either product or value orientation.

Second, due to the absence of a theoretical consideration of employees´ corporate brand experience a new scale was developed and validated using a multi-method approach (e.g. in-depth interviews for item generation and quantitative validation study). Following well-established scale development practices (Churchill, 1979; Crawford & Kelder, 2018), the results provide evidence for the scale factor structure, reliability and validity. In doing so, results reveal that the newly developed employee corporate brand experience scale is distinct from other measures, such as employment experience (Edwards & Edwards, 2013) and the most widely cited brand

experience construct of Brakus et al. (2009), providing further support for the quality of the used scale development procedure. Therefore, the thesis provides a measure for direct product related corporate brand experience of employees as well as an indirect non-product related corporate brand experience of employees, which researcher can apply in further studies concerning corporate brand experience in an employee context.

Third, all studies of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 complement the scarce research on (corporate brand) pride in an employee context by providing further insights about the influence on brand-supporting and customer-oriented behaviour. In addition, this thesis provides evidence on how corporate brand pride can be fostered answering calls for further research (e.g. Kraemer et al., 2020). The results of the various studies show that employees´ corporate brand pride is a strong intrinsic motivator which significantly affect brand-oriented and customer-oriented behaviour. Hereby, Chapter 2 depicts that corporate brand pride influences employee behaviour stronger than commitment. Therefore, research may be well advised to further investigate this construct, calling for further research. This thesis also shows that the different facets of employees´ corporate brand experience strongly influence corporate brand pride. Considering this, the studies complement previous calls for further research answering the question how corporation can enhance the pride of employees (e.g. Kraemer et al., 2020).

Fourth, as highlighted in Chapter 3, results reveal the detrimental influence of perceived negative corporate brand publicity on employees' affective and cognitive reactions. Here, this thesis is the first investigating and verifying such effects in an employee context. Considering the adverse effects of negative corporate brand publicity as an external form of corporate brand experience, the thesis sheds light on the question how corporations can mitigate this issue. Hereby, results reveal that the perception of negative publicity can be attenuated when employees experience the corporate brand through internal communications, representing a facet of internal brand experience. However, in contrast to expectations corporate brand experience through external communications did not act in the same way. Hence, this thesis provides several theoretical implications and further avenues for exploration. For example, the question arises how different sources of external corporate brand experience (i.e. publicity) might affect the strength of the effects.

Fifth, the thesis applies affective-events-theory as a theoretical macrostructure and a foundation in an internal branding context. As this theory is mainly applied in a human resource context the studies in Chapter 2, 3, and 4 contribute to a broader

understanding and generalizability of Weiss and Cropazaono`s theory (1996) in the field of marketing and management.

In summary, this thesis contributes to the understanding of corporate brand experience in an employee context. Figure 10 gives an overview of the theoretical contributions this thesis makes.

Facets of Employees´ Corporate Brand Experience

Direct Corporate Brand Experience	Indirect Corporate Brand Experience	Brand Knowledge Dissemination	Corporate Brand Publicity
▪ Introduction of a new (direct) corporate brand experience measure and is validation ▪ Revealing that not all corporate brand experience are equally effective in an employee context ▪ Adaption of the brand experience concept to a new domain (employee context)	▪ Establishing an understanding that indirect experiences play a crucial role in an employee context ▪ Introduction of a new (indirect) corporate brand experience measure and its validation ▪ Providing evidence how corporate brand pride can be fostered ▪ Adaption of the brand experience concept to a new domain (employee context)	▪ Revealing the strong influence of Brand Knowledge Dissemination on Corporate Brand Pride ▪ Demonstrating strong moderation effects of perceived management support for CSR ▪ Showing that corporate brand pride plays a central role in a service context	▪ Ilustrating detrimental effects of negative corporate brand publicity on employee outcomes ▪ Providing evidence how perceptions of negative corporate brand publicity can be mitigated ▪ Adaption of the brand experience concept to a new domain (employee context)
Internal focus			External focus

Figure 10: Facets of Employees´ Corporate Brand Experience

5. 2 Managerial Implications

This thesis offers important insights for managers who want to better understand and manage employees´ corporate brand experience as well as its effects on employees´ corporate brand pride, brand-oriented and service-oriented behaviour. In doing so, this work helps practitioners to develop efficient branding strategies. Here, the depicted framework provides an overview of several experiences an employee can have and their effects. Thus, practitioners can use this basic framework as a guideline when developing or re-thinking internal branding strategies. Overall, this thesis has the following main implications for management.

