Exploring Internal Brand Management and the HRM Role: Public versus Private Sector Universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates the complexities of managing brand identity IBM) and the significant role played by Human Resource Management (HRM) in shaping organizational identity within the realm of higher education institutions (HEIs). Specifically focusing on universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan the research conducts an analysis between public and private sectors. Through research methods such as interviews, surveys, and document analysis the study aims to uncover the strategies, obstacles and results associated with IBM practices and HRM approaches in both sectors. By investigating, the goal of this research is to recognize the unique factors that influence IBM effectiveness and HRM contributions within public and private universities. The insights gained from this study are anticipated to offer information, for university leaders, policymakers, and professionals to improve internal brand consistency and HRM practices thereby promoting organizational success and competitiveness in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's higher education sector.

Keywords; Internal Marketing, Internal Branding, Internal Brand Management, Human Resource Management, Public/Private Universities, Pakistan.

Introduction:

In the evolving world of higher education universities are under growing pressure to stand out draw in top notch faculty and stay competitive (Nguyen et al., 2016). A key aspect of this challenge involves establishing an internal brand identity and implementing effective human

resource management (HRM) strategies. Internal branding campaigns, designed to align staff with values and objectives have become crucial for enhancing employee satisfaction, dedication, and performance (Azeez, 2017). Likewise, HRM practices play a role in attracting, retaining and nurturing a skilled workforce (Ada et al., 2023).

In the realm of education institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan the significance of internal branding and HRM cannot be emphasized enough. The caliber of faculty and staff significantly impacts universities reputation and status affecting their ability to attract students, secure funding and contribute to progress (Baltaru, 2019; Ren and Chen 2023). Despite the focus on external branding endeavors in this sector

limited research has delved into internal branding initiatives and HRM practices, within higher education institutions especially within the context of KPK and Pakistan. This study aims to fill a gap by investigating how internal branding initiatives and HRM practices impact faculty satisfaction, commitment, and performance in private universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Through comparing these sectors, we aim to understand how effective internal branding and HRM strategies are in organizational contexts.

The main research question is, how do internal branding initiatives and human resource management practices affect faculty satisfaction, commitment, and performance in universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan?

To achieve this goal the study will focus on the following objectives.

1. Evaluate the influence of branding initiatives on faculty satisfaction and commitment in public and private universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

2. Investigate how human resource management practices shape faculty satisfaction, commitment, and performance in these universities.

3. Identify the challenges that public and private universities face when implementing branding and HRM practices effectively.

4. Provide recommendations for enhancing branding strategies and HRM practices to improve faculty satisfaction, commitment, and performance at universities, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

This study intends to add to the existing knowledge on branding and human resource management in the higher education sector specifically focusing on Pakistani universities. The research findings aim to offer insights for university administrators, policymakers, and practitioners to create customized strategies to improve faculty satisfaction, commitment, and performance. This will help enhance success and competitiveness in the higher education landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Justification

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of branding and HRM practices within higher education institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Given the environment among universities, understanding how internal branding initiatives and HRM practices impact faculty satisfaction, commitment and performance is crucial for the overall success and reputation of these institutions. By comparing public and private sector universities this research aims to uncover insights into the effectiveness of branding and HRM strategies across different organizational contexts. The outcomes of this study can assist university administrators and policymakers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in devising tailored strategies to enhance faculty satisfaction, commitment, and performance, for betterment of the region's education sector.

Literature Review

Having a team of qualified and experienced faculty members is crucial for universities to boost their reputation, attract more students and improve their national standing (Ishak, 2014; Gilliot et al., 2002). Strategic management of capital plays a vital role in helping universities recruit and retain talented staff (Bucăța and Tileagă 2023). It is important for universities to focus on retaining employees within their academic staff (Samuel and Chipunza 2013). Universities need to consider policies and strategies to motivate and support the development of their faculty members (Meyer, 2005).

Importance of HRM Practices

Employees and faculty members have a significant impact on how the public perceives universities (Ivy, 2001; Naude & Ivy 1999). Effective human resource practices are essential for attracting and managing faculty members (Iqbal et al. 2011). These practices, which include recruitment, training, compensation, and mentorship greatly contribute to the growth of faculties and institutions (Ahmad, 2018). Faculty retention policies cover aspects such as monitoring welfare, ensuring transparent recruitment and evaluation processes providing mentorship opportunities and adjusting, to workload and benefits (Sadagheyani et al., 2022). When combined with culture, job satisfaction and employee satisfaction it positively influences organizational commitment and performance (Heriyatiand Ramadhan 2012).

