2009-01-01

Internal Branding and Brand Commitment: a Quantitative Investigation into Corporate Brand Building in a Retail Store Network

Edmund O'Callaghan
Technological University Dublin, edmund.ocallaghan@tudublin.ie

Recommended Citation

2009-01-01

Internal Branding and Brand Commitment: a quantitative investigation into Corporate Brand Building in a Retail Store Network

Edmund B. O'Callaghan

Dublin Institute of Technology, edmund.ocallaghan@dit.ie

Recommended Citation

O'Callaghan, E. (2009), 'Internal Branding and Brand Commitment: A quantitative investigation into Corporate Brand Building in a Retail Store Network' ,Paper presented at EIRASS conference, Niagara Falls, USA, July.

Internal Branding and Brand Commitment: A quantitative investigation into Corporate Brand Building in a Retail Store Network

Edmund O' CALLAGHAN, School of Retail & Services Management, Faculty of Business, Dublin Institute of Technology, Aungier St. Dublin 1. Ireland.

Tel. 00353-1-4027062. Fax 00353-1-4027199. e-mail edmund.ocallaghan @dit.ie

Abstract

The aim of this quantitative study was to investigate the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of internal branding activities on brand commitment among owner managers within a retail store network of previously independent retailers. Brand commitment was hypothesized as essential for coherent and consistent corporate brand building within this context. Two new scales were developed and tested to measure internal branding and brand commitment. Perceived clarity of vision, core values and brand communications were highly correlated with strong brand commitment, while lack of perceived business supports and adequate reward systems were potential inhibitors. Interalia, findings validate the significance of internal branding for corporate brand building within a retail network.

Keywords

Corporate Branding, Internal branding, brand commitment, retail store network, Ireland

1. Introduction

The strategic significance of corporate branding has been elevated by the modern-day proliferation of branded product line offerings and is reflected in the increasing academic attention to the subject over the past decade (Balmer 1995, 1998, 2001, 2005; Ind, 1997; King, 1991; Macrae, 1996, 1999; Mitchell, 2002; Daffey & Abratt, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 1997; 2001; Urde, 1999, 2003). Despite an extensive branding literature, there has been a paucity of academic analysis of the corporate brand construct within both the retail and SME literatures (Abimbola, 2001; Burt & Sparks, 2002; Roper & Parker, 2006; Merrilees, 2007). In a retail context, the greater challenge of maintaining brand essence across potentially hundreds of stores of varied size and location has been recognized (Burt & Sparks, 2002). While the increasing internationalisation of the European high street provides an increasingly challenging context for SME retailers, the need to better understand the process of building a successful SME store brand or brands is clear. Knox & Bickerton (2003) combined two perspectives on corporate brand building by comparing an 'outside in' marketing focus with an 'inside-out' organizational identity focus. This paper adopts an 'inside-out' perspective, and investigates the perceived impact of internal branding activities on owner-manager commitment to a store brand within a retail network of previously independent retailers, the majority of whom joined the network in order to avail of the more attractive buying economies associated with a large organisation. It is argued that owner managers within this context are viewed as the key conduit of brand essence from corporate to store level. While intuitively, the development of owner-manager commitment to the store brand could be viewed as a seminal requirement for corporate brand building within a retail store network, no

2

empirical study was uncovered that focuses on brand commitment within this context. Therefore the aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between the perceived effectiveness or otherwise of internal branding activities on brand commitment among owner managers within a retail store network.

Given the importance attributed to the development of brand commitment for successful corporate brand building hypothesised within this research paper, the paper includes a selective review of the literature on internal branding and organisational commitment. While owner managers within the retail network are not employees, the process of internal branding which views employees as internal customers is appropriate and analogous within this context. The organization, which provides the research context is at an early stage in the implementation of an internal branding programme for its retail store network, the majority of whom are single store operators, although there is a growing trend towards multiple store ownership (one owner operates six stores). This task cannot be underestimated, given the fact that there are substantial differences in the age profile, size and location of stores across the network, and where owner-manager commitment to the brand is unknown. Therefore, brand commitment is conceptualised as a relevant form of organizational commitment within this network of previous independent retailers.

2. Literature Overview

2.1 Internal Branding

The view that the internal branding literature has lacked focus and definition (Mahnert & Torres, 2007) is reflected in the differing definitional emphasis evident within the branding literature. Definitions range from referring to internal branding as a means of creating powerful brands (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007), or the attainment of competitive advantage through people in the organisation (Jacobs, 2003), to seeing internal branding as the activities employed by a company to ensure intellectual and emotional commitment to the brand (Thomson et al, 1999, Thomson & Hecker, 2000). Alternatively, the view of internal branding as an activity that enables disparate organisations to come together and 'speak with one voice' (Einwiller & Will, 2002, p.100), has resonance in the current research context. The conceptualisation of the internal branding process as a two way communications process is also highlighted for successful internal branding. For example, Totsi & Stotz (2001) view internal branding more as an iterative process, rather than a series of communication events. They argue that this iterative view of the internal branding process is necessary for the fulfillment of brand promise. Similarly, Vallaster & De Chernatony (2005) found that institutionalized feedback loops that embed the internal branding process support the identification and removal of inhibitors of the process. Mahnert & Torres (2007) emphasise three core principles within their conceptualisation of the internal branding construct that are commonly emphasised within the wider branding literature. Firstly, that committed employees reflect and deliver desired brand values to consumers. Secondly, that effective communication results in the brand promise being realised both internally and externally,

4

and thirdly, that internal branding needs to permeate all levels of the organisation to align the behaviour and attitudes of management and staff.

2.1.1 Committed Staff

The importance of internal brand commitment is reflected in Punjaisri & Wilson's (2007, p.60) view of the objective of internal branding as ensuring 'that employees transform espoused brand messages into brand reality'. The importance attributed to the development of organizational and brand commitment among employees arises from the greater dependence ascribed to internal branding activities for brand success in a services context (Ind, 1997:41; Harris and De Chernatony, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Bergstrom et al, 2002; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; De Chernatony et al, 2003; Lomax & Mador, 2006). For retailers, the internal branding process is perceived as creating and nurturing commitment among employees. Therefore, the commitment by staff to deliver this brand reality, essence and reflect the desired brand values to consumers, has often been viewed as a successful outcome of internal branding activities (Meyer et al, 2002).

