

Leadership Branding: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Leadership is stated as the "process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." Alan Keith stated that, "Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen. Branding of leadership is all about how the leader he or herself creates a branding in leading the organization. This paper gives a frame work how a leader in an organization brands him or her-self to help in shaping the organization based on leaders' leadership style.

Keywords

Leadership, Branding, leadership style

I. Leadership and Branding

Leadership can be seen as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal achievement. Stogdill concluded that leadership can be seen from personal perspectives and the aspect of the phenomenon of most interest to them. (Yukl, 2002, pp.2-3). Leadership can be defined from individuality perspectives and group perspectives. Individuality perspectives view leadership as a combination of special traits or characteristics of individuals own that enable them to induce others to accomplish task. Group perspectives said that the leader is the centre of group change and activity and embodies the spirit of the group (Northouse, p.2, 2004).

In this paper on "leadership branding: a conceptual framework" the researchers is thinking on the idea that branding is entrepreneurial and thus well connected with leadership. Branding is an economical way to "reproduce" oneself, as an entrepreneur and also as a leader—an efficient and simpler way to lead. The problem of leadership today is that there is usually a great divide between the corporate intentions and the corporate brand and individual leader personalities and personal brands. The researcher underlined the fact that branding is communication and that it deals with what happens in other people's minds.

To bridge the management communication gap between business strategies initiated by top management and people and processes in the organization, branding can be used as a highly efficient tool. Branding proves to be a powerful management toolbox with tools like: issue, Brand Code & Brand Motto and brand storytelling. Personal branding and the Brand Me-method is a way to learn to know yourself better as a leader and establish what you stand for—all this in order to become a more authentic leader, a person for your people to respect and like. One can integrate one's own personal brand with the brand of their company and analyze the match or mismatch and make a decision to stay or leave the company before it's too late. If one finds a strong match it strengthens your motivation and personal satisfaction. Finally branding still offers unique possibilities for leadership in a transparent world with high demands on integrity, and that it is, with many companies and organizations, still an underestimated toolbox for leadership.

In this paper, leadership branding can be seen from two perspectives, the individual perspectives and organizational perspectives. In individual perspective, leadership can be seen

between the leader relationship and employee or employees in group, whereas from organizational perspectives, it involves a relationship between a leader and customer and market or industry.

The term branding can be seen clearly from the organizational perspectives. Leadership branding is a method uses by a leader to promote him or herself in order to get influence or positioning him/herself in the organization using his/her power, image, skills, ideas and others.

Research has proven that individuals are more likely to engage in impression management when the benefits they receive from pleasing others are greater. Past research has shown that impression management can be linked with interviewing and job application, performance appraisal, feedback, competency demands, promotion opportunities and career advancement at work

II. Statement of the Problem

The present study does not relate to the management and marketing fields. Here the researcher is combining these two fields together and focusing on branding of leadership in organization especially among organizations from different sectors.

III. Objectives of the Study

The study is to assess the importance of leadership as a major factor in creating a brand for the organization.

- To study the importance of leadership capabilities and qualities in building an organizational branding for an organization
- To study the association between leadership and branding within an organization.
- To bring in new concept of leadership in organization this is the leadership branding.
- To introduce new leader's capabilities and qualities in relation to the leadership branding.

IV. Importance of the Study

The outcomes of this study will improve the existing awareness especially in leadership and organizational branding. The findings also will help leaders' to improve their leadership skills and styles in developing their organizations. The findings of this study will also help leaders not only in organization but also in political field and others.

V. Research Methodology

In this study the researcher has used a qualitative methodology. Since this is a qualitative research, the current study included some interviews from each sector. The participants such as leaders, employees and customers. Quantitative research methodology also needed to show some proof of arguments and claim.

VI. Literature Review- Leadership

According to Spinks and Wells, leadership is the ability to inspire people to work together as a team to achieve common objectives (1995, p. 14). The study of leadership has been

closely tied to the study of the leader and his or her relationships with followers. Recent studies have shown that there has been growing evidence that follower perceptions have an important role in determining leadership outcomes. These resulted in changing the definition of the locus of leadership. The new definition of leadership is an interaction between two or more members in of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members (Andrews and Field, 1998, p.128). Leaders must understand the difference between leadership and authority. Authority is delegated from those above in the chain of command, whereas leadership is earned from those below and from peers. Leaders are people who are able to fully express themselves; they know what they want, why they want it and more important, how to communicate what they want to others to gain co-operation and support. Leadership is the most important part in organisation.