HR Practices in Promoting Brand Identity

Effective implementation of HRM strategies leads to outcomes in HR management, which in turn enhances the overall performance of organizations (Zheng et al., 2006) playing a key role in improving employee effectiveness (Nor, 2018). Internal branding that aligns staff behavior with values is crucial for universities to maintain their competitiveness (Wishman, 2009). Employee branding plays a role in presenting a unified brand identity (Sharma and Mittal 2015). In terms of retaining faculty members in universities research emphasizes the significance of total rewards satisfaction with pay learning opportunities and human resource development practices (Akhtar et al. 2015; Mubarak et al., 2012; Ahmed, 2018). Moreover, elements like university culture, work environment, teamwork dynamics and challenging prospects are vital for retaining faculty members (Mohammad and Joardar 2010). These findings stress the importance of adopting an approach that combines both monetary and non-monetary incentives to retain faculty members within Pakistani universities.

Several studies consistently establish a connection between human resource management practices and organizational efficiency and productivity levels (Huselid et al., 1997; Birdi et al., 2008; Biswas et al., 2006; Delaney and Huselid,1996). These strategies, such as empowering employees providing training and fostering teamwork have a significant impact on how well organizations perform (Birdi et al., 2008; Delaney and Huselid 1996). Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are crucial in shaping the right brand behavior within companies,

which in turn enhances the brands strength (Chang et al., 2012; Simoes and Dibb 2001; Said et al., 2016). Empowerment and training are especially important for maintaining an edge (Birdi, 2008) allowing employees to embody the brand values effectively (Said et al., 2016).

Interdependence between HRM and IBM

HRM plays a role in managing internal branding by promoting a positive attitude and behavior towards the university's brand, among employees (Aurand et al., 2005). HR practices that enhance resilience can positively impact employee's psychological wellbeing, attitudes, actions, and overall performance within an organization (Bardoe et al., 2014). Successful businesses implement changes to adapt effectively to challenges they face (Megele, 2014). Providing support and fair treatment significantly influence employee attitudes and behaviors like engaging in activities that benefit the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005; Pattnaik and Tripathy 2014).

Employees play a role in building a brand as they represent the brand through their actions, especially in the service sector where they are the face of the brand. Their awareness of how they influence the company's reputation is shaped by factors like pride, job satisfaction and how they perceive the company's reputation. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to empower and involve their employees to ensure a positive portrayal of the brand. When employees understand their contribution to the brand's success their dedication to the brand grows. They tend to form a sense of belonging around the values of the brand.

Trust development in service industries is impacted by factors such as industry knowledge, customer focus and social connections. Effective internal communication plays a role in ensuring that employees are aligned with the brand and can fulfill its commitments. Internal branding helps companies concentrate on their vision and principles.

Communication and IBM

Building an internal brand involves nurturing a sense of identity among employees, fostering open communication channels, and engaging all staff members in the company's culture (Thomson and Hecker 2001). Employees can act as advocates for the brand or work against it. When they identify with the organization, it acts as a motivator for them to support the brand

(Lohndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014) and when they fail to identify and agree with brand ethos, they work against it. To improve understanding and alignment with the brand companies should focus on recruiting, training, and supporting employees with a brand orientation (King, 2015).
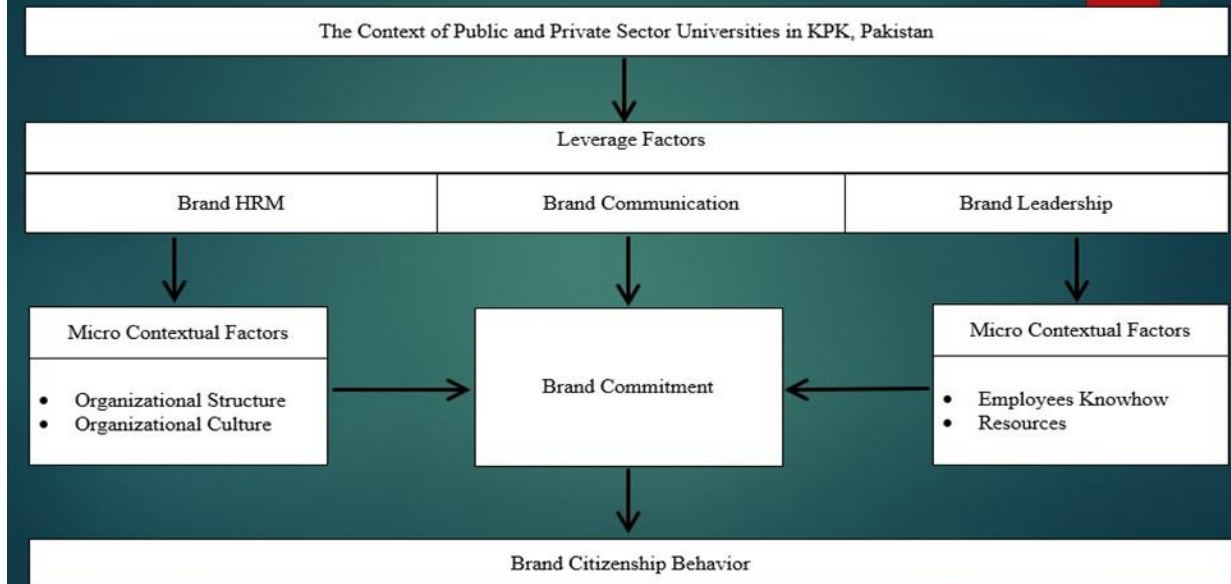
Effective communication within a company is essential for boosting employee involvement, which has been connected to results for both the organization and its staff (Mbhele and de Beer, 2022; Karanges et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there is a requirement to explore methods for evaluating internal communication that prioritize the communication requirements of employees (Ruck and Welch 2012).