2.1.2 Effective Communications

Effective brand communications results in the brand promise being realised both internally and externally. De Chernatony & Segal-Horn (2003) emphasise the importance of effective communication of the service vision, the brand promise and consumer expectations to staff for successful brand building. This effectively results in a staff 'buy in' to the corporate brand (Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2005; Thomson & Hecker, 2000;

Thomson et al, 1999), or staff 'living the brand' (Hankinson, 2004), both indicators of commitment to the brand. Within a services context, the process of internal corporate brand building among staff is viewed as of equal importance to external brand building to customers and investors (Witt & Rode, 2005; Bergstrom et al, 2002). It is argued that such a balanced internal/external orientation is strategically more effective than a singularly and marketing oriented external focus (Wong and Saunders, 1993; Lings, 1999). Within the services literature, there is universal agreement that the providence of successful corporate brands emanate from organisations with a balanced orientation and effective internal and external communications (Wong and Saunders, 1993; Greenley & Foxall, 1997; Cleaver, 1999; Lings, 1999; Urde, 1999, 2003; Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; De Chernatony et al, 2003; De Chernatony & Segal Horn, 2003; De Chernatony, 2006; Xie & Boggs, 2006).   There also appears to common agreement that greater points of contact with stakeholders in a services context, necessitate greater attention to the coherency of both internal and external communications (Wong & Saunders, 1993; De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999; De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; De Chernatony, 2006). In a pure retail context, the rationale for this view rests with the need for congruency between the externally communicated brand promise with the internally generated customer store experience. Totsi & Stotz (2001, p.30) capture the essence of this sentiment when they cite an old marketing mantra that states that 'nothing kills a bad product faster than good advertising'.

2.1.3 Internalisation of Brand Values

The view that internal branding activities need to permeate all levels of the organisation to align the behaviour and attitudes of management and staff is common. It is argued that

the internalisation of brand values by staff at all levels of the organisation allows consistency in the delivery of the brand promise (Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2005, 2006), and facilitates the development of effective internal systems that deliver consistent value (Harris & Ogbonna, 2000; De Chernatony, 2006). Hankinson & Lomax (2006) contend that the internalisation of the corporate brand by staff is manifested through three dimensions from the branding literature, namely knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Hankinson et al, (2007) argue that these three dimensions need to be addressed on a continual basis to ensure staff retain new knowledge, remain positively motivated and maintain behaviours over time. This internalisation process often involves the education and training of staff throughout the organisation and is seen as critical for the development of brand values among staff, as well as providing supports for the enactment of brand values (Harris & Ogbonna, 2000; De Chernatony, 2006). It has also been viewed as convincing staff of the relevance of the brand, communicating brand value, and successfully linking every job in the organization to delivery of brand essence (Bergstrom et al, 2002). Punjaisri & Wilson (2007) found that internal branding not only directly influences the extent to which employees perform their role in relation to the brand promise, but also influences attitudes towards the brand, which in turn affects employee performance.

2.2 Brand Commitment

The multidimensional nature of organisational commitment is emphasised in many definitions of organisational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et al, 1990), but has been generally perceived as an attitude towards a particular entity. The concept of attitudinal staff commitment to the

brand has already been discussed within the context of the branding literature (Thomson et al, 1999; Thomson & Hecker, 2000; Hankinson 2004; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2005). Many definitions emphasise the psychological nature of commitment. With an emphasis on the internalization of values, O'Reilly & Chatman (1986, p.493) define commitment as '….the psychological attachment felt by the person for the organization; it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization'. Others see it as see it as 'a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization' (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p.14). Thus, the nature of commitment is that it is an attitudinal construct that represents feelings about the act of maintaining a relationship with a commercial partner (Fullerton, 2005). Meyer & Allen (1991: p.67) noted that organizational commitment is a 'psychological state' that firstly characterizes the relationship with the organization and secondly, has implications for the decision to continue membership with the organization. They identified three separate psychological forces that link the employee to the organization as affective, continuance and normative commitment, which have been explained as:-

'Employees with strong affective commitment remain because they *want* to, those with strong continuance commitment because they *need* to, and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they *ought* to do so'

(Allen & Meyer, 1990, page 3)

Affective commitment arises from a trusting and enjoyable business relationship (Gilliland & Bello, 2002; Fullerton, 2005), which is based on principles of shared values,

identification, attachment and trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Gruen et al, 2000; Bansal et al, 2004; Fullerton, 2005).   The importance of congruency of organizational and individual objectives is emphasized in several definitions of affective commitment. Hall et al, (1970, p.176-177) define it as 'the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent', while Mowday et al, (1982: p.27) define it as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation'. Normative commitment refers to feelings of obligation or duty towards an entity.   Weiner, (1982, p.421) defines normative commitment as 'the totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interests', and argues that normative commitment to the organization develops during a socialization process for newcomers to the organization. Meyer & Allen (1991) argue that normative commitment motivates individuals to behave appropriately and do what is right for the organization. In a later paper (Meyer & Allen, 1997), they also suggest that normative commitment develops on the basis of a particular type of investment that the organisation makes in an employee that is difficult to reciprocate. Continuance commitment refers to a position whereby one of the partners to the relationship, in either a C2B, B2B or employee/employer context, are bound to their relationship partner because either it is difficult to get out of the relationship, perhaps because of the cost associated with leaving or they perceive few alternatives outside the existing relationship or both (Kanter, 1968). The construct has its origins in economic and psychological switching costs and scarcity of alternatives (Gruen et al, 2000; Bansal et al, 2004; Fullerton, 2005). Over an extended period, Meyer & Allen (1984, 1991; Meyer et al, 1993) define commitment in such a way that it implies a course of action

(continuing membership) of relevance to an entity (organization). The idea of binding the individual to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990) is relevant in the current research context and appears appropriate for the conceptualization of continuance commitment within a retail network of geographically dispersed stores. The challenge might be viewed as the transformation of a good buyer-seller relationship into a brand partnership, or moving from a 'transactional' to 'relational' relationship (Kumar, 1996). Chang (1999) suggests that new members of an organization evaluate whether a company has fulfilled the psychological contract, which has been viewed as a perceptual belief about what employees believe they are entitled to receive (Robinson, 1996). In business to business environments, contractual arrangements are viewed as one of the main mechanisms of maintaining relationships (Anderson & Weitz, 1992). The effect of contracts is that they both limit the alternatives available to partners, and they also impose switching costs on partners in the event that they decide to exit the relationship (Fullerton, 2005). Allen & Meyer (1990) suggest that such a dependency is not conducive to the development of prosocial behaviours, including advocacy. In a later study, they also found that the perceived availability of alternatives will be negatively correlated with continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

3. Conceptual development: Model and Hypotheses

The theoretical model is graphically shown in Figure 1. The model presents hypotheses relating to the potential impact of internal brand activities on brand commitment within a retail store network. It posits the idea that perceived clarity of the strategic vision and core values underpinning the brand, perceived effectiveness of internal brand communications within the retail store network, and the perception of internal brand

support mechanisms and reward schemes, as a direct consequence of internal branding activities, correlate to positive levels of brand commitment to the store brand across the retail network, and are essential for brand development and success.

