Brand Reward, Brand Training and Employee's Brand Citizenship Behavior in Telecommunication Industry: The Mediating Role of Employee Brand Fit

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Abstract: - The current internal branding literature has paid little attention on how employees in an organization can be encouraged to exhibit brand citizenship behavior particularly among frontline and back stage employees of telecommunication industry. In order to bridge this gap, the study aimed at exploring the impact of internal branding practices on employee brand citizenship behavior through the mechanism of employee brand fit among telecommunication employees in Nigeria. In particular, the study determined the relationship between brand reward and brand training on employee brand citizenship behavior. Similarly, the study is aimed at examining the mediating role of employee brand fit on the relationship between internal branding practices and employee brand citizenship behavior. A self-administered questionnaire was used in obtaining data from employees of Nigeria telecommunication industry. The hypotheses in the study were simultaneously tested on a sample of 254 employees out of 377 distributed, giving the response rate of 68%. SmartPls was used to assess the relationship between the variables under investigation. The empirical results showed that brand reward and brand training have significant impact on employees' BCB. Similarly, significant relationship was revealed between brand reward, brand training and employee-brand fit. Also, it was discovered that employee-brand fit has significant impact on employees' BCB. Employee-brand fit was found to mediate the relationship between brand reward, brand training and employees' BCB. Practically, this study has shown the importance of internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training in encouraging employees to exhibit brand citizenship behavior. It is therefore suggested that the management of companies in the telecommunication industry should prioritize, promote, and improve their internal branding management. Implications and directions for future study were discussed.

Key-Words: - brand citizenship behavior, brand reward, brand training, internal branding, employee brand fit, and Nigeria telecommunication

1 Introduction

Marketing researchers and practitioners have acknowledged the importance of employee brand citizenship behavior (BCB) in achieving brand goals and objectives particularly among service brands. Employee BCB is viewed as the extra-role behavior

employee engages, in order to achieve organization's brand goal [1]. Furthermore, employee BCB is a discretionary behavior, which is not acknowledged by formal reward structure but enhances the performance of the organization [2]. Employee's BCB have been considered more superior in achieving competitive advantage and brand differentiation than in-role behavior [3], [4]. Certainly, brand citizenship has been argued to lie at the heart of every brand [5]. Moreover, employees spend extra time to achieve organization's brand goal, reduce the variability of service delivery, and deliver brand promise to customers to meet their expectations. As such, it is crucial in maintaining long-term loyalty of customers. [6] argued that BCB has an impact on the brand-customer relationship as employees that exhibit such behavior are found to show the willingness to help the customer. Therefore, employee brand citizenship behavior has been considered as a key source of brand differentiation and competitive advantage, especially among service brands [7]. However, internal branding literatures has fall short on how this behavior can be enhanced particularly among service employees.

According to internal branding literatures, employee brand citizenship behavior is an outcome of internal brand management practices [8]. But only few studies seek to discover how well organizations can use these practices to induce brand citizenship behavior among its employees. The rare studies conducted have shown that practices such as brand reward and brand training are important internal branding practices that encourage employee's exhibiting brand citizenship behavior [7], [8] . Nevertheless, on how these practices induce BCB among service employees is still scarce. In addition, scholars of internal brand management report that employee brand fit is an important construct which explain why employees exhibit positive brand attitude and behavior. In particular, employee brand fit has been considered as an important mediating variable between internal branding and other employee brand related outcomes such as intention to stay, brand building behavior, employee satisfaction [4], [9]–[11]. However, so far the connection between employee brand fit, brand reward, brand training and employee's BCB is missing in literatures. Specifically, two important questions are yet to be answered by previous researches. How does internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training affect employee brand citizenship? What role does employee brand fit play on the relationship between internal branding and employee's BCB?

To address these pertinent questions, the present study proposed and test a comprehensive model in line with social exchange theory. In particular, we attempt the effects of brand reward and brand training on employee's BCB. We also examine the impact of employee brand fit on employee brand citizenship behavior. Attempt was also made to determine the mediating effect of employee brand fit on the relationship between internal branding practices and employee's BCB. Therefore, the present study is unique and has extended research in internal branding by providing the empirical relationship between internal branding practices and employee's BCB. Furthermore, the study has provided the mediating effects of employee brand fit on the relationship between internal branding practices and employee's BCB.