Employee Performance, Customer Relationship, and Brand Success

Studies by Wallace and de Chernatony (2009) highlight the influence of employee performance on the success of a brand. Establishing and cultivating customer relationships can result in various advantages such as reduced perceived risk, lower transaction costs, increased customer loyalty and enhanced customer retention (Bejou, 1998). Trust plays a role in creating stable relationships between service providers and customers (Caseilles, 2005). Greater levels of trust and emotional commitment in these relationships are associated with chances of retaining customers (Shemwell et al. 1994). The flexibility exhibited by service providers also significantly impacts customer satisfaction, trust levels and commitment (Ivens, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the following conceptual framework, based on the theoretical framework given by Burmann and Zepelin, (2005). The context of KPK and Pakistan is added by the author to make it more context specific.

Conceptual Framework:

The Context of Public and Private Sector Universities in KPK, Pakistan

Leverage Factors

| Brand HRM | Brand Communication | Brand Leadership |

Micro Contextual Factors
- Organizational Structure
- Organizational Culture

Brand Commitment

Micro Contextual Factors
- Employees Knowhow
- Resources

Brand Citizenship Behavior

Research Methodology

A qualitative case study method was utilized to delve into the exploration and evaluation of universities in KPK, Pakistan both in the public and private sectors. This method proves to be valuable for unraveling phenomena examining processes and gaining insights into individual experiences and organizational dynamics (Khan, 2019; Dabout, 2016; Ratnasari and Sudrajat 2023). To meet the research goals of replication between sectors and literal replication within sectors as outlined by Yin (2006) a multiple case study method was employed. Hardwick (2017) elaborates on the usefulness of this approach in qualitative theoretical research across different fields. In this study involving public and private institutions three cases were selected from each sector.

Coding plays a role in data analysis by connecting recurring patterns with existing literature and aiding in conceptual analysis. The analysis involved scrutiny and interpretation of the gathered data through coding, thematic analysis, pattern recognition and constant comparison to unveil emerging themes, patterns, and relationships within the dataset.

The rationale behind the choice of respondents, particularly utilizing non-probability sampling, is grounded in alignment with the study's objectives, available resources, intricacies, and a

comprehensive review of research methodology literature (Bradley, 1999). Interviewing individuals from both private universities enabled us to grasp their unique circumstances by carefully observing their distinct traits, interactions and contextual factors leading to a deep and detailed comprehension of the topics being investigated. To ensure the study's credibility and consistency we utilized triangulation by comparing observations within and, across sectors to strengthen the research robustness. The study incorporated inductive methodologies (Young et al., 2020). Using structured interviews offered a balance of structure and adaptability facilitating the emergence of new insights (Ruslin et al., 2022).

Findings

Private Sector Universities

Structured Training and Orientation: Within government universities there is a focus on structured guidance and introduction programs to align faculty and staff with the institution's core values. These planned programs aim to cultivate a deep comprehension of the brand's fundamental principles, purpose, and vision among all team members. Through engaging workshops, seminars and immersive activities employees are fully immersed in the essence of the brand, ensuring they grasp its significance in every aspect of their duties.

Brand Ambassador Programs: Additionally private universities actively encourage participation in brand advocate initiatives motivating staff to be supporters of the institution both internally and externally. These initiatives empower employees to embody the spirit of the brand in their interactions, presentations, and representations of the university. By fostering a culture of brand advocacy non-government universities enhance their influence as employees become living examples of the brands values, beliefs, and aspirations.

