

Leveraging Organisational Culture for Employee-based Brand Equity in a South African Hotel Brand

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Abstract

The tourism industry has become more competitive with recent developments in information technology. Consensus on the role played by organisational culture in firm performance and sustainable competitive edge is well established across industries, including hospitality. In the tourism sector, brand management is considered strategic since it is able to position a firm favourably in the eyes of its stakeholders, including customers and employees. This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from 165 hotel employees in and around Johannesburg. Structural equation modelling using the Smart PLS programme was carried out for data analysis. The results of the study found that all four dimensions of organisational culture, namely involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission, were positively and significantly related to employee-based brand equity. The results of the study offers evidence-based recommendations to prioritise employee-based brand equity and to leverage organisational culture to attain this brand equity.

Keywords: Involvement, consistency, adaptability, mission, employee-based brand equity

Introduction

Over and above the positive socio-economic impact of the hospitality and tourism industry, in many economies the industry has been acknowledged as one with the potential to grow faster than other industries (Glen & Mearns, 2018; Liu & Chou, 2016). The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the largest and most diversified industries in the world. It includes tour operators, accommodation providers, transport, caterers, leisure activities and entertainment (Jeganathan & Srinivasulu, 2014). Its sheer diversity and size gives the industry a massive employment generation capacity, making the human resource dimension, characterised by high levels of human involvement in the development and delivery of hospitality and tourism



services, to be one of the key success factors for the industry (Baum, 2006; Jeganathan & Srinivasulu, 2014).

The industry is also highly competitive and fluid, forcing other players such as hotels to reconsider how they should utilise their tangible and intangible resources proficiently so they can improve their financial performance and maintain competitive advantage (Marais, du Plessis & Saayman, 2017; Wong, Tseng, Chang & Phau, 2017). Sadly, such a competitive and fluid environment in the industry increases the level of job insecurity among employees (Lin et al., 2018). The challenge for employers in the industry is to ensure that employees deliver services to the best of their ability. In this regard, Mutsikiwa, Zvavahera and Pasipanodya (2020) hold that service delivery in the hospitality and tourism industry is a function of the interaction between the employees and customers. In fact, this employee-customer interaction, which is likely to result in brand loyalty, has been described as one of the most important themes of branding theory (Al-Hawary, 2013; Sahin et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, every business would like its customers to have a good experience of the product sold or service rendered. According to Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet (2011), an experience is regarded from the brand management point of view ‘as the impression that consumers form in their minds after encountering a brand offer.’ Interestingly, research has found an association between brand experience and brand equity (Beig and Nika, 2019). Brand equity can be defined as a value of a brand implanted in a customer's mind and emerged in his or her perceptions and expectations (Davcik & Sharma, 2015). The focus of this article, though, is not on the customer brand equity but on the employee-based brand (EBBE), which helps the hotel brand to attain a competitive edge by positioning it in the minds of employees, thereby motivating them to deliver the brand promise to customers. According to King and Grace (2009), EBBE can be defined as the effect that brand knowledge has on an employee's response to their work environment, and that it requires the translation of the brand identity into meaningful roles and responsibilities by the employee.

In the hospitality industry, brand management can be a strategic tool with the potential to position a firm well in the eyes of its stakeholders, such as customers and employees (Keller, 2013). However, it has been empirically confirmed in the tourism literature that destination branding, through the use of images alone, is not adequate in increasing the call for other branding alternatives (Palmer, Koenig-Lewis & Jones, 2013). The general understanding in management literature is that brands do not grow by mere chance, but result from the conscious effort on the part of the firm and how it relates with stakeholders (Keller, 2011). For example, in their study based in the hospitality industry, Fisher and Pooe (2019) concluded that organisational support is important for employee brand trust. Since contemporary corporate bodies and organisations are progressively turning their attention to long term survival through employees, attention should be given to the benefits that can be derived from organisational culture in relation to employee-based brand equity (EBBE). Since employees are generally regarded as valuable assets to an organisation, it is important to recognise that employees can also serve to build strong brands, effectively becoming brand ambassadors (Garas, Mahran & Mohamed, 2018). As a result, brand equity has become a strategic asset that firms need to nurture, especially in the services sector (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2017; Santiago, 2019).