2 The Concept of Employee Brand Citizenship Behavior

In management of brand, employee's behavior has gained considerable attention among marketing practitioners and researchers [4], [8], [12]–[14]. Researchers have used different terms to address employees brand behaviors such as brand-building behavior, brand-supportive behavior, brand-loyalty behavior, brand-consistent behavior and brand-adequate behavior [15]. In the present study, employee brand behavior termed as brand-consistent behavior which comprises of in-role behavior and extra-role behavior [3]. Specifically, extra-role behavior will be the main focus in this study and conceptual such behavior as employee's BCB.

The concept of employee's BCB was first coined by [2], derived from organizational citizenship behavior OCB. They further argued that BCB is different from OCB. According to them BCB is considered to be externally targeted behavior while on the other hand OCB is internally targeted behavior. Therefore, BCB is viewed as brand-oriented behavior that include not only intra-organizational behaviors, but also externally targeted behaviors [3]. Although contrary view was argued by[16] that the two concepts can be used interchangeably, hence they are considered as synonymous. In this study, the researchers consider the two concepts as different based on the argument put forward by [2].

Employee's BCB can be defined as an aggregate construct which describe a number of generic employee behaviors that enhance brand identity [2]. Similarly, [16] view BCB as extra-role behavior employees exhibit in an organization in order to

achieve organization's brand goals. Therefore, employee's BCB is considered to be non-prescribed behaviors that employee exhibits that is consistent with the brand values of the organization, thus engendering positive organizational outcomes. In addition [17] defined extra-role behavior (BCB) as employee actions that go beyond the prescribed roles for the good of brand and are discretionary. Therefore, based on these definitions, the present study defined employee BCB as the extra-role behaviors exhibited by employees on voluntary basis that go beyond the prescribed role but yet consistent with brand value in order to achieve organization's brand goals.

In their study, [2] consider employee BCB as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of seven dimensions. These dimensions were based on seven dimensions of OCB proposed by [18]. [2] renamed the OCB dimensions and come up with the following:

- *Helping behavior* - According to Chang et al. (2012), helping behavior is the extent to which the employee shows positive attitudes, friendliness and helpfulness toward the external customer. This differs from the OCB dimension as the employee not only helps his or her colleagues in a group, but extend such behavior to the external customers [2].

- *Brand consideration* **-** This is considered to be a brand-centered behavior that employees follow before they communicate or take action on brand related situation [2]. As such, before employee takes any action or communicates anything about brand, he or she must reflect on the impact such will have on the brand.

- *Brand enthusiasm* - This is considered as extra initiative behavior employee shows while engaging in brand related behaviors [2]. [19] opined that employee takes extra-building initiatives by either attending workshops or conferences voluntarily in an attempt to foster brand value.

- *Sportsmanship* - This refers to the extent to which employee is fully engages for brand without complaining even if such may cause inconvenience [2]. And also the employee is willing to engage for the brand even at high cost.

- *Brand endorsement* - Employees engage in such behavior by recommending the brand to others in both job-related situation and non-job related situations. As such, the employee is willing to say a positive things about the brand and willingness to recommend the brand to others [20].

- *Self-development* - This is considered to represent the behaviors that employees show in order to improve his or her brand related skills and knowledge [21]. That is the willingness by employee to acquire more brand related skills, knowledge and abilities.

- *Brand advancement* - That is the behaviors of employees toward enhancement of brand identity which may be via customer feedback, or innovative ideas [21]. Employees in an organization can make suggestions as to changes in the new market needs in order to deliver the right experience to the target customers.

