

## **Leadership Branding in Organisation: A Theoretical Framework**

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*Branding of leadership is about how a leader brands him or her-self as a leader in the organisation that they lead. The paper will give you a framework theory on how a leader in an organisation could brand their leadership and help to shape the organisation based on the leader's leadership style.*

**Field of Research:** Leadership, Marketing and Branding, Strategic Management

### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **1.0.1 Leadership**

According to Rauch and Behling, leadership can be seen as the process of influencing the activities of an organised 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 personality perspectives and group perspectives. Personality perspectives view leadership as a combination of special traits or characteristics of individuals possess 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 will of the group (Northhouse, p.2, 2004).

Here in this paper, leadership branding in organisation can be seen from two perspectives, the personal perspectives and organisational perspectives. In personal perspective, leadership can be seen between the leader relationship and employee or employees in group, whereas from organisational perspectives, it involves a relationship between a leader and customer and market or industry.

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The term branding can be seen clearly from the organisational perspectives. Leadership branding is a method uses by a leader to promote himself in order to get influence or positioning himself in the organisation using his power, image, skills, ideas and others.

One might say that leadership branding is similar to the concept of internal branding. Internal branding can be defined as a process of aligning staff's behaviour with a corporate brand's identity (Vallaster, et. 2004. p761). From the definition we can say that leadership branding is totally different from internal branding. Besides internal branding, leadership branding was also thought to be similar with impression management. Impression management is the process by which people attempt to influence the image others have of them. Impression management is used when a person wishes to create and maintain a specific identity ( Drory and Zaidman, 2006.p.290).

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.

### **1.0.2. Branding**

The American Marketing Association define a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or groups of seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors.

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. Brand is the manufacturers guaranteed or promised to consistently deliver a specific set or features of a product or services. The best brand conveyed a warranty of quality (Kotler, et.all, p.461, 1999). Besides functioning as a symbol of quality, a brand also carries different meaning. One of the meanings is a brand give the product or services an image. Mercedes car for example has portrayed as an exclusive image for the owner. Mercedes carries the symbol of wealth, success; prestige and satisfaction especially in Malaysian culture and Asian as a whole. Brand also gives the manufacturer a positive image. This image helps the company to gain more profits by selling other brands produced by the same manufacturer or company. A branded product or services is a symbol of quality, quality helps to create the feeling of trust on the customer. Trust proves that the products or services are reliable.

The feeling of trust and reliability among customer towards the products and services lead to brand loyalty.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The present theory does not connect or relate the management field and marketing field. Here I am joining these two fields together and focusing on branding of leadership in organisation especially among organisations from different sectors. The question here is; how branding plays a major role in leadership of an organisation in building up their internal and external image?

### **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

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

- To study the important of leadership competencies and traits in designing organisational branding for an organisation
- To study the connections between leadership and branding within an organisation.
- To introduce new concept of leadership in organisation this is the leadership branding.
- To introduce new leader's competencies and traits in relation to the leadership branding.

### **1.3 Significance of Research**

The findings of this study will enhance the existing knowledge especially in leadership and organisational branding. The findings also will help leaders' especially Malaysian leaders to improve their leadership skills and styles in developing their organisations. The findings of this study will also help leaders not only in organization but also in political arena and others.

### **1.4 Scope and Limitation of Research**

The study is a Qualitative based research that will focus on Organisation in Malaysia from different industrial sectors such as manufacturing, business, education and services sector. Due to the geographical limitations, only few samples of industrial sectors will be used. Study will be done in these sectors to proof that leadership branding is important in organisation from different sectors of industries.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

The study will use a qualitative method. Observation will be done through detached and participant observation. Since this is a qualitative research, the study will include some interviews from each sectors stakeholder such as organisational leaders, organisational employees and customers. Quantitative methods also needed to show proof of arguments and claim. Surveys and questionnaires also will be distributed to related stakeholders.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **a) 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).

## **b) 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:

- a) values that are related to the organization
- b) values that summarise the brand; and
- c) 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 chart:



**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. 1.0: Source: Urde, 2001.

The core values that bring about brand identity affected leadership, strategy, organisation, product development and communications. So here we can say that brand identity is related closely to leadership of an organisation. Now we can say that branding is not also about brand a product, services, organisation but also branding the leadership of an organisation. 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, organisation objectives and being committed to achieve the brand related-behaviour among his employees (Vallaster, 2004, p.101).