At the same, there has been a growing consensus on the role that organisational culture plays in improving firm performance and sustainable competitive edge. Culture has become one of the largely investigated notions in organisational theory (Ogbonna & Harris, 2015) primarily due to the vital role it plays in employee attitudes and behaviors as well as customer experience and satisfaction (Miller, Devlin, Buys & Donoghue, 2019). The social context in which members of the firm operate has a direct influence on critical organisational outcomes both for members themselves and the organisation at large (Gillespie, Denison, Haaland,



Smerek & Neale, 2008). Being central to organisational effectiveness and firm performance, organisational culture remains an important source of competitive advantage (Denison, 1990; Hartnell, Ou, Kinicki, Choi & Karam, 2019). Also important for the growth of the firm's brand are the knowledge, experience and insights that employees bring along to the firm (Hernández-Díaz, Calderon-Abreu, Amador-Dumois & Córdova-Claudio, 2017). The skills and competencies considered important for the hospitality and tourism industry include interpersonal skills, ability to communicate with visitors, management of customers' expectations and performance standards as well as culture-specific knowledge about the country (Mutsikiwa et al., 2020; Tesone & Ricci, 2005).

Despite its significance, studies on how organisational culture influences employee commitment to a brand and their brand-aligned behavior remain scant, especially in an emerging economy context. Given this apparent void, this study, based in the hospitality industry aims to contribute to the discourse. Specifically, this is achieved by exploring the influence of organisational culture dimensions as propounded by the Denison (1990) model of the four dimensions of organisational culture, namely adaptability, consistency, involvement, and mission, on EBBE.

The hospitality and tourism industry in South Africa

The significant contribution of the hospitality and tourism industry to the economy is well established and beyond dispute (Chang et al., 2010; Sharma, 2018; World Trade Organization, 2012). The hospitality and tourism industry has also been acknowledged for its contribution to the economic and environmental wellbeing of nations as well as the quality of life of citizens (Gursoy, Ouyang, Nunkoo, & Wei, 2018; Numanoğlu & Güçer, 2018). The South African economy has long been regarded as one of the biggest and most diversified economies in Africa and its tourism sector has over time contributed significantly to the growth of the economy (Bah & Azam, 2017). Continued gradual economic growth is associated with improved standards of living and increased consumption of hotel services leading to tourism development (Xie, Guan & Huan, 2019). Tourism contributes significantly to both the labour market and gross domestic product (GDP) more than any other industry, making it an excellent alternative for poverty alleviation (Glen & Mearns, 2018; Chidakel, Eb & Child, 2020; Maziriri & Chivandi, 2020). It is estimated that small accommodation businesses alone account for approximately 22% of all the tourism jobs (Booyens, 2020; Mofokeng, Giampiccoli & Jugmohan, 2018). Although South Africa has remained the first choice tourist destination owing to its cultural diversity, challenges such as economic progress, poverty, unemployment and inequalities are slowing progress in the tourism sector (Nyawo & Mashau, 2019). There is therefore a need for government to come up with policies, strategies and plans to promote the uptake of sustainable business practices, employment opportunities and economic growth (van der Bank & van der Bank, 2016). That said, there has been some significant inroads to addressing the challenges and imbalances within the tourism sector in South Africa (Glen & Mearns, 2020).