Specifically, the present study adapted four dimensions of [3] as the measure of employee BCB which was argued to depend on context and the nature of the study, therefore there is no universal measures for the construct [22], [23] Consequently, studies on employee BCB have measured it as a multi-dimensional construct not based on the original seven dimensions (see [4], [22]–[25]

3 Research Model and Hypotheses

Our model as shown in Figure 1 focuses on how employee brand citizenship behaviors might be impacted by internal branding practices through the mediation of employee brand fit. In particular, based on social exchange theory, we proposed that employee brand fit is a key motivators for employees to engage in brand citizenship behavior while being itself influenced by internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training. Built on social exchange relationships, employees that perceived fair brand reward being provided, perceived adequate brand knowledge and skills are provided through brand training employees would reciprocate by engaging in BCB [26]. Nevertheless, the present study presumed that such depends on employee's fit with the organization. Hence, the study suggested employee brand fit to mediate the relationship between internal branding practices (brand reward, and brand training) and employee's BCB. The inclusion of employee brand fit in the relationship is basically on the crucial role it has in determining employee brand behavior which has impact on delivering brand promise to the customers [4], [9], [10], [27].
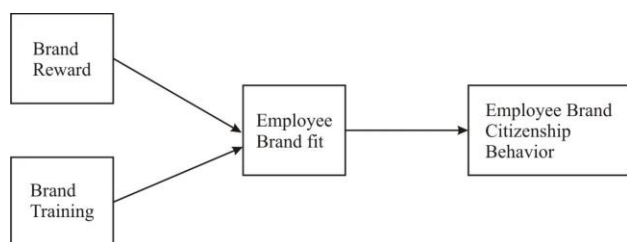
Fig. 1 Research Framework

3.1 Impact of Internal Branding on Employee Brand Citizenship Behavior

Indeed, brand-oriented organizations consider internal brand building as their main priority, therefore focused on their employee's needs and wants which might influenced their brand building behavior and eventually encourage brand citizenship behavior [28]–[31]. In other words, providing employees with fair reward, and providing adequate brand information and skills needed through brand training serve as a motivation to develop and encourage employee to exhibit brand citizenship behavior [26].

Specifically, it is argued that organizations motivate their employees to achieve the desired behavior through brand reward [32]. In addition, engaging in extra role behavior depend largely on the perception the employee has on the brand reward provided by the organization [8], [33]. Therefore, where employee perceives the reward to be fair as compared with their work effort, his or her satisfaction and commitment increases. When an employee is satisfied and committed to the brand he or she may exhibit citizenship behavior. Certainly, brand reward was argued to limit the effectiveness of internal branding which is aimed at encouraging employees to exhibit positive brand consistent behavior [34], [35]. Hence, for organization to build a strong brand through internal branding strategies reward/recognition must be provided to employees as it affects the employee's behavior and attitude.

Obviously, it has been established in internal branding literatures that brand training is also an important internal branding practice that influences brand behavior and attitude of an employee [21], [24]. In their study, [36] believe that brand training not only improves employees performance but also helps them to be part of the brand, identifies with the brand and to be more committed to the brand. Therefore, have an impact on their brand behavior and attitude. Similarly, it was also argued that employees that are satisfied with organization's supportive practices such as brand training can be motivated to exhibit extra role behavior [24]. Besides, [19] opined that organization can use

practices such as brand training to promote extra role behaviors among their employees. Indeed, employees who are provided with brand skills and knowledge through brand training are suggested to be more willing to demonstrate a supportive behavior such as citizenship toward brand goals [24].

Furthermore, empirical evidence has shown that internal branding practices increase employees brand identification, and brand commitment which contribute to employee brand behavior [30], [37]. Thus, internal branding practices can be argued to be important factors that may relate significantly to brand citizenship behavior [31]. Therefore, based on these arguments, the current study hypothesized that:

H1: Brand reward has significant effect on brand citizenship behavior

H2: Brand training has significant effect on brand citizenship behavior

3.2 Internal branding and employee brand fit

Achieving alignment between employee's value and brand value is crucial to organizations, and such can be achieved through internal brand building [38]. Drawing from internal brand literatures, we defined employee brand fit as the compatibility between individual and the organization or brand that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs or they share similar values or both [11], [39]. Prior studies have suggested that employees who are in consensus with the brand values are more likely to exhibit brand consistent behavior in delivering service value to customers [4], [9], [11], [40], [41].