Proper Brand-Centric Training: The targeted approach taken by government institutions towards aligning employees with the brand reflects a proactive stance in brand management. By investing in training and development programs universities ensure that every member not only comprehends the brand but also actively represents it in their daily engagements and duties. Private universities work on building a brand image that resonates throughout their different departments, campuses, and communities by consistently reinforcing their values and providing

continuous education. Additionally internal branding campaigns are used to support brand training efforts by emphasizing messages and promoting a sense of unity among faculty and staff. These campaigns act as a point bringing employees together around common goals and values while also strengthening their bond with the university.

Private universities understand the importance of aligning employees with the institution's brand identity and reputation. Through programs like structured training, brand ambassador initiatives and internal branding campaigns these universities promote a culture where everyone advocates for the brand across all levels of the organization. Private universities position themselves for long term success enhancing their appeal and competitiveness in a competitive market environment by investing in their people, whom they consider their strategic assets.

Table 1: Private sectors universities Themes

Theme	Description
Structured Training and Orientation	Private sector universities prioritize structured training and orientation programs to align faculty and staff with the institution's brand values. These programs are meticulously designed to instill a profound understanding of the brand's core principles, mission, and vision among all employees through workshops, seminars, and immersive experiences.
Brand Ambassador Programs	Private universities actively promote participation in brand ambassador programs, encouraging staff to become vocal advocates for the institution both internally and externally. These programs empower employees to embody the brand's essence in their interactions, presentations, and representations of the university.
Proper Brand-Centric Training	The private sector's targeted approach to employee alignment with the brand underscores a proactive strategy in brand management. By investing in comprehensive training and development initiatives,

	universities ensure that every member of the institution not only understands the brand but also actively embodies it in their daily interactions and responsibilities.
Internal Branding Campaigns	Initiatives such as internal branding campaigns complement brand training efforts by reinforcing key messages and fostering a sense of belonging among faculty and staff. These campaigns serve as a rallying point, galvanizing employees around shared values and objectives, while simultaneously strengthening their connection to the institution.

Public Sector Universities

Public universities unlike ones tend to focus on integrating their brand values into the existing institutional culture rather than relying heavily on formal branding training programs. They view the brand as a part of their long-standing traditions and values, believing that employees absorb and reflect these values through their immersion in the university's culture.

Organic, Culture Driven Approach: The sectors approach emphasizes aligning employees with the brand by ingraining the institutions core values within its fabric. While this method may not offer results like structured training programs in the private sector it fosters a more authentic and deeply rooted sense of brand identity among staff and faculty.

Centralized Policy Making: Moreover, public universities prioritize policy making processes involving various stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that policies align with the values and aspirations of the university community while fostering a shared sense of ownership and responsibility.

Regulated by University Regulatory Framework: Employees tend to feel a connection to the organization's mission leading them to support and promote its brand both within and outside the institution. Public universities, governed by government regulations, operate within a framework that influences how they communicate their brand values to internal stakeholders. In Pakistan for instance public universities often highlight their role in development as part of their unique identity, tailored to specific regions and missions.

The branding strategy in universities emphasizes the seamless integration of core values into the institutional culture, driven by inclusive policy making processes. Although this approach may differ from training programs in its indirect nature it nurtures a strong sense of identity and shared responsibility, among staff members fostering a resilient brand presence throughout the university community.

Table 2: Public Sectors Universities Themes

Theme	Description
Organic, Culture Driven Approach	Public sector universities rely on the organic integration of brand values into their existing institutional culture, viewing the brand as an inherent extension of long-established traditions and values. Employees naturally absorb and embody the brand's essence through immersion in the university's culture and ethos.
Centralized Policy Making	Public sector universities prioritize inclusive policy-making processes involving various stakeholders, reflecting collective values and reinforcing shared ownership and responsibility. Employees feel connected to the institution's mission, advocating for its brand both internally and externally.
Regulated by University Regulatory Framework	Public universities operate within government-set regulatory frameworks influencing brand communication and management practices. For instance, public universities in Pakistan may emphasize their contribution to national development as part of their brand identity, reflecting unique missions and geographic focus.