### 3.0 Theoretical Framework

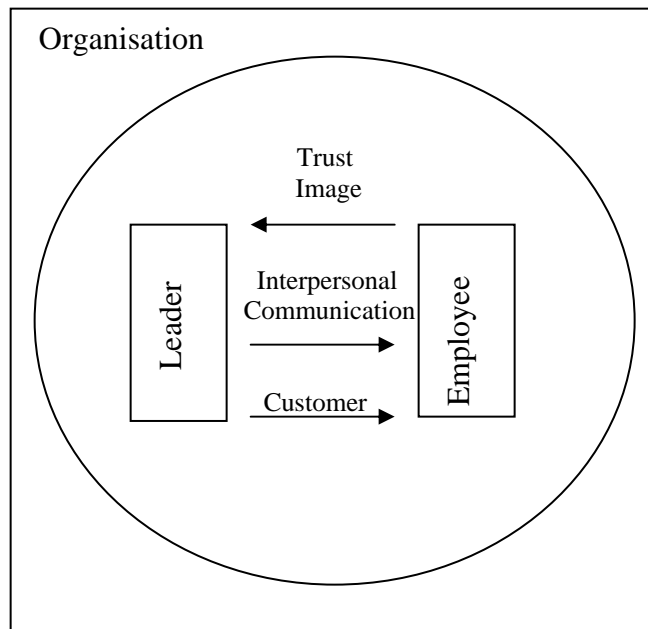


Fig. 3.0 Leadership Branding concept from personal perspective

The first perspective of branding of leadership is about branding the leader among employee within the organisation. 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 organisation 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 figure 3.1.

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 organisational perspectives

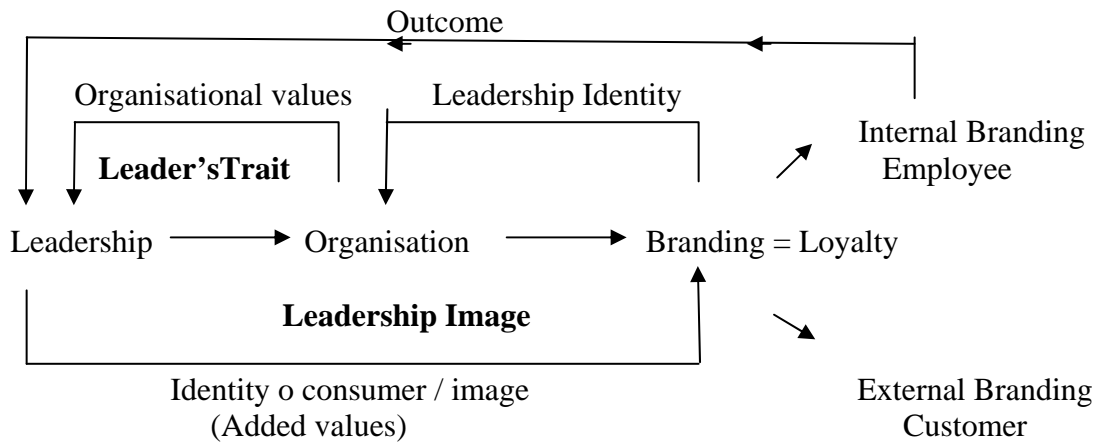


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Leadership based on Kerfoot had mentioned that branding of leadership is based on the leader competencies, standard and style as well as on others perceptions. Here my research will be based not only on leader's competencies but also on leader's traits. 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 organisational competency.

Organisational competency will help the organisation 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 organisational 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 organisation especially in terms of creating its own values. The organisational values will create the organisational identity. The creation of organisational identity is actually creating a branding for the organisation itself. The result is the organisational core values. Sharing of these core values (branding) within the organisation will help to develop brand identity. Brand identity will help organisation to be unique and different from its competitors. Branding is important to promote the organisation values among its employees and to help the organisation to sell its products and services to the customer. Here, leadership is the most important factor in creating an image for the organisation 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 this employees will be come 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 organisation 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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