Insert Figure 1

3.1 Vision and Brand Commitment

There is general agreement that a compelling strategic vision is required to underwrite the corporate brand and is a seminal activity for corporate brand building (Abimbola, 2001 De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Doyle, 2003; Inskip, 2004; Krake, 2005; Rode & Vallaster, 2005; Wong & Merrilees, 2005; Kay, 2006; Rogers & Blenko, 2006; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2006). While owner managers within the retail store network could not be viewed as the architects of the vision for the store brand, their perceived clarity of understanding of that vision for the brand would appear essential for brand building within the retail store network. Collins & Porras (1991) argue for effective leadership to catalyse a clear and shared vision of the organisation and to secure commitment to, and vigorous pursuit of that vision. Therefore it is hypothesised that owner managers who purport to have a clear vision of the store brand will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

H1: Owner managers who purport to have a clear vision for the store brand will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

3.2 Core values and Brand Commitment

A brand oriented philosophy, which acknowledges the strategic importance of brands, is an approach in which the processes of the organization revolve around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers (Urde, 1994, 1999). The aim of this interaction is the achievement of lasting competitive advantage in the form of brands, and has been found to positively impact on firm performance (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Urde (1999) proposes 'high-level' brand orientation as important for brand building. This refers to a position in which the organisational mission, vision and values are brought together in the form of core values, and have been viewed as critical for brand building (Kapferer, 1997, Urde, 2003). Kent & Stone (2007) propose that core values relate to the internal brand building process by linking the brand to the company's mission, vision and fundamental organizational values, which in turn affect the brand architecture, product attributes, brand positioning and communications strategy. These core values underpin the store brand proposition and therefore address fundamental brand building requirements of continuity, consistency and credibility (Urde, 2003). As the metaphoric glue in the brand building process, they cannot be changed quickly or easily, and can potentially inhibit the process of brand building (Ind, 1997). The articulation of core values, viewed as the DNA of the store brand, has not only been seen as crucial for internal brand building, but for the overall

development of the corporate brand (Kent & Stone, 2007). The organization 'lives its core values' and thus its brand (Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991; Balmer, 1995; Urde, 1999; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006a) state that comprehension of core organisational values encourages and endorses preferred forms of staff behaviour that facilitates their role as brand builders. It is therefore hypothesised that owner managers within the retail store network, who purport to have a clear understanding of the core values of the store brand will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

H2: Owner managers who purport to understand the core values of the store brand will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

3.3 Congruency of Personal and Core Brand Values

There is a common view within the services literature that the business philosophy of the founder often defines the core values of the organisation (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Inskip, 2004; Kent & Stone, 2007). Similarly, many of the empirical studies on SME branding (Abimbola, 2001; Inskip, 2004; Krake, 2005; Rode & Vallaster, 2005) highlight the importance of the founder in the branding process, whose personality and personal values are synonymous with organizational values and the corporate brand (Witt & Rode, 2005). While each owner-manager within the store network does not perform the same role as the CEO, their role is similar in the duties they perform for brand building at a store operations level. Kay (2006) identifies successful small businesses as being clearly driven by leaders who are value driven, hold strong beliefs about business, and carefully craft mission statements to communicate their specific goals. With the

13

exception of the crafting of mission statements, the retail store owners are required to fit this profile for business success. While a minority of current owners inherited family owned businesses, the majority founded their own independent retail businesses. It is therefore hypothesised that congruency of their personal business philosophy and the philosophy underpinning the retail store brand would be important for brand building, in line with previous conceptualisations of affective commitment (Hall et al, 1970; Mowday et al, 1982). Therefore, the alignment of owner manager's business philosophy (core values) with that of the organisation (core values) would appear an important condition necessary for successful brand building within the retail network. By contrast, Van Rekom (1997) argues that dissonance results from the non-alignment of corporate brand values to employee values and other stakeholder concerns. Therefore, within the current research context it is hypothesised that successful corporate brand building cannot successfully develop without congruency of owner-manager and organisation brand values, and that owner managers whose personal business philosophy is closely aligned with the core values of the store brand, will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

H3: Owner managers who are a 'good fit' with the store brand (good alignment of personal business values and core brand values) will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment

3.4 Internal Brand Communications and Brand Commitment

Many writers view effective communications as key to relationship building and therefore formative for corporate brand building (Kennedy, 1977; Plummer, 1984;

Cleaver, 1999; Merrilees & Fry, 2002; De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; De Chernatony et al, 2003). Effective internal communication of company policies is seen as crucial to consistency of image, although Markwick & Fill (1997) argue that a uniform image cannot be expected, given the multitude of stakeholders, with a variety of backgrounds, objectives and levels of dependency. The effectiveness of these communications is viewed as critical to staff's perception of the company (Kennedy, 1977; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2005, 2006). Kennedy (1977) argues that for brand building in a services context, that a consistent internal perception of a company is the keystone to external stakeholder image. Effective communication of the brand is seen as one of the key requirements for successful internal branding (Bergstrom et al, 2002). Therefore it is envisaged that owner managers within the retail store network who perceive that their store brand has been clearly communicated to them would be expected to exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

H4: Owner managers with a more positive view on the effectiveness of internal brand communications within the retail store network will exhibit higher levels of store brand commitment.

3.5 Network Supports and Brand Commitment

Organisational supports could be viewed as a means of developing 'feeling of obligation' (Weiner, 1982: 421) or normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) towards the organisation. Organisational supports, such as induction, training and education are important for the development of internal brand literacy. They are the formative means

for the creation of the desired brand supporting behaviour, greater staff commitment and the alignment of staff values with the values of the organisation (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002). Induction programmes have been successfully found to translate the corporate brand internally to employees in order to facilitate their role as brand builders (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006a, 2006b), and are often designed to ensure staff engagement, empowerment and responsiveness (Aaker, 2004). Many of the owner managers within the retail store network established and developed their stores prior to joining the network. The initial motivation for joining the network might be interpreted as gaining access to purchasing economies of scale, in order to compete with larger operators. As such, this relationship might be seen as essentially transactional (absence of obligation) rather than relational (Kumar, 1996). Both affective and continuance commitment have been shown to be a key feature of both inter-organisational relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and service relationships (Fullerton, 2005). The corporate group offers various supports for business development. It is argued that such business supports increase the psychological switching costs (Gruen et al, 2000; Bansal et al, 2004; Fullerton, 2005). Therefore it is hypothesized that owners who perceive the corporate group as an important support mechanism for their business would exhibit higher levels of commitment.

