

How Internal Employer Branding Fosters Brand Ambassadorship Through Communication Clarity and Identification: The Moderating Role of Hybrid Work

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Bachelor of Science

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Purpose/Motivation: Employees are increasingly expected to contribute to how organizations are represented as employers by voluntarily communicating and representing employer-related meanings toward internal and external audiences (Morhart et al., 2009; Mutter, 2025). While employee brand ambassadorship is recognized as a strategically relevant form of voluntary behavior, less is known about the perceptual and identity-based processes through which internal employer branding fosters such behavior, particularly under hybrid work conditions (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Theurer et al., 2018). This thesis develops a theory-driven conceptual model explaining how internal employer branding fosters employee brand ambassadorship through communication clarity and Organizational Identification (OI), and how the relationship between internal employer branding and communication clarity is moderated by hybrid work.

Theories/Hypotheses: The thesis integrates Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) with the Human Resource Management (HRM) system strength framework (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Communication clarity is conceptualized as a perceptual mechanism capturing employees' shared perceptions of the interpretability, coherence, alignment, and temporal stability of employer-related messages. OI represents the central motivational mechanism through which shared interpretations become internalized and are translated into employee brand ambassadorship as a form of identity enactment. Hybrid work is conceptualized as a contextual boundary condition shaping the communication context in which internal employer branding unfolds. Four propositions are derived concerning the relationships between internal employer branding, communication clarity, OI, employee brand ambassadorship, and hybrid work.

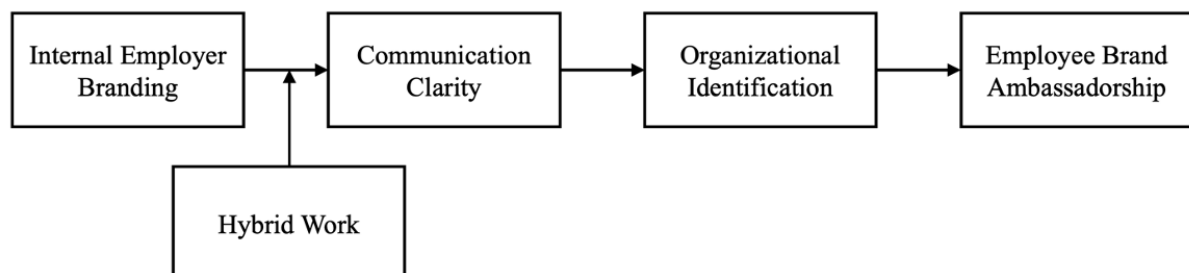


Figure 1. *Overview of the conceptual model*

Approach/Methodology: This is a conceptual thesis. Building on construct clarifications of internal employer branding, communication clarity, OI, employee brand ambassadorship, and hybrid work, a theory-driven sequential process model is developed through an integrative literature-based argumentation grounded in SIT and the HRM system strength framework.

Findings/Propositions: The proposed model conceptualizes employee brand ambassadorship as the outcome of a sequential meaning-based process. Internal employer branding is expected to foster communication clarity by aligning employer-related signals across HRM practices and internal communication channels. Communication clarity provides the interpretive foundation for OI by enabling shared interpretations of organizational values and identity cues. OI functions as the central motivational mechanism through which shared interpretations are translated into employee brand ambassadorship as a form of identity enactment. Hybrid work is theorized to strengthen the relationship between internal employer branding and communication clarity because reduced opportunities for informal interaction increase employees' dependence on formally communicated and consistently enacted employer-related signals.

Research Limitations: The proposed model is conceptual and has not been empirically tested. Consequently, no conclusions can be drawn regarding causal effects, effect sizes, or the relative importance of the proposed relationships. The model adopts a linear process perspective, focuses on perceptual mechanisms, and theorizes hybrid work only as a moderator of the relationship between internal employer branding and communication clarity.

Research Implications: The thesis contributes to internal employer branding research by specifying communication clarity as a perceptual mechanism linking internal employer branding to OI. It extends OI research by explaining how communication clarity enables organizational identity cues to become interpretable and identity-relevant. It further contributes to employee brand ambassadorship research by explaining ambassadorship as an outcome of identification-based processes rather than as a direct response to employer branding initiatives. Finally, it identifies hybrid work as a contextual boundary condition shaping the relationship between internal employer branding and communication clarity.

Practical Implications: Organizations should treat internal employer branding as an ongoing organizational process rather than as isolated communication initiatives. Employer-related messages should be communicated coherently and consistently across HRM practices and internal communication channels, with emphasis on interpretability rather than communication volume. Because employee brand ambassadorship is theorized to emerge

from OI rather than from formal advocacy expectations or incentives, organizations should focus on fostering employees' sense of belonging and value alignment. In hybrid work contexts, where opportunities for informal clarification are reduced, the clarity and consistency of formally communicated employer-related signals become especially important.

Contribution: This thesis develops an integrated, process-based account of how internal employer branding fosters employee brand ambassadorship under hybrid work conditions. By combining SIT and the HRM system strength framework, the model identifies communication clarity as a central perceptual mechanism, OI as a central motivational mechanism, and hybrid work as a contextual boundary condition shaping the first stage of the process. It thereby explains how employer-related meanings are structured, interpreted, internalized, and enacted by employees.

Paper type: conceptual

Further readings:

- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. A. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), 20–39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258189>
- Bartel, C. A., Wrzesniewski, A., & Wiesenfeld, B. M. (2012). Knowing where you stand: Physical isolation, perceived respect, and organizational identification among virtual employees. *Organization Science*, 23(3), 743–757. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1110.0661>
- Bowen, D. E., & Ostroff, C. (2004). Understanding HRM–firm performance linkages: The role of the “strength” of the HRM system. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(2), 203–221. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159029>
- Lievens, F., & Slaughter, J. E. (2016). Employer image and employer branding: What we know and what we need to know. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3, 407–440. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-041015-062501>
- Morhart, F. M., Herzog, W., & Tomczak, T. (2009). Brand-specific leadership: Turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 122–142. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.122>