Grounding theory

This study is grounded on the social identity theory (SIT). The SIT has over time been applied in several contexts from consumer psychology (Dimofte, Goodstein, & Brumbaugh, 2015), to mass communication (McKinely, Mastro, & Warber, 2014), to sports teams-fans relationship (Ambrose & Schnitzlein, 2017). Several tourism scholars have also utilised the SIT as their main theoretical framework in their studies (Gursoy, Boğan, Dedeoğlu & Çalışkan, 2019; Nath & Saha, 2017). Proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), SIT is one of the foundational theories in social psychology that has been used to explain the group cognitive, interactive, and social perspectives. Social identity relates to that part of one's self-concept stemming from the social



group or groups one belongs to, coupled with the value and emotional meaning attached to belonging to a group (Tajfel, 1978). It is that part of the self-identity that is largely derived from group membership (Scheepers & Derks, 2016).

The SIT postulates that as a means of defining self-identity and a sense of belonging individuals tend to identify and associate themselves with various social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to the theory, and individual sense of self-concept is based on the value and significance the individual places on group membership (Turner & Oakes, 1986). As such, human beings develop perceived social identity based on what the groups they belong to exhibit, in relation to social aspects like race, ethnicity, gender or political party (Chan, 2016). Social identity is such an important construct as it helps the understanding of how culture and social identity of residents influence attitudes and experiences (Sharpley, 2014). The SIT stresses that a person's sense of identity with a particular group encourages their commitment to a brand community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). This is significant to the current study, which examines the influence of organisational culture on EBBE within a tourism organisation. It is a theory that can be used to explain the motifs behind the employees' decisions to commit to a brand. Therefore, understanding this theory would potentially benefit practitioners in the tourism industry. In addition, understanding the propositions of the SIT enhances the ability to evaluate the role that organisational culture play in influencing employee-based brand equity. Thus, the SIT provides a valuable and effective framework for understanding the application of organisational culture (OC) dimensions on employee based brand equity. The OC dimensions and EBBE are discussed next.

Culture and social identity

Culture is an all-permeating construct in human existence, and as such has remained problematic to define or measure (Fellows & Liu, 2013). Culture has been acknowledged as both a predictor and outcome of social identity (Smaldino, 2019). Social identity also provides the linkage between the depiction of one's self and the structure and cultural processes of social groups within which the self is rooted. It is believed that a person gains a social identity by referring, conforming and stressing points of similarity with some social group (Palmer et al., 2013). These points of similarity include fundamental beliefs or assumptions, norms and values among groups, which Hofstede (1980) define as culture. Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012) recognise the significance of identity and argue that the decisions and choices that individuals make are usually influenced by and congruent with their social identity. Consequently, the groups from which the derive their identity are influenced by existing culture and are a significant source of attitudes, pride and a basis for decision making (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004).

Organisational culture

Emerging from the notion of culture is the organisational culture dimension, a concept which first emerged in the 1970s and 1980s through the work of Hofstede (1980). Ever since it has become both an influential and controversial concept in management research and practice. In line with the definition of culture, organisational culture describes the values, norms and assumptions shared within an organisation (Schneider, Gonzalez-Roma, Ostroff & West, 2017). As such, organisational culture is entrenched in the national culture and in certain instances such as for international organisations, can be entrenched in more than one national culture (Fellows & Liu, 2013). Organisational culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviors of organisational employees that help them understand organisational functioning (Deshpande & Webster, 1989). Each organisation has a unique 'climate', and this means that



understanding organisational culture is important for each organisation as it seeks to gain superiority through new product performance (Xie, Wu, Xie, Yu & Wang, 2019). As such, organisations with a positive cultural support are better positioned to gain positive results in terms of employees' attitude, perception, principled behavior, ethics, and job satisfaction and thus position an organisation for improved overall long term organisational performance and competitiveness (Wahyuningsih, Sudiro & Troena, 2019). According to Kotrba et al. (2011), organisational culture has two foci, one being external and the other being internal. The adaptability and mission dimensions represent an external focus while the involvement and consistency dimensions represent the internal focus. At the same time, the mission and consistency dimensions together represent a focus on stability while adaptability and involvement together characterise the organisation's degree of flexibility. As indicated earlier, Denison (1990) has identified the four main dimensions of organisational culture as involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission.