H5: Owner managers with a more positive view of the role of the corporate group on the development of their businesses will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

3.6 Network Reward Systems and Brand Commitment

Aaker (2004) states that the translation of the corporate brand internally to employees must be supported by the mission, goals, values and culture of the organization where employees 'buy in' (Thomson et al, 1999; Thomson & Hecher, 2000; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2006) to organizational values and programs. Reward systems could be viewed as an important mechanism through which commitment to the brand is engendered within a branch network, and therefore an integrative element in corporate brand building. Effective reward and recognition schemes have the ability to enhance motivation and commitment (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Membership of the symbol group offers a variety of discounts related to purchase quantity. It also rewards individual stores for sales performance. Reward systems have also been viewed as increasing both the economic and psychological switching costs (Kanter, 1968; Gruen et al, 2000; Bansal et al, 2004; Fullerton, 2005). Rousseau (1989) classifies notional psychological contracts as either transactional or relational. Transactional contracts are based on principles of economic exchange and tend to be more objective, whereas relational contracts are more abstract and based on principles of social exchange. Kumar (1996) provided strong empirical evidence, based on longitudinal research over a 20 year period on buyer–supplier relationships, that the move from transactional to relational has strong positive strategic consequences. Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni (1995) view relational contracts as more relevant to normative commitment and transactional more relevant to continuance commitment. Therefore it is hypothesized that owners with a more positive view of reward systems within the retail store network will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment

17

H6: Owner managers with a more positive view on reward systems within the retail store network will exhibit higher levels of brand commitment.

4. Methodology

Data was collected via an on-line survey sent to all owner-managers and managers within the retail store network, which comprises sixty nine stores, by the general manager of the group. Fifty five stores are operated by independent business owner-managers and 14 operated by employed retail store managers. Online research is a growing business research method, which in the future is predicted to account for the majority of market research studies (Taylor, 2000). An online survey was chosen in favour of postal or other methods, given the cost, ease of use for the researcher, expected level and speed of response, lower response error and geographical spread of potential respondents, previewed by previous online business research studies (Mehta & Sivadas, 1995; Weibie & Wallace, 1998; Cho & LaRose, 1999; Bachmann et al, 2000; Taylor, 2000; McDonald & Adam, 2003; Wilson & Laskey, 2003). While actions or behaviour can indicate brand commitment, the construct is conceptualised as an attitudinal construct for the current study. A total of 23 responses were received, representing an overall response rate of 33%, and accounts for 46% of all stores within the store network. While there were three store managers within the respondent sample of twenty three, this sub-sample was deemed too small to facilitate meaningful comparative analysis between the two groups, and it was decided to use the full sample of twenty three as the 'owner-manager' sample for the purposes of this study. In terms of single unit versus multiple unit respondents,

single unit owners accounted for seventy per cent of survey respondents, twenty six per cent of respondents had two stores and four per cent had three stores. The tenure of the respondent owner managers ranged from one to sixteen years, with a mean tenure of 7.6 years and a standard deviation of 4.52.

Two new scales are proposed within this study. Firstly, a 14-item positively and negatively rated seven-point Likert type scale is proposed for the measurement of brand commitment based on the adaptation of Meyer & Allen's (1990) three component organizational commitment scale. This model of commitment was chosen because it has undergone extensive empirical evaluation (Allen & Meyer, 1996) and has also been recommended for the measurement of organizational commitment in an internal brand building context for the services sector (Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2005). Secondly, a 15-item positively and negatively rated seven-point Likert type scale is proposed for the measurement of the effectiveness of internal branding activities. The variables for the internal branding scale were developed with reference to two sources. Foreman & Money's (1995) *Internal Marketing Scale, which focused on v*ision, rewards and development, was chosen as an appropriate starting point for the development of the internal branding scale. This was augmented by two additional variables as a result of exploratory depth interviews, conducted with the CEOs/Owner Directors of three successful and nationally recognised retail store brands in the Irish marketplace. This resulted in the proposed internal branding scale comprising five distinct constructs, i.e. vision, core values, effective brand communications, network supports and network reward systems

The *survey* was pilot tested to test for clarity, ease of completion, errors and respondent fatigue and the data screened and cleaned before the analysis. A total of seven negative statements within the internal branding and brand commitment scales were reversed. While the tests of normality of the distribution scores on both scales indicated a normal distribution, a non-parametric approach was adopted, primarily because of the small sample size.

Reliability tests were performed to evaluate the extent to which the proposed scales were free from random error and internally consistent. The reliability alpha for the proposed internal branding and brand commitment scales are 0.925 and 0.854 respectively which indicates very good internal consistency. The scales were further assessed by reference to the *item-to-item correlation* of each distinct element of each scale (Coding for each item on the scale is shown in Appendix 1). While low positive values of 0.206 on REW2 and 0.168 on NC1 and negative values of -0.231 and -0.269 on CC2 and CC4 indicates that these items may be measuring something different to their respective scales as a whole, it was not deemed necessary to remove these items from the scale due to the fact that all alpha values are greater than 0.7. While the removal of two items on the internal branding scale (REW1 and REW2) would result in higher alpha values of 0.926 and 0.932 respectively and the removal of three items on the brand commitment scale (NC1, CC2 and CC4) would result in higher alpha values of 0.861, 0.861 and 0.891 respectively, it was decided that these improvements were not sufficiently significant to warrant their removal.

Spearman's rank order correlation (Rho) was used to test relationships between perceptions of internal branding activities and levels of brand commitment. The direction and strength of relationships is indicated by calculating the r value. This can have a positive or negative value that indicates a positive or negative correlation. The co-efficient of determination (r squared) was also calculated and helps explain the percentage of shared variance between two variables. The statistical significance of the correlations was also established at both the 95% and 99% levels, mindful that the statistical significance is questionable for moderate correlations, given the small sample size. However, the statistical significance is reported, but ignored, within the research study and the focus directed at the amount of shared variance (r squared) (Pallant, 2001). A summary table of all correlations and their statistical significance is shown in Table 17.