The extant literature suggests that employee brand fit can be enhanced through internal brand building. Moreover, it was argued in branding literature that internal brand building is crucial to the success of brand, as it helps to enhance and stimulate employee brand fit [2], [8], [34], [42]–[44]. Therefore, improving internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training were argued to play an important role in enhancing employee brand fit.

Besides, studies have shown that employees' are provided with clear understanding of the brand through internal branding practices which not only enhances their brand knowledge but also stimulate and enhance their brand fit [4], [8], [34], [45]. In particular, [25] posited that organization can enhance employee's fit with the brand by providing equitable brand reward. Equally, [46] opined that getting the right reward is a prerequisite of achieving congruence between employees value and the value of the organization. Therefore, organizations should be engaged more in rewarding their employees so as to enhance employee brand fit.

In the same vein, [11] posited that internal brand building via brand training aimed at instilling brand values in employees enhanced employees brand identification, loyalty, commitment and their fit with the brand. Equally, it was argued that training employees provide employees with opportunities such as career development, enhance their brand performance, their intention to stay, and their brand fit [42], [47], [48]. Hence, it is argued that the extent to which employees are provided with brand training, help to strengthen their relationship with the organization which in turn stimulate and enhance their fit with the brand [47], [49]. Therefore, based on these arguments we made the following hypotheses:

H3: That brand reward has significant effect on employee brand fit

H4: That brand training has significant effect on employee brand fit

3.3 Employee Brand fit and Employee Brand Citizenship Behavior

Employee brand fit is considered by researchers to have a great impact on the employee's perception of the organization, hence affect their attitude and behaviors [4], [5], [9], [49]. Certainly, brand fit has been argued to be the reason why employees exhibit positive brand behavior particularly extra role behavior [4], [49]. Consequently, employee brand fit is argued to be crucial in influencing employee brand behavior. Thus, brand fit may result in employees having strong feelings of affiliation to the organizational brand which enhance their commitment and brand citizenship behavior [27], [11].

In a particular study, [50] maintained that the higher the employees brand fit is, the more extra-role employee's exhibit in order to achieve organization's brand goals. [39] opined that organization can encourage high brand commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and brand citizenship behavior, by developing and enhancing brand fit. Therefore, organizations should align the behaviors and attitude of their employees with the brand values. As this may lead to higher match between personal values of employees and the values of the brand, it is therefore more likely that the employees will exhibit brand citizenship behavior. Consequently, we hypothesized that:

H5: Employee brand fit has significant effect on employee brand citizenship behavior

3.3 The Mediating effect of Employee Brand fit

Whereas the main direct effects between the variables have been outlined above, we proposed that there will be indirect relationships that may exist through a mediator. As in this study, we proposed that the relationship between internal brand practices such as brand reward and brand training can be mediated by employee brand fit. Employee brand fit is viewed as the compatibility between the employees and the organization when the organization provides the employees with what they need [39]. Certainly, employee brand fit has been argued to have great impact on employee's perception of the brand which eventually affect their willingness to exhibit BCB [2], [4], [9]. Indeed, research have shown that the higher employees perceive fit with the brand the more likely they are to exhibit extra role behaviors [27], [49].

Similarly, studies have shown that employee brand fit can arouse an altruistic spirit within employee, encouraging the employee to exhibit BCB [5], [41], [51]. As proposed in this study, employee brand fit can be achieved by providing employee with fair brand reward and required brand training. Research evidence have shown that through internal branding practices congruence between employee values and the values of the brand can be achieve [2], [9], [34], [52]. Therefore, employee brand fit exact great impact on employee's BCB, it depends largely on internal brand building [2], [4], [9].

Internal branding literatures have shown that through internal branding management organizations promote shared brand understanding of brand values among employees which induce their brand fit [11], [48], [53]. Consequently, implementation of internal branding can promote brand fit and help employees to exhibit brand consistent behavior such as BCB in order to deliver brand promise to customers [4], [49]. Thus, we hypothesized as:

H6 (a): Employee brand fit mediates the relationship between brand reward and employee brand citizenship behavior

H6 (b): Employee brand fit mediates the relationship between brand training and employee brand training

4 Methodology

The study utilized quantitative method in order to explore the relationship between the independent and dependent variable as well as the mediating variable. Furthermore, we adapted a survey method to obtain data using self-administered questionnaires. Data were collected from employees of Nigeria Telecommunication industry. In particular, frontline and back stage employees were included in the study as all employees are argued to be important in achieving brand goals [14]. A questionnaire and a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study were distributed to 377 selected using a simple

random technique. A total of 282 questionnaires were filled and returned out of which 254 were lastly retained as useable for further analysis indicating a 68% response rate.