Involvement

This dimension of organisational culture, namely involvement, relates to the extent to which employees feel a sense of commitment and belonging including the extent to which they feel they have a say into decisions that affect their work (Suhartanto, Dean, Nansuri & Triyuni, 2018). Involvement was initially introduced in the pioneering work of Sherif and Cantril (1947) and subsequently defined by Zaichkowsky (1985) as the perceived personal relevance of an object to the individual's needs, values, interests and goals. Involvement is also about the extent of employee participation in the organisational processes, or are engaged in the thinking and decision-making process (Mu, Bossink & Vinig, 2018; Zheng, Yang & McLean, 2010). As a construct, involvement has generally been operationalised in social-psychological terms (Rothschild, 1984). It has also been understood as a philosophy embraced by organisations when they provide their employees with a stake in decisions on issues that directly impact their job. Since management is faced with the task of ensuring that there is increased employee involvement, involvement may be experienced either at an individual level or through existing work groups (Croucher, 2010). The key benefit from employee involvement is increased job productivity and this is more effective if employees are empowered and given more responsibilities. Scholarly evidence has proved that employee involvement and commitment is strongly connected with continuous improvement and thus valuable for the firm (Costa, Lispi, Staudacher, Rossini, Kundu & Cifone, 2019). Montani, Boudrias and Pigeon (2020) add that involvement generally increases where the level of trust is high, and there is increased harmony between management and the employees. This study builds on these definitions and seeks to investigate the influence of involvement on EBBE.

Consistency

Consistency relates to the extent of interconnectedness, integration or cohesion of members around the upholding of organisational beliefs, values and norms (Zheng, Yang & McLean, 2010). It is a construct that defines the locus of consensual coordination, governance support and integration around the firm's core values (Yang, Lütge & Yang, 2019). According to Etzioni (1975) there are three types of involvement namely moral, calculative, and alienative. Employees in the tourism sector are said to be morally involved when they fully identify with organisation's goals, calculatively involved when they observe an exchange arrangement with the organisation, and alienatively involved if they have a negative attachment to the organisation and are still with the organisation because of lack alternatives. It is thus this dimension that will assist the organisations to constantly interpret new information in a manner that will improve firm performance and survival chances. It is believed that transparency and



honesty from the organisation's management are key in fostering consistency and that if employees are informed about corporate values they are likely to act positively. Organisations with such characteristics tend to be effective as employees exhibit consistency, coordination and unity in their behaviour (Mujeeb, Masood & Ahmad, 2011). Givens (2012) has argued that consistency is vital for the creation of a strong organisational culture that improves employees' performance in an organisation. Consistency thus helps managers to create a system that they need to drive the organisation in the direction they deem appropriate.

Adaptability

One of the greatest challenges facing organisations relates to how they are positioned so that they can adapt to ever-changing competitive environments (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). In this rapidly changing economic, social, and technological environment, characterised by complexity and diversity, individual and organisational adaptability becomes more and more imperative (Ohme & Zacher, 2015). According to Pulakos Arad, Donovan and Plamondon (2000) adaptability refers to one's propensity to creatively deal with situations and solve problems ingeniously. It is the readiness and capacity to alter behaviors in the face of changing environments (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). In the organisational context, adaptability thus entails the magnitude of the firm's aptitude to alter behaviors, structures, and systems within itself, in order to endure in the wake of environmental dynamism (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). An adaptable organisation is willing to modify its existing systems to accommodate the necessary changes, which may include improving internal organisational foundations, streamlining processes and departments in response (Mousavi, Hosseini & Hassanpour, 2015). An adaptable organisational culture will also enable an organisation to quickly move and seize new opportunities in the market (Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012). Since employees also continuously face new demands, diverse surroundings and work groups, they need to be in a more flexible and adaptable mode.