Leadership is stirring people so that they are moved from within. It is stating goals that excite [people] and lift their sights. It is setting the personal example, putting enthusiasm into the operation, communicating with workers both ways, listening as well as talking. Leadership is rewarding merit and penalizing demerit, honestly and fairly. It is the right combination of these [qualities] so that people will do the work that makes a business successful because they want to. Leaders understand that people are the most important components in an organization. Leader also make people feel as though they are accomplishing something and not just "putting in time", a leader must work with people and not against them. A leader needs to create and image which excites people and which inspires excitement at work (Spinks and Well, 1995, p.14). This image that a leader creates calls branding of leadership. The branding of leadership style is partly determined by what you want your leadership style to evolve into, and equally important, what people in the marketplace are looking for in leaders. Branding of leadership involves positioning but also develops competence to back up the brand identity.

Branding of leadership is not about selling a product but it is about selling services. The development of personal brand is focussing on leader competencies, standards and style. Developing a brand of leadership is a composite of building the perceptions that you want and having the competence to always have the perceptions believed because you have the competency to get the job done. A leader should merge his own brand of leadership with his employer's expectations. The ability to articulate the branding of your leadership style is very helpful in knowing how you can best work in an organization with the parameters of the organization's brand (Kerfoot, 2004, pp.438-439).

VII. Branding

Branding is important in marketing a product. Without branding a product will not sell very well in the market. Branding is needed to position a product in the market. Good position in the market will determine profits for manufacturer. Manufacturer will then get the bigger size of the market shares. Branding can be defined as a core of expectation that creates a set of understanding and drives everything from first impression to long-term expectations (Kerfoot, 2004, p.438). Brand is one of the most valuable assets to a firm. As a result, brand management is a key activity in many firms. Firm focus their branding efforts toward developing product and corporate brands but branding also can be used in the area of human resource management (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p.501).

Internal branding is closely related to human resource management. Internal branding efforts by an organization help to establish systems or processes and consequent employee behaviour that are consistent with external branding efforts made by an organization. Internal and external branding need to be coordinated not just to fulfil the needs and wants of the target market but also related to choosing or hiring the right people, training and motivation of those who must deliver the brand which is the employee of the organization (Aurand et.al, p.164). Internal branding is also known as internal marketing. The function is to develop a work force that is committed to the set of values and organisational goals established by the firm (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p.503). A reason for looking inside the organisation is the shift in the branding literature from brand image to brand identity. Brand image focus on consumer's perceptions of brand differentiation whereas brand identity is more focus towards how managers and employees make a brand unique (Harris, 2001, p. 442)

Before managers and employees make a brand unique firstly they need to define brand's values. Management has provided leadership through defining a brand's values. According to Urde, brand's values can be seen from three viewpoints such as:

1. Values that are related to the organization
2. Values that summarise the brand; and
3. Values as they are experienced by customers.

These three levels of brand's values are the keys to shift the brand image to brand identity (2001, p.1018). The process of creating brand's values is brought about by the interaction between these levels. The interaction between these levels can be seen from this Fig. 1:



Note: First, the organisational values are translated into the core values that guide the organisation's efforts. Second, the core values are translated into customer utility value or added value for various target groups

Fig. 1: Interaction of three levels of Band's value

The core values that bring about brand identity affected leadership, strategy, organization, product development and communications. So here we can say that brand identity is related closely to leadership of an organization. Now we can say that branding is not also about brand a product, services, organization but also branding the leadership of an organization. Branding of leadership can be divided into internal branding and external branding. Undoubtedly brand's values are created by an organization for internal branding. The role of leadership is important facilitating the internal brand building. Leaders will act as group facilitators that increase group cohesiveness by explaining the interactive (i.e. cognitive, affective and communicative) processes to the group and building appropriate interpersonal skills. The act of leadership in creating internal branding can be seen through creating an exciting vision, organization objectives and being committed to achieve the brand related-behavior among his employees