Non response bias was tested by comparing the difference between those that responded early and those that responded late. Respondents were separated into two groups based on early and late respondents, to test the response bias. All the variables including the dependent, independent, and mediating variable were subjected to an independent sample t-test to ascertain the existence of any bias among the groups. As such, Levine's test of quality of variance was used to see if the groups differ. In the same vein, based on Levine's test, the two-tailed quality of means t-test was used to see the p value related with the hypotheses, in order to know whether or not there is a substantial difference among the early responses and late responses. The independent samples t-test for quality has indicated that the group mean and standard deviation for early responses and late responses did not differ. In addition, the t-test results has indicated that there is slight difference between the early responses and the late responses.

Based on the items in BR (t=.383 p< .702), BT (t= .209, p<.834), BF (t= .111, p< .912) and BCB (t= .080, p<.937) respectively. Hence, the results shows that these items are statistically different, the differences are quite small and not significant to affect the overall results. More than half (61.8%) of the respondents were frontline workers and about 32% have worked for more than 5 years. The educational background of the respondents indicate that about 32% have obtained their first degree while only 17% have their master degree. In addition, about 45% of the respondents are permanent staff working in various department with about 26% works with customer relations department.

Well established scales were employed to measure the constructs in this study. In all cases, seven-point Likert scales were used as was found to be more reliable than lower scales [54]. Employee brand citizenship behavior was measured using the scale adapted from [3]. This scale consist of 14 items and measures employee's perceptions of four dimensions of brand citizenship behavior. Furthermore, employee brand fit was measured based on 4 items adapted from [10]. Similarly, brand reward was measured using scale developed by [3]. In addition, brand training was measured based on 4 items adapted from [25].

To solve the potential problems of common method bias (CMV), we employed both procedural and statistical measure as suggested by [55]. Some of these measures include elimination of item

ambiguity, allowing respondent's anonymity and Harman's single-factor test. Harman's single-factor has been considered as the most widely used technique among researchers to address the problem of CMV. The procedure involves loading simultaneously altogether the variables in the study into exploratory factor analysis and then observes the un-rotated factor solution in order to establish the number of factors that are essential to account for variance in the variables. It is stated in the rules that if a substantial amount of CMV exists. In the present study, un-rotated factor analysis of all variables has revealed that no single factor accounted for more than 50% of the variance. Therefore, CMV may not be a problem in the study in line with the arguments of [55] and [56], that a common method bias is said to exist where a single factor explains more than 50% of the variance.

5 Results

The proposed model was examined using partial least square (PLS) regression with SMART-PLS software. The study used PLS for three reasons. First, the technique is selected in order to avoid normality problem that may arise in the course of data analysis [57]. Secondly, the study involve the assessment of mediating effect and it is considered to be superior in assessing mediation [58]. Third, the analysis involve testing first and second order structures. In particular, the model was treated as reflective-reflective type 1 hierarchical component model Therefore, the dimensions of brand citizenship were considered as reflective- reflective first order constructs (HCM) [22], [23].

5.1   Measurement Model Evaluation

In PLS-SEM analysis, the first stage is to ascertain the outer model (measurement model). This involves determining how well the indicators (items) load theoretically and associate with respective constructs. The analysis of evaluating outer model involves two main criteria this include reliability and validity of constructs [57], [59], [60]. First individual item reliabilities, i.e. indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability using composite reliability (CR) is assessed. Secondly, convergent validity associated with individual constructs is also assessed using average variance extracted AVE. In the same vein, discriminant validity is assessed using both [61] criterion and the outer loadings of the indicators. In the study, PLS algorithm was performed in order to ascertain the reliability and validity of the constructs [62].