Mission

The final organisational culture dimension is the mission, which relates to the extent to which a firm has a clear direction and purpose. The mission also involves the extent to which all within the organisation embrace the organisation's values, purpose and strategic direction and intent (Yang, Lütge & Yang, 2019). To ensure competitiveness, firms are increasingly obliged to come up with strategies that improve effectiveness and sustainability to achieve superior performance goals (Weerawardena, McDonald, & Sullivan-Mort, 2010). Organisations use mission statements as a strategic tool to communicate their purpose to stakeholders and thus reinforce their legitimacy (Bebegali-Mirabent, Mas-Machuca & Guix, 2019). In today's highly competitive world, most organisations have shifted their focus on their fundamental missions and shared organisational values since these bring about a sense of comfort and purpose to employees, which leads to improved performance (Kang, Kunkel, Columbo, Goodney & Wong, 2019). According to Liu, Chow, Zhang and Huang (2019) when employees possess a greater degree of psychological ownership of organisational goals, they are more likely to perform discretionary work behaviors outside their formal job descriptions, thereby increasing work performance. Organisational mission is therefore important for long term survival and development and forms the foundation upon which the organisation sets the strategic direction that guides decision-making of the organisation.

Employee-based brand equity

Over the past decades, branding has been understood to have a wider scope beyond potential and current consumers, but that other stakeholders such as suppliers, shareholders, communities and employees in particular, have an important role to play. Employees are a critical link between the organisation and its customers, especially when it comes to attending to customer queries. Karatepe, Ozturk and Kim (2019) hold that the employees' attitudes and behaviors can influence performance. King, Grace and Funk (2012) define employee-based brand equity (EBBE) as the employees' positive and productive brand behaviors stemming from the knowledge of the brand and in harmony with the expected behavior of the brand identity. According to Piehler, King, Burmann and Xiong (2016), EBBE describes the manner in which an employee identifies with the employer's brand. Thus EBBE is an outcome of a scenario where employees possess a high level of brand knowledge so as to stimulate positive behaviour which is in line with the organisation's brand identity (Brexendorf & Kernstock, 2007). Employee-based brand equity has been conceptualised as a multifaceted construct made up of brand endorsement, brand allegiance and a brand consistent behaviour (King, Grace & Funk, 2012).

Conceptual model

The following conceptual model is a pictorial representation of the hypothesized relationships.