5. Findings and Discussion

The overall response rate of 34%, while disappointing within the research context, was deemed satisfactory and representative of owner-managers within the retail store network, in that it represented 46% of all stores. The majority (70%) of respondents were single unit owners with an average length of tenure of 7.6 years. Better than average scores were found on clarity of vision, comprehension of core values, clarity of communications and reward systems, with a lower than average perception for network supports. In general, owner managers viewed joining the retail store network as having been good for their business, which was reflected in better than average scores on all mindsets of brand commitment.

Owner managers perceived themselves to have a clear vision of the store brand and core

values of the organization. There was a statistically significant positive correlation found

between the owner manager's perception of clarity of vision, core brand values and their

level of brand commitment. Therefore hypotheses one and two accepted. Perceived

clarity of vision helped explain 57% of the variance in respondents' brand commitment

scores. This perceived clarity of brand vision is encouraging for the retail store network,

given the seminal status of a clear strategic vision within the branding literature

(Abimbola, 2001; Doyle, 2003; De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Inskip, 2004;

Krake, 2005; Rode & Vallaster, 2005; Wong & Merrilees, 2005; Kay, 2006; Rogers &

Blenko, 2006; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2006). However, perception of the vision

construct is not uniform. An above average comprehension of the store brand proposition

contrasts with a below average comprehension of the vision underpinning the brand. One

possible explanation is that at an operational level, owner managers perceive themselves

to understand the store proposition, but at a strategic level, do not fully understand the

vision underpinning it. Alternatively, it may be that perceived clarity of vision is related

to other factors that have not been examined within this quantitative study. Nevertheless,

the strong positive correlation between the perceived clarity of vision among respondents

and their level of brand commitment is indicative of its relevance for corporate brand

building within the retail store network. It also indicates a certain degree of achievement

for the corporate organisation, given the importance attributed to knowledge of the brand

proposition (values, vision, logo and slogan) for brand success (Hankinson & Lomax,

2006; Hankinson et al, 2007). It could be argued that that owner managers in their

perceived understanding of brand vision, have effectively 'bought-in' to the corporate

brand, seen as important for brand building in a services context (Thomson et al, 1999; Hankinson, 2004; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2005). Perception of core brand values helped explain 59% of the variance in respondents' brand commitment scores. The perceived clarity of core values is also encouraging for the organisation, given the its importance for corporate brand building (Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991; Balmer, 1995; Urde, 1999, 2003; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006a, 2006b). It also augurs well for the development of the store brand in the years ahead, and should address fundamental brand building requirements of continuity, consistency and credibility (Urde, 2003). The strong positive correlation between respondent's perceived comprehension of core brand values and their level of brand commitment is indicative of their importance to corporate brand building.

There was statistically significant congruency between the respondents' perception of their own business philosophy and core values underpinning the store brand (r=0.709, n= 23, p<0.01). Therefore, hypothesis three is accepted. The need for 'like-minded people' within the retail network of stores to build a coherent and consistent brand emanates from a view that the business philosophy of the founder often defines the core values of the organisation (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Inskip, 2004; Kent & Stone, 2007). While the majority of the owner-managers within the retail store network were either original founders or inherited a family business, the congruency of their personal business philosophy and the core philosophy underpinning the brand has been found to be important for corporate brand building in SME branding studies (Abimbola, 2001; Inskip, 2004; Krake, 2005; Rode & Vallaster, 2005). The strong degree of perceived

congruency found between the business philosophy of the owner-managers and core brand values allied to the low level of perceived dissonance (Van Rekom, 1997) augurs well for the development of the retail store brand in Ireland in line with the view expressed on the importance of congruency of personal values and organizational values (Witt & Rode, 2005).

Owner managers perceived brand communications to be effective, but also perceived that store brand values require regular re-enforcement. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between the respondent's perceived clarity of brand communications and their level of brand commitment (r=0.639, n= 22, p<0.01), and accounted for 41% of the variance in respondents' brand commitment scores. Therefore hypothesis four is accepted. This is encouraging because of the critical importance attributed to effective communications for corporate brand building (Kennedy, 1977; Plummer, 1984; Merrilees and Fry, 2002) and internal branding (Bergstrom et al, 2002). The high correlation between perceived clarity of the store brand proposition and high levels of brand commitment emphasizes the importance of continued re-enforcement of core brand values.

Owner managers acknowledged supports from the corporate group, but perceived a greater need for support in the area of management development and the process of induction for new members. There is also the perception that high performing stores are rewarded within the group. A weak relationship was found between brand commitment and owners' perception of network supports and rewards. While the small correlations

24

might be considered reasonable within a large sample, it is considered poor, given the small sample size. Perceived support from the corporate group for individual stores and perception of rewards accounts for only 16% and 19 per cent of the variance in respondent's brand commitment scores. Therefore while hypotheses five and six are not rejected, they are accepted with reservation given the small sample size. Findings also indicate that owner managers perceive a greater need for general supports from the corporate group for their individual stores. However this perceived need does not appear to strongly influence levels of brand commitment. Previous studies have argued that supports are crucial for corporate brand building and staff commitment (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2002). It could be construed that in moving from a transactional to a relational relationship (Kumar, 1996), that expectations are low and therefore do not significantly affect their overall level of brand commitment. Alternatively, it may be that many of the owners view the relationship with the corporate group as simply transactional, while commitment to the store brand has a greater personal dimension and seen as relating to the development of their own stores. Rewards might also be viewed as simply a contractual mechanism to maintain the business relationship (Anderson & Weitz, 1992), and through which the corporate group can secure a greater commitment to the corporate brand (Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2006). While there appears to be a relatively benign view on the reward structure among owner managers, it does not appear to strongly influence the overall level of brand commitment. It could be argued that reward systems are more representative of a transactional relationship, whereas brand commitment is more aligned to the relational end of the buyer-supplier relationship spectrum (Kumar, 1996).

6. Conclusion

The rationale for the current research results from a paucity of academic analysis of the corporate brand construct within both retail and SME literatures (Burt & Sparks, 2002; Roper & Parker, 2006; Abimbola, 2001; Merrilees, 2007), despite a good coverage within the general branding literature. This quantitative study, based on an on-line survey of owner-managers within a retail network, has focused on the potential impact of internal branding activities on brand commitment. Brand commitment was hypothesized as essential for building a strong coherent and consistent corporate brand within a network of previously independent retailers in the Republic of Ireland. This task of brand building was also conceptualized as a process of change in the nature of the retailer/ supplier relationship from transactional to relational, through effective internal branding activities. In general, the strong correlations found between the perceived effectiveness of internal branding activities and level of brand commitment among owner managers within this quantitative study validate the significance of internal branding for corporate brand building within a retail network. Perceived clarity of vision, core values and brand communications were highly correlated with higher levels of brand commitment, while lack of perceived support for business development and adequate reward systems were potential inhibitors. While this paper has indicated a significant role for internal branding activities on the development of brand commitment within a retail SME network, future research should explore in greater depth the nature of brand commitment and address the fundamental question as to what builds or inhibits brand commitment within such a network of previously independent retailers. Issues that arise from the current research, include the requisite supports for building commitment, the impact of rewards and the

nature of effective iterative communication processes for a developing vision and core values. This would allow a greater understanding of the process of transformation to a relational store-supplier relationship for the purpose of retail store brand building within a retail network of previously independent retailers.