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Table I
Convergent Validity

Variable	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
BE	0.901	0.819
BF	0.888	0.665
BHB	0.865	0.564
BR	0.875	0.641
BT	0.91	0.716
SD	0.815	0.525
SP	0.806	0.676

Note BR=brand reward, BT=brand training, BF=brand fit, BE=brand endorsement, BHB=brand helping behavior, SD=self-development, SP= sportsmanship.

In this regard, factors loadings of the indicators for all constructs were above 0.5 and were statistically significant this indicated convergent validity of the factors. Similarly, CR and AVE values were greater than the common thresholds of 0.7 and 0.5 as suggested by [57]. Regarding discriminant validity, we follow the suggestion made by [61] by comparing every construct's AVE with the squared correlation of that construct in relation to the other variables. Consequently, the squared of AVE is more than its construct's relationship with any other latent variables. Hence, conclusively discriminant validity is achieved [57], [63].

Table 2
Discriminant validity

Variable	BE	BF	BHB	BR	BT	SD	SP
BE	**0.9**						
BF	0.4	**0.8**					
BHB	0.4	0.3	**0.7**				
BR	0.3	0.4	0.4	**0.8**			
BT	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	**0.8**		
SD	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	**0.7**	
SP	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.4	**0.8**

Note BR=brand reward, BT=brand training, BF=brand fit, BE=brand endorsement, BHB=brand helping behavior, SD=self-development, SP= sportsmanship.

Table 3
Effect Size for Indirect Relationships (f2)

Construct	Included R^2	Excluded R^2	f^2	Effect Size
BR	0.585	0.560	0.0602	Small
BT	0.585	0.517	0.1639	Medium
BF	0.585	0.466	0.2867	Medium

Note BR=brand reward, BT=brand training, BF=brand fit

5.2 Structural Model

This involve the evaluation of the inner model. Therefore, entire main and the mediating hypotheses were analyzed using PLS-SEM bootstrap analysis. Moreover, the evaluation of the inner model in PLS-SEM require the determination of path coefficient, coefficient determination (R^2), the effect size, and predictive relevance (Q^2) (Hair et al., 2014). In our study, the results of structural relationships as shown in figure 2 below revealed a coefficient determination (R^2) values of 0.363 and 0.585 for BF and BCB respectively suggesting a moderate amount of variance explained [64]. For the effect size, we used the formula proposed by [65] as shown on the table below. The result revealed small, medium and medium for brand reward, brand training and employee brand fit respectively. On the other hand, the predictive relevance (Q^2) revealed existence of path model predictive relevance [57], [66], [67].
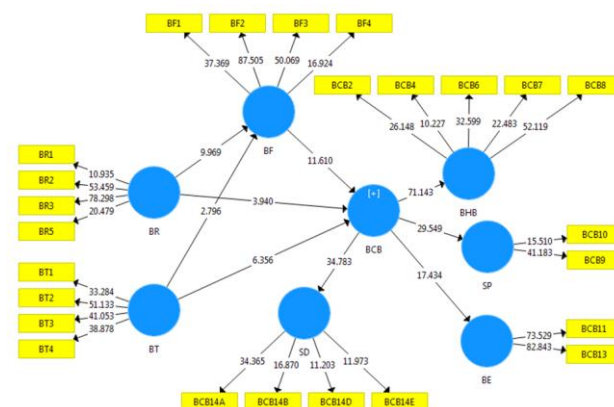

Fig. 2 Structural Model of internal Branding

In support of H1 and H2, the results revealed positive significant relationships between brand reward, and brand training on brand citizenship behavior. Similarly, the results revealed positive significant relationships between brand reward, and brand training on employee brand fit, hence H3 and H4 are supported. In line with H5, the result revealed a significant direct relationship between employee brand fit and employee brand citizenship behavior. In addition, H6 (a) and H6 (b) were also supported, therefore employee brand fit mediates the relationship between internal branding practices (brand reward and brand training) and brand citizenship behavior. The test of mediation follow the suggestions made by [68], [69]. In support of mediation, all the two indirect effect revealed significant relationships (BR -> BF -> BCB= β = 0.233, t= 7.29) and (BT -> BF -> BCB= β = 0.068, t=

2.713). Since the direct effect between internal branding practices (brand reward and brand training) are significant, then this indicate a partial mediation through employee brand fit.