First, not all forms of corporate brand experience are equally effective in an employee setting (see Chapter 2). Results provide evidence that product-related direct corporate brand experience does not influence employees´ corporate brand pride in the same way as non-product related indirect corporate brand experience does. Thus, managers should focus on non-product related indirect corporate brand experiences when developing or re-thinking internal branding strategies. This finding is particularly interesting, as corporations invest a vast amount of money in internal branding (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010). For example, organizations can offer

trainings for their managers learning how to act as a role model, living the corporate brand values. Furthermore, corporations should make the values they stand for accessible to their personnel through their communications, so that they can experience them on a regular basis.

Second, this thesis uncovers the detrimental effects perceived negative corporate brand publicity can have on employees´ corporate brand pride and subsequent brand-supporting behaviour. As employees represent a crucial part of a company's success and competitive advantage (Viitala et al., 2020), this thesis illustrate how organizations can effectively attenuate effects of perceived negative corporate brand publicity by creating indirect corporate brand experience. In doing so, marketing managers may be well advised to highlight corporate brand values through internal communications, which in turn reduces the adverse perception of employees´ perception of negative corporate brand publicity.

Third, this thesis highlights the importance of corporate brand pride as a central driver of brand-oriented and service-oriented behaviour. Here, this work also shows how corporate brand pride of employees can be fostered through specific corporate actions. For example, marketing practitioners can highlight corporate brand values via internal communications or supervisors and colleagues can act as role model. Thus, managers should think about incorporating brand pride in their marketing concepts instead of solely focusing on (brand) commitment. A good example of an early adopter of this concept is the hotel chain Ritz-Carlton, which already incorporated pride as a central driver for service success in its strategy ("I´m proud to be Ritz-Carlton") (Appleberg, 2005, p. 3). Similarly, Facebook lately released the information that organizational pride is a key determinant of employee engagement (Kraemer et al., 2020).

Besides these main implications for management, this thesis depicts further aspects practitioners should take into account when developing or re-thinking branding strategies. On the one hand, employees with a long tenure are less likely to recommend jobs of the corporation to friends. This finding depicts a major disadvantage, as employee referrals are an important recruiting source (Pieper, 2015). So, management and HR professionals should stimulate employee referrals through specific incentive programs. Similarly, personnel with a long tenure show less customer-oriented behaviour, which represent a major drawback with regard to service firms. Hence, corporations should foster customer-oriented behaviour using training activities. This aspect (i.e. training) is also important for non-management employees in service corporations, as they show lower levels of customer-oriented behaviour compared to management staff. On the other hand, moderation analysis

(see Chapter 4) revealed the importance of perceived management support for CSR as a strong force with regard to employee behaviour, namely: customer-oriented behaviour, dissemination of service complaints, and participation in online brand communities. Therefore, managers and top-management are well advised to confess clearly to corporate social responsibility. Here, corporations have various possibilities to spread CSR information within the organization, for example, through internal and external communications, workshops, trainings besides others.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the insights of this thesis with regard to internal branding and management, it is not without limitations that offer avenues for further research.

First, the studies in Chapter 2, 3 and 4 investigated corporate brand experience and its outcomes using cross-sectional study designs. However, it may be interesting how corporate brand experience or specific facets of corporate brand experience affect corporate brand pride of employees over time. Such an investigation seems particularly interesting, as a saturation effect might occur at some point – highlighting that higher levels of corporate brand experience does not automatically lead to the same extent of corporate brand pride. Here, Deppe et al. (2005) state that brand experience could represent a non-linear, interaction-dominant process. Moreover, employees working for a corporation facing a product-harm crisis or scandal might display a habituation effect at some point – so that the negative stimulus becomes familiar over time (Horn & Hinde, 1970). Similarly, Chapter 3 shows how perceived negative corporate brand publicity can be mitigated. So, future studies should identify what is the optimal point of time, starting or terminating internal branding initiatives with the aim to compensate the detrimental effects of negative media coverage. Thus, future research should use longitudinal designs.