References

Aaker, D.A. (2004), 'Leveraging the corporate brand', *California Management Review,* Vol.46, No.3, Spring, pp.6-18.

Abimbola, T. (2001), 'Branding as a competitive strategy for demand management in SMEs', *Journal of Research in Marketing & Entrepreneurship,* Vol.3, No.2, pp97-106.

Ahmed, P.K. & Rafiq, M. (2003), ' Internal Marketing issues and challenges', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol.37, No.9, pp1177-1186.

Allen, N.J. & Meyer, J.P. (1990) 'The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organisation', *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol.63, pp.1-18.

Allen, N.J. & Meyer, J.P. (1996) 'Affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organisation: An examination of construct validity ', *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol.49, pp.252-276.

Anderson, E., & Weitz, B. (1992), 'The use of pledges to build and sustain commitment in distribution channels, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol.29, No.1, pp.18-34.

Bachmann, D.P., Elfrink, J. & Vazzana, G. (2000), 'E-mail and snail mail face off in rematch', *Marketing Research*, Vol.11, No.4, pp.10. Winter 1999/Spring 2000.

Balmer, J.M.T. (1995), 'Corporate branding and connoisseurship', *Journal of General Management*, No. 21, Autumn, pp.21-46.

Balmer, J.M.T. (1998), 'Corporate identity and the advent of corporate marketing', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.14, pp.963-996.

Balmer, J.M.T. (2001), 'Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing-seeing through the fog', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35, No.3/4, pp.248-291.

Balmer, J.M.T. (2005), 'Values, Promise and Behaviour: The Corporate Brand Triumvarite?, *Thexis*, Vol. 22, No.1, pp.13-17.

Balmer, J.M.T.& Wilkinson, A. (1991), 'Building Societies, change, strategy and corporate identity', *Journal of General Management*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.20-33

Bansal, H., Irving, G. & Taylor, S. (2004), 'A three-component model of customer commitment to service providers, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol.32, No.3, pp.234-250.

Becker, H.S. (1960), Notes on the concept of commitment', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.66, pp.32-42.

Bergstrom, A., Blumenthal, D. & Crothers, S. (2002), 'Why Internal Branding Matters: The case of Saab', *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol.5, Nos2/3, pp133-142

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003), *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press

Burman, C. & Zeplin, S. (2005), 'Building brand commitment: a behavioural approach to internal brand management', *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol.12, No.4, pp.279-300.

Burt, S.L. & Sparks, L. (2002), 'Corporate Branding, Retailing, and Retail Internationalisation', *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol.5, Nos2/3, pp194-212

Chang, E. (1999), 'Career commitment as a complex moderator of organizational commitment and turnover intention', *Human Relations*, Vol.52, Issue 10, pp.1257-1278.

Cho, H. & La Rose, R. (1999), 'Privacy Issues in Internet Surveys', *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol.17, No.4, pp.421-434.

Cleaver, C. (1999), 'Brands as the catalyst', *Journal of Brand Management,* Vol.6, No.5, pp.309-312.

Collins, J.C & Porras, J. I. (1991), 'Organisational Vision and Visionary Organisations', *California Management Review*, Fall, pp.30-52.

Cronbach, L.J. (1951), 'Co-efficient alpha and the internal structure of tests', *Psychometrika*, Vol.16, No.3, September, pp.297-333.

Daffey, A. & Abratt. R. (2002), 'Corporate branding in a banking environment', *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol.7, No.2, pp.87-91

De Chernatony, L. (2006), *From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation*, 2nd Ed.,Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford

De Chernatony, L & Dall'Olmo Riley, F. (1999), 'Experts' views about defining services brands and the principles of services branding', *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.46, No.2, pp.181-192.

De Chernatony, L & Segal-Horn, S. (2003), 'The criteria for successful services brands', *European Journal of Marketing,* Vol.37, No.7/8, pp1095-1118

De Chernatony, L., Drury, S. & Segal-Horn, S. (2003), 'Building a Services Brand: Stages, People and Orientations', *The Services Industries Journal*, Vol.23, No.3, pp1-21.

Doyle, E. (2003), 'A study of entrepreneurial brand building in the manufacturing sector in the UK', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vo.12, No.2, pp.79-93.

Einwiller, S. & Will, M. (2002), 'Towards an integrated approach to corporate branding- an empirical study', *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol.7, No.2, pp.100-109.

Foreman, S. & Money, A. (1995), 'Internal Marketing- concepts measurement and application', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.11, Issue 8, pp.755-768.

Fullerton, G. (2005), 'The impact of brand commitment on loyalty to retail service brands', *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, Vol.22, No.2, pp.97-110.

Gilliland, D. & Bello, D. (2002), 'The two sides of attitudinal commitment: The effect of calculative and loyalty commitment on enforcement mechanisms in distribution channels', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol.30, No.1, pp.24-43.

Gruen, T., Summers, J, & Acito, F. (2000), 'Relationship Marketing Activities, commitment and membership behaviors in professional associations', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.64, No.3, pp.34-49.

Hall, D.T., Schneider, B. & Nygren, H.T. (1970), 'Personal factors in organizational identification', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 15, pp.176-190.

Hankinson, P. (2004), 'The internal brand in leading UK charities', *Journal of Product and Brand Management,* Vol.13, No.2, pp84-93

Hankinson, P. & Lomax, W. (2006), 'The effects of re-branding large UK charities on staff, knowledge and behaviour', *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing,* Vol.11, No.3, pp193-207

Hankinson, P., Lomax, W. & Hand, C. (2007), 'The time factor in re-branding organizations: its effects on staff knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in UK charities', *Journal of Product and Brand Management,* Vol.16, No.4, pp236-246

Harris, F. & de Chernatony, L. (2001), 'Corporate branding and corporate brand performance', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35, No. 3/4, pp.441-456

Harris, L.C. & Ogbonna, E. (2000), 'The responses of front-line employees to market oriented culture change', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34, No's 3/4, pp.318-340

Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (1997), 'Relations between organizational culture, identity and image', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31, No's 5/6, pp.441-456.

Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2001), 'Are the strategic stars aligned for your corporate brand', *Harvard Business Review,* Feb, pp.128-134

Ind, N. (1997), *The Corporate Brand,* Macmillan Business

Inskip, I. (2004), 'Corporate branding for small to medium-sized businesses-A missed opp.ortunity or an indulgence', *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol.11, No.5, pp.358-365.

Jacobs, R. (2003), 'Turn employees into Brand Ambassadors', *Bank Marketing*, Vol.35, No.3, April, pp.22-26.

Kanter, R.M. (1968), 'Commitment and social organisations: A study of commitment mechanisms in utopian communities', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.33, pp.499-517.

Kapferer, J.N. (1997), *Strategic Brand Management*, Kogan-Page, London.

Kay, M.K. (2006), 'Strong brands and corporate brands', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40, No.7/8, pp.742-760.

Kennedy, S.H. (1977), 'Nurturing Corporate Image', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol.11, No.3, pp.120-164.

Kent, T. & Stone, D. (2007), 'The Body Shop and the role of design in retail branding', *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 35, No.7, pp.531-543.

Knox, S, & Bickerton, D. (2003), 'The six conventions of corporate branding', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 37, No.7/8, pp.998-1016.

Krake, F.B.J.M. (2005), 'Successful Brand Management in SMEs: a new theory and practical hints', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol.14, No.4, pp.228-238.

Kumar, N. (1996), 'The power of trust in Manufacturer-Retailer Relationships', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol.74, No.6, pp.92-106.

Lings, I.N. (1999), 'Balancing internal and external Market orientations', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 15, pp.239-263.

Lomax, W. & Mador, M. (2006), 'Corporate re-branding : From normative models to knowledge management', *Brand Management*, Vol. 14, Nos.1/2, pp.82-95, Sept-Nov.

Macrae, C. (1996), *The Brand Chartering Handbook*, EIU/Addison-Wesley, Harlow.

Macrae, C. (1999), 'Brand Reality Editorial', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 15, Issue 1-3, pp.1-24.

Mahnert, K.F. & Torres, A.M. (2007), 'The Brand Inside: The Factors of Success and Failure in Internal Branding', *Irish Marketing Review*, Vol.19, No.1/2, pp.54-63.

Markwick, N. & Fill, C. (1997), 'Towards a framework for managing corporate identity', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol.31, No.5/6, pp.396-409.

McAlexander, J.H., Schouten, J.W. & Koenig, H.F. (2002), 'Building Brand Community', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.66, No.1, pp.38-54.

McDonald, H. & Adam, S. (2003), 'A comparison of on-line and postal data collection methods in marketing research', *Market Intelligence & Planning*, Vol.21, No.2, pp.85-95.

Mehta, R. & Sivades, E. (1995), 'Comparing response rates and response content in mail versus electronic mail surveys', *Journal of the Market Research Society*, Vol.37, No.4, pp.429-440. October.

Merrilees, B. & Fry, ML. (2002) 'Corporate Branding: A framework for e-tailers', *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol. 5, No's.2/3, pp.213-225.

Merrilees, B. (2007), 'A theory of brand-led SME new venture development', *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol.10, No.4, pp.403-415.

Meyer, D.P., Stanley, D.J., Herscovitch, L. & Topolnytsky, L. (2002), 'Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment to the Organisation: A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences', *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, No.61, pp.20-52.

Meyer, J.P., Allen, N.J. & Gellatly, I.R. (1990), 'Affective and Continuance Commitment to the Organisation: Evaluation of Measures and analysis of concurrent and time-lagged relations', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 75, pp.710-720.

Meyer, J.P. & Allen, N.J. (1997), Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, research and application, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Meyer, J.P. & Allen, N.J. (1991), 'A three component conceptualization of organizational commitment', *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 1, pp.61-89.

Meyer, J.P. & Allen, N.J. (1984), 'Testing the 'side bet theory' of organizational commitment: some methodological considerations', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 69, pp.372-378.

Mitchell, C. (2002), 'Selling the Brand Inside', *Harvard Business Review*, V0l. 80, No.1, pp.99-105. January.

Morgan, R.M. & Hunt, S.D. (1994), 'The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.58, No.3, pp.20-38, July.

Mowday, R.T., Porter, L.W. & Price, J.L. (1982), *Organisational Linkages: the psychology of commitment, absenteeism and turnover*, Academic Press, SanDiego, CA.

Nguyen, N. & Leblanc, G. (2002), 'Contact personnel, physical environment and the perceived corporate image of intangible services by new clients', *International Journal of Service Industry Management,* Vol.13, No.3, pp.242-262.

O'Reilly, C. & Chatman, J. (1986), 'Organisational Commitment and psychological attachment: the effects of compliance, identification and internalization on pro-social behaviour', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.71, pp.492-499.

O'Reilly, C., Chatman, J. & Caldwell, D.F. (1991), 'People and organizational culture: a profile comparison approach to assessing person organization fit', *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.34, No.3, pp.487-516.

Pallant, J. (2001), *SPSS Survival Manual*, Berkshire, UK., Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education.

Papasolomou, I. & Vrontis, D. (2006a), 'Building corporate branding through internal marketing: the case of the UK retail bank industry', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 15/1, pp.37-47.

Papasolomou, I. & Vrontis, D. (2006b), 'Using internal marketing to ignite the corporate brand: The case of the UK retail bank industry', *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 14, Issue 1/2, pp.177-195.

Plummer, J.T. (1984), 'How personality makes a difference', *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol.23, Dec/Jan, pp.27-31.

Punjaisri, K. & Wilson, A. (2007), 'The role of internal branding in the delivery of employee brand promise', *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol.15, No.1, pp.57-70.

Robinson, S. (1996), 'Trust and breach of the psychological contract', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol.41, pp.574-599.

Rode, V. & Vallaster, C. (2005), 'Corporate Branding for Start-ups: the crucial role for entrepreneurs', *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol.8, No.2, pp.121-135.

Rogers, P. & Blenko, M. (2006), 'The high-performance organization: making good decisions and making them happen', *Handbook of Business Strategy*, pp.133-141.