(Vallaster, 2004, p.101).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

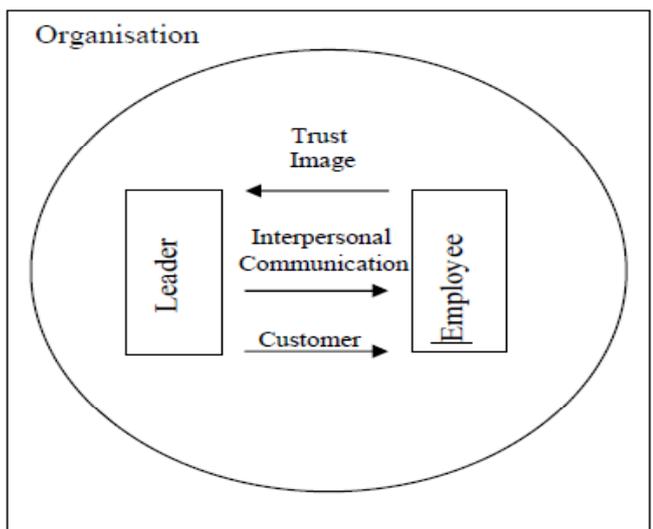


Fig. 2: Conceptual Framework

Leadership branding concept from personal perspective

The first perspective of branding of leadership is about branding the leader among employee within the organization. It is about a leader relationship towards the employee. It's about one-to-one relationship. This paper is an introduction to leadership branding framework. Here, we are only discussing on the leader's relationship to the employee. Second phase, the paper will discuss deeper into this topic and it will focus on the personal traits, characteristics and the relationship towards organization and branding. Throughout this paper, we have discussed four main elements which can be used by a leader to brand him or her-self among employees. These elements were observed and delivered to you based on employee view toward a leader and relationships a leader try to have with employees. Next is the theoretical framework of branding of leadership from personal and organisation perspectives. See Fig. 3. Based on the literature review and through my qualitative research, I am proposing my hypothetical framework on branding of leadership. My hypothesis framework is based on Urde's brand's values framework. Leadership based on Kerfoot had mentioned that branding of leadership is based on the leader competencies, standard and style as well as on others perceptions. Here my research will be based not only on leader's competencies but also on leader's traits. Leader's competencies are communication competency, teamwork competency, self-management competency, strategic action competency and planning and administration competency.

Leadership branding concept from organizational perspectives

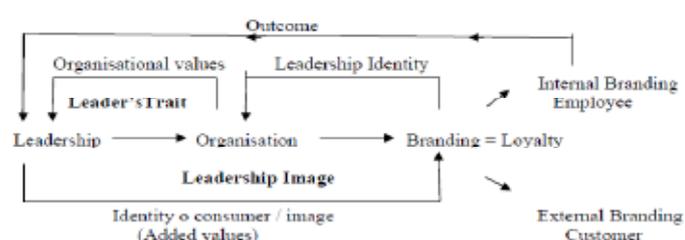


Fig. 3: Leadership branding concept from organizational perspective

Based on the literature review and through my qualitative research, I am proposing my hypothetical framework on branding of leadership. My hypothesis framework is based on Urde's brand's values framework.

Leadership based on Kerfoot had mentioned that branding of leadership is based on the leader competencies, standard and style as well as on others perceptions. Here my research will be based not only on leader's competencies but also on leader's traits. Leader's competencies are communication competency, teamwork competency, self-management competency, strategic action competency and planning and administration competency. I will be adding another competency, which is organizational competency.

Organizational competency will help the organization to have its own values and identity that will lead to branding of organization as well as branding of leadership. These competencies and leader's traits should work well together in branding of leadership. The traits are emotional intelligence, knowledge of the business, integrity, drive, desire to lead, cognitive ability and self-confidence. These traits are not enough for branding of leadership. Two other traits should be added on to the existing leader's traits such as image and self-reliance. In my research I will prove that these two new traits are important in building up organizational brand identity as well as branding of leadership.

Leadership as shown in the above framework through the leader's competencies and traits will develop the organization especially in terms of creating its own values. The organizational values will create the organizational identity. The creation of organizational identity is actually creating a branding for the organization itself. The result is the organizational core values. Sharing of these core values (branding) within the organization will help to develop brand identity. Brand identity will help organization to be unique and different from its competitors. Branding is important to promote the organization values among its employees and to help the organization to sell its products and services to the customer. Here, leadership is the most important factor in creating an image for the organization in order to sell its products and services to the target market. Leadership branding will create feeling of loyalty towards the leader due to the bridge that connects the leader and their employee and later these employees will become the leaders' followers.

In promoting leader's leadership style and working culture, a leader should be able to use these four tools or techniques. The techniques a leader should use in promoting their leadership is through identifying the right values, identity, image and communication. One might think that branding of leadership is similar to corporate branding. The fact is branding of leadership is bigger than corporate branding. Corporate branding is only the tool or techniques for the leaders to brand their leadership whereas branding of leadership is a "holistic" concept for a leader and organization to position oneself and itself in the market. According to Karlene Kerfoot there are four ways to create our own leadership brand. The first way is to differentiate yourself as a leader. The second way is leadership branding is about selling the invisible or service. The third way is brand as competence, standards and style. The fourth way is merging your brand with your employer (2002, pp 438-439).

Based on my research and observation, there are more ways than stated by Kerfoot. I would like to add on to Kerfoot Branding of leadership. The fifth way of branding leadership is through positioning of trust. Branding of leadership can be done through positioning of trust.

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