Table 3: Comparison of Public and Private Sector Universities Themes

Theme	Private Sector Universities	Public Sector Universities
Structured Training and Orientation	Private sector universities prioritize structured training and orientation programs to align faculty and staff with the institution's brand values. These programs are meticulously designed to instill a profound understanding of the brand's core principles, mission, and vision among all employees through workshops, seminars, and immersive experiences.	Public sector universities rely on the organic integration of brand values into their existing institutional culture, viewing the brand as an inherent extension of long-established traditions and values. Employees naturally absorb and embody the brand's essence through immersion in the university's culture and ethos.
Brand Ambassador Programs	Private universities actively promote participation in brand ambassador programs, encouraging staff to become vocal advocates for the institution both internally and externally. These programs empower employees to embody the brand's essence in their interactions, presentations, and representations of the university.	Not emphasized.
Proper	The private sector's targeted approach	Employees are expected to uphold

Brand-Centric Training	to employee alignment with the brand underscores a proactive strategy in brand management. By investing in comprehensive training and development initiatives, universities ensure that every member of the institution not only understands the brand but also actively embodies it in their daily interactions and responsibilities.	institutional values as they navigate their roles within the university community.
Internal Branding Campaigns	Initiatives such as internal branding campaigns complement brand training efforts by reinforcing key messages and fostering a sense of belonging among faculty and staff. These campaigns serve as a rallying point, galvanizing employees around shared values and objectives, while simultaneously strengthening their connection to the institution.	Not heavily emphasized.
Organic, Culture Driven Approach	-	Public sector universities rely on the organic integration of brand values into their existing institutional culture, viewing the brand as an inherent extension of long-established traditions and values. Employees naturally absorb and embody the brand's essence through

		immersion in the university's culture and ethos.
Centralized Policy Making	-	Public sector universities prioritize inclusive policy-making processes involving various stakeholders, reflecting collective values and reinforcing shared ownership and responsibility. Employees feel connected to the institution's mission, advocating for its brand both internally and externally.
Regulated by University Regulatory Framework	-	Public universities operate within government-set regulatory frameworks influencing brand communication and management practices. For instance, public universities in Pakistan may emphasize their contribution to national development as part of their brand identity, reflecting unique missions and geographic focus.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis provided, here are some recommendations for both private and public sector universities to enhance their brand management efforts:

Private Sector Universities

Keep investing in structured training programs and orientation sessions to ensure that all employees have a deep understanding of the institution's brand values, mission, and vision.

Expand the brand ambassador programs and offer incentives for staff participation to enhance the promotion and representation of the university's brand both inside and outside.

Carry out internal branding campaigns to reinforce important messages and nurture a sense of belonging among faculty and staff.

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of brand management efforts through surveys, feedback sessions and performance assessments adjusting as needed to stay in line with evolving organizational objectives.

2. Public Sector Universities:

Utilize the institutional culture and beliefs to better incorporate brand values into daily routines and relationships among faculty and staff.

Enhance inclusive decision-making procedures to guarantee that a variety of viewpoints and stakeholder input shape the institutions brand image.

Look into ways to showcase the university's impact on progress or other important societal objectives within its brand story.

Cultivate a feeling of ownership and shared accountability among staff by encouraging openness, teamwork and joint decision making, in governance procedures.

Overall, both private and public sector universities can benefit from a holistic approach to brand management that encompasses structured training, employee engagement initiatives, internal

branding efforts, and inclusive governance practices. By aligning these strategies with their organizational values and objectives, universities can enhance their brand identity, reputation, and competitiveness in the higher education landscape.

Future Research

In the realm of university brand management future research could delve into crucial areas to deepen comprehension and effectiveness. To begin with, conducting studies between private and public universities in different regions or countries could uncover nuances in brand management strategies, effectiveness, and outcomes. This exploration may illuminate how culture, regulatory contexts, and resource allocation influence brand practices. Additionally examining the correlation between employee engagement and brand advocacy within university settings considering factors like culture, leadership approaches and communication methods could yield valuable insights on cultivating employees' willingness to champion the brand. Lastly gaining insights into stakeholder perceptions and expectations from groups such as students, alumni, donors, government entities and local communities regarding university branding is essential, for engaging stakeholders effectively and aligning them with the brand vision.

Conclusion

In conclusion the difference in how brand managements approached in private and public sector universities highlights the various strategies used to align faculty and staff with the values of the institution.

Private universities focus on training orientation programs and initiatives involving brand ambassadors to ensure that employees deeply understand and actively embody the principles of the brand. By implementing branding campaigns, they create a culture of brand advocacy that enhances the institution's identity and competitiveness.

On the contrary public universities integrate brand values organically into their existing culture by emphasizing established traditions and inclusive policy making processes. Although they may lack training programs this approach nurtures a stronger sense of brand identity among staff and faculty through a shared responsibility and connection to the institutions mission.

Both private and public sector universities face challenges and opportunities in managing their brands. While private universities adopt strategies to shape their brand identity public universities rely on their institutional culture and inclusive governance to foster a deep sense of loyalty to the brand. Despite their differing methods both approaches aim to elevate the institutions' reputation and influence within their environments.

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