Roper, S. & Parker, C. (2006), 'Evolution of Branding Theory and its relevance to the independent Retail sector', *The Marketing Review*, 6, PP55-71

Rousseau, D.M. (1989), 'Psychological and implicit contracts in organisations', *Employee Rights & Responsibilities Journal*, Vol.2, pp121-139.

Rousseau, D.M. & Wade-Benzoni, K.A. (1995), 'Changinging individual-organisation attachments', in A.Howard (ed), *The changing nature of work,* pp290-322. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco.

Taylor, H. (2000), 'Doing internet research: Comparing Online survey results with telephone surveys', *International Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol.42, No.1, pp.51-63.

Thomson, K. & Hecker, L.A. (2000), 'The business value of buy-in: How staff understanding and commitment impact on brand and business performance', in Varey, R.J. & Lewis, B.R. (eds), *Internal Marketing: Directions for Management*, Routledge, London, pp.160-172.

Thomson, K., de Chernatony, L., Arganbright, L. & Khan, S. (1999), 'The buy-in benchmark: how staff understanding and commitment impact brand and business performance', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.15, pp.819-835.

Tosti, D.T. & Stotz, R.D. (2001), Brand: Building your brand from the inside out', *Marketing Management*, Vol.10, No.2, July/August, pp.28-33.

Urde, M. (1994), 'Brand Orientation – a strategy for survival', *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Volume 11, No.3, pp.18-32.

Urde, M. (1999), 'Brand Orientation: A mindset for Building Brands into Strategic resources', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Volume 15, pp.117-133.

Urde, M. (2003), 'Core value-based corporate brand building', *European Journal of Marketing*, Volume 37, No. 7/8, pp.1017-1040.

Van Rekom, C.B.M. (1997), 'Deriving an operational measure of corporate identity', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol.31, No.5/6, pp.410-422.

Vallaster, C & de Chernatony, L. (2005), 'Internationalisation of Services Brands: The role of Leadership during the Internal Brand Building Process', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 21, Issue1/2, pp.181-203.

Vallaster, C & de Chernatony, L. (2006), 'Internal brand building and structuration: the role of leadership', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40, No.7/8, pp.761-784.

Weibie, R. & Wallace, J. (1998), 'Cyber Research: the impact of the internet on data collection', *Market Research*, Vol.10, No.3, pp.19-31.

Wiener, Y. (1982), 'Commitment in Organisations: a normative view', *Academy of Management Science*, Vol.7, pp.418-428.

Wilson, A. & Laskey, N. (2003), 'Internet based marketing research: a serious alternative to traditional research methods?, *Market Intelligence & Planning*, Vol.21, No.2, pp.79-84.

Witt, P. & Rode, V. (2005), 'Corporate Brand Building in Start-ups', Journal of Enterprising Culture, Vol.13, No.3, pp.273-294.

Wong, H.W. & Merrilees, B. (2005), 'A brand orientation typology for SMEs: a case research app.roach', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 14, No 3, pp.155-162.

Wong, V. & Saunders, J. (1993), 'Business Orientations and corporate success', *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol.1, No.1, March, pp.20-40.

Xie, H.Y. & Boggs, D.J. (2006), 'Corporate Branding versus product branding in emerging markets: a conceptual framework', *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol.24, No.4, pp.347-364.

Appendix A

Internal Branding Scale

Vision
VIS1 The xxxxx store brand offers previously independent owner-managers a vision they can believe in (+)
VIS 2 I have a clear appreciation of the xxxxxx store unique brand proposition (+)
VIS 3 I do not have a clear vision for the future development of the xxxxxx Store Brand (-)

Core Values
CV1 I do not fully understand the core values of the xxxxx organisation (-)
CV2 The core values of the Expert brand reflect my own personal business philosophy (+)

Internal Brand Communications
BC1 The future of the xxxxx store brand has been effectively communicated to me (+)
BC2 The xxx group communicates the core values of the store brand to owner-managers on an on-going basis (+)
BC3 The uniqueness of the xxx unique store brand proposition has been clearly communicated to me (+)

Network Supports
NS1As owner-managers, we receive help from the xxxx group to perform more successfully (+)
NS2 The xxxxx Group emphasises knowledge of the store brand proposition for owner-managers (+)
NS3 The xxxxx Group places considerable emphasis on management development (+)
NS4 New members stores undergo a beneficial induction programme on joining the xxxx Group (+)

Network Rewards
NR1 The xxxxxx Group's reward systems encourages store owners to work together (+)
NR2 The xxxxx group uses data gathered from owner-managers (all stores) to improve the store brand proposition for all members (+)
NR3 High performing stores are rewarded within the xxxxxx Group (+)

Brand Commitment Scale

Normative Commitment
NC1 My business has grown as a result of joining the xxxxxx group of stores (+)
NC2 Things were better when I operated as a totally independent retailer (-)
NC3 My business would not have survived without joining the xxxxxxx Group (+)
NC4 I would prefer to operate independently of the xxxxx group if it was a practical business option for me (-)
NC5 If I was approached by another retail group, I would be tempted to leave the xxxxx group of stores (-)
NC6 The xxxxxx Group has been good for my business (+)

Continuance Commitment
CC1 I have spent a lot of time and effort building up my business as an xxxxxx store (+)
CC2 I will stay within the xxxxxx group as long as it benefits my business (+)
CC3 It would be too costly for me to withdraw from the xxxxxx group of stores (-)
CC4 Right now, staying with the xxxx group is a matter of necessity rather than desire (-)

Affective Commitment
AC1 I am very happy to develop my business as an xxxxx store (+)
AC2 I believe that the xxxxx brand is an exciting store brand proposition(+)
AC3 I do not feel emotionally attached to the xxxxxx store brand.(-)
AC4 The xxxx brand has a great deal of personal meaning to me (+)

Seven point Likert type scale (1= Strongly Agree ….. 7= Strongly disagree) used

Appendix 2 Summary Table of Correlations

	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Coefficient of Determination (r2)	Sig. level
Total Internal Branding/ Total Brand Commitment	.695	0.4830	0.01 (2-tailed)
Perceived Clarity of Vision/ Brand Commitment	0.758	0.5745	0.01 (2-tailed)
Perceived Clarity of Core Values/ Brand Commitment	0.769	0.5913	0.01 (2-tailed)
Perceived Clarity of Brand Communications/ Brand Commitment	0.639	0.4083	0.01 (2-tailed)
Perceived Support for Development/ Brand Commitment	0.1576	0.397	NS
Perceived Reward Systems/ Brand Commitment	0.437	0.1909	0.01 (2-tailed)

Figure 1 The proposed Model (The Impact of Internal Branding on Brand Commitment)