6 Discussion

The main objective of our study is to investigate the effect of internal branding practices namely brand reward and brand training on employee brand citizenship through the mediating effect of employee brand fit. The results revealed that employee brand fit mediate the relationship between internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training and employee brand citizenship behavior. Therefore, brand reward and brand training are found to affect employee brand citizenship behavior via the mediating role of employee brand fit. These results are in line with the arguments put forward by [4], [9], [10], [31] who argued that employee brand fit can explain why employees engaged in extra role behavior (BCB).

There is, however, a need for brand-oriented organization to ensure that employees' values and beliefs are congruent with brand values as mediating test shows that higher brand fit make employee to exhibit brand citizenship behavior. Furthermore, the results of our study suggest that internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training have significant impact on employee brand citizenship behavior. Therefore, they are important practices that can be used to motivate employees to put extra effort toward achieving brand goals.

As such, our findings provide an empirical support for the proposed relationship between brand reward and employee brand citizenship behavior in line with prior research such as [3], [19], [33]. Furthermore, the findings support prior research that brand training have significant effect on employee brand citizenship behavior [21], [24]. However, the finding has contradicted the findings of [28] as brand-oriented training was reported to have no significant effect on brand-building behavior.

In addition, our findings revealed significant connection between internal branding practices and employee brand fit. Specifically, brand reward was found to have significant effect on employee brand fit and is consistent with prior research [21]. Further, the findings revealed significant relationship between brand training and brand fit and is consistent with [11]. Moreover, we found significant connection between brand fit and employee brand citizenship behavior and this is consistent with prior research such as [5], [40], [50], [51], [70].

7 Implications of our study

The results of our study has provided empirical evidence of the link between internal branding practices and employee brand citizenship behavior. one important implication of this study within the internal branding context is the mediating role of employee brand fit om the link between internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training and employee brand citizenship behavior. Further, our results have indicated that employee brand citizenship has no universal accepted measure. As such, this has provided an avenue for future research to be conducted.

Indeed, our study has some managerial implications. This study is significant for management to realize the impact of internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training for employees' positive consequences such as employee brand citizenship and brand fit. It is therefore crucial for the management of brand-oriented companies to prioritize, promote, and improve internal branding practices in their internal brand building. Moreover, management of an organization must appreciate the impact of employee brand fit, thus, enhance its development and sustainability amongst all their employees.

This suggests that organization should ensure that the employee's inputs are fairly rewarded in order to encourage positive brand behavior such as brand citizenship behavior. Another implication of our study to managers is related to the importance of internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training. We found that these practices are mechanism through which organizations can use to foster employee's brand fit with their working environment.

8 Limitations and suggestions for further research

As usual, our study has some limitations that made its interpretation and generalization impossible. Moreover, the limitations may serve as a direction for further research. In particular, one of the major limitation of this study is the cross sectional nature in which the data were obtained over a single time period from telecommunication companies. Thus, caution should be applied when drawing causal inferences.

Therefore, future research may address this limitation by conducting a longitudinal study that involves collecting data over two or more points of time, so as to compare and contrast the findings of this study to be able to draw cause-effect interference appropriately. Similarly, the study concentrated on

only two internal branding practices, as such other practices such as brand leadership, brand communication was not considered. Therefore, future studies should incorporate these important practices in their research. In order to further validate the brand citizenship construct, more studies are suggested across the globe particularly in African countries as such studies are few.

8 Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to investigate the mediating role of employee brand fit on the link between internal branding practices such as brand reward and brand training and employee brand citizenship behavior. The empirical findings supported all the seven (7) hypotheses formulated. Hence, the results in this study are consistent with the number of previous studies conducted. In particular brand reward and brand training were found to have significant impact on employee's brand citizenship behavior. Furthermore, brand reward and brand training were revealed to have positive significant effect on brand fit. So also brand fit was significant to brand citizenship behavior. Similarly, our study revealed that employee brand fit mediate the link between internal branding practices and employee brand citizenship behavior.

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