Besides this approach, qualitative methods might provide the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of employees´ perceptions of corporate brand experience and related affective as well as cognitive outcomes. As highlighted in Chapter 2, direct corporate brand experience does not influence corporate brand pride in contrast to expectations. This is interesting, as consumer research on product experience show strong effects on consumer attitudes (Hoch & Ha, 1986). Here, semi-structured interviews can help to gain a better understanding what reasons might cause this effect. Moreover, this thesis focuses in Chapter 4 on external facets of corporate brand experience, namely corporate brand publicity. However, little is known if all forms of corporate brand publicity are equally harmful regarding employees. Previous research in consumer research show differences regarding

performance-related publicity and value-related publicity (Lee et al., 2013; Thwaites et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2011; Kanar et al., 2010). Based on the assumption that values are especially important in an employee context (e.g. De Chernatony et al., 2006), future studies should investigate this aspect using a qualitative research design.

Second, complementary studies are important to enhance knowledge about the interplay of different facets of corporate brand experience. For example, the question arises if specific forms of corporate brand experience enhance effects of other forms of corporate brand experience, creating synergies. As this thesis partly focusses on value based corporate brand experience it seems interesting how other forms of non-value based corporate brand experience might interact in an employee setting, providing potential for further research and answering calls for further studies (Zha et al., 2020). Furthermore, Chapter 2 shows potential touch points for indirect corporate brand experience. Following the assumption that supervisors play a central role in an employee context, future research could investigate the interplay on different levels. For example, whether experience relate on an individual or team level. In addition, corporations face increasing digitalization (Verhoef et al., 2021). So, future research might evaluate how employees´ digital corporate brand experience interact with analogue forms of employees´ corporate brand experience. In this case the degree of maturity regarding digitalization of the organization and the average age of a person employed might exhibit potential moderators.

Third, the present concept of employees´ corporate brand experience focusses solely on the employee him/herself. However, employees´ corporate brand experience may also affect other stakeholders (Bravo et al., 2021). Following this idea, the question arises, for example, how sales professionals' or key account managers' direct corporate brand experience influences the perception of customers or suppliers when interacting with them, even though direct corporate brand experience did not show significant effects on corporate brand pride. Moreover, literature lately highlight co-creation in various contexts (e.g. Oklevik et al., 2022). So, future studies might investigate how corporate brand experience of employees influence the co-creation process in a service-context.

Fourth, analysing other combinations of employees´ corporate brand experience than those in Chapter 2 and 3 would be interesting for further research. Here, the conceptual framework based on different layers of corporate identity could provide a basis for the validation of a new short measure of employees´ corporate brand experience, especially with regard to direct and indirect corporate brand experience.

6. Conclusion

Nowadays complex, volatile and competitive business environment forces corporations to focus more than ever on internal resources, such as employees (Viitala et al., 2020; Iglesias et al., 2019). On an organizational level this circumstance leads to increasing effort to maintain and enhance the (emotional) bond with the employees, using internal branding activities. Here, literature provides evidence that experiences play a crucial role in a consumer context (Brakus et al., 2009). However, little is known how corporate brand experiences might influence employees and how they can be measured. This thesis has addressed this research gap by developing a corporate brand experience measure and shedding light on various facets of corporate brand experience and the impact corporate brand experience has on corporate brand pride, brand and service behaviour of employees. The thesis also considered the interplay between different facets of corporate brand experience, such as direct and indirect corporate brand experience (Chapter 2) or indirect corporate brand experience via internal/external communications and publicity (Chapter 3). To identify and systematically group the several facets of corporate brand experience in an employee setting (i.e. direct corporate brand experience, indirect corporate brand experience, brand knowledge dissemination, and corporate brand publicity), the thesis focusses on the concept of corporate (brand) identity, which represents the core of every corporation or brand. Based on four main studies with various employees and leaders from diverse sectors, this work holistically examines the research questions in Chapter 1 and makes a number of contributions to research on employees´ corporate brand experience, corporate brand pride and brand-oriented as well as service-oriented behaviour. Hereby, the established AET and its macro-structure was applied to a new context, namely marketing domain. These findings are also relevant for practitioners as they can gain a better understanding of what facets of corporate brand experience are effective in an employee context. Additionally, this work provides insights for managers whose corporation face adverse media attention – highlighting that indirect corporate brand experience through internal communications can mitigate perceived negative corporate brand publicity. Overall, despite the various insights this thesis also contributes to literature on corporate brand experience and corporate brand pride, as it depicts avenues for further exploration.

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