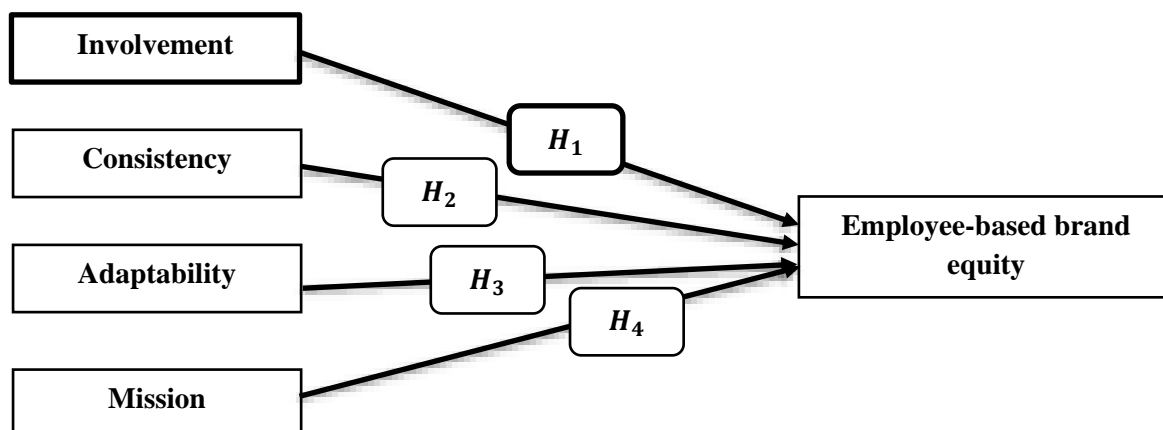


Figure 1: Conceptual model
Source: Authors' compilation

Research hypothesis development

Involvement and employee-based brand equity

It has been acknowledged in literature that employee involvement impacts on the behaviors of individuals and groups within organisations. Empirical evidence suggests that as employees experience a knowledge development chain, this enhances their execution of duties and contribute to the firm's goals (Chen, Genchev, Willis & Griffis, 2019). This knowledge experience is critical because it facilitates the ability of employees to translate their view about the organisation into action and practical insights that cultivate brand-related outcomes. Increased employee involvement in decision making processes empowers the frontline employees in the overall planning process (Kuye & Sulaimon, 2011). As employees become more involved with product development, for instance, they have a stronger attitude concerning the product and consistency will improve such individuals' efficiency and commitment to the activities they do. The more employees contribute to the organisation's decision-making process their more they will have a sense of belonging, and the more likely that they will maintain a long term relationship with the organisation (Zona, Andriani & Abror, 2019). Also,



employee involvement has been significantly and positively associated with the organisation's continuous improvement initiatives (Jurburg, Viles, Tanco & Mateo, 2017). Organisational support and involvement can thus be regarded as a significant factor in advancing employees' brand performance. Building on these arguments, this study makes the following research hypothesis.

H₁: Involvement positively and significantly influences employee-based brand equity.

Consistency and employee-based brand equity

The world is currently experiencing environmental dynamism, and given the challenges associated with these environments, it is imperative for players in the hotel industry to consistently plan and alter strategies in order to stand out and be competitive (Tsang, Lee & Li, 2011). Consistency as a dimension of organisational culture helps employees to determine the best alternative to influence a particular outcome. It is one of the elements of human resource management that is considered vital for increased organisational functionality since it is at the core effective planning and decision making. Consistency in engaging employees in decision making and planning processes will improve their word-of-mouth, consequently influencing their perceptions about the brand image (Tiwari & Lenka, 2019). Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis is made.

H₂: Consistency positively and significantly influences employee-based brand equity.

Adaptability and employee-based brand equity

Employee adaptability relates to the employee's attitude to willingly adjust to the environment and has become an important ingredient for organisational success (Xie & Peng, 2012). With the business world today experiencing increased competition, higher levels of organisational adaptability and unity of purpose are necessary to ensure stability and growth within the tourism sector. Adaptability also allows employees to perceive customised service delivery better leading to increased customer satisfaction (Xie, et al., 2019). It is also expected that because of the unique challenges in the tourism sector, such as long and irregular working hours, weekends and holidays duties and limited career growth opportunities, employees must adapt to the changing job requirements (Chang & Busser, 2020). Such adaptability will assist organisations to address quicker, the customer perceptions and achieve a better quality of service and greater customer satisfaction (Kara, Andaleeb, Turan, & Cabuk, 2013). As such the following hypothesis is posited.

H₃: Adaptability positively and significantly influences employee-based brand equity.

Mission and employee-based brand equity

The organisation's mission relates to the purpose of existence of an organisation, representing the symbolic of expression of the critical organisational activities (Mersland, Nyarko & Szafarz, 2019). According to Matzler, Bailom, Friedrich von den Eichen and Kohler (2013) there are several aspects that organisations should focus on to improve their performance, and these include product and services, branding and marketing. The success of these aspects largely depends on the extent to which the employees comprehend the organisational mission, and are able to implement it with intense passion and determination (Yao, Qiu & Wei, 2019). The hotel industry, being a labour intensive industry, is largely affected by the extent of employee branding initiatives undertaken within the organisation. Buil, Martínez and Matute



(2016) regards employee branding as an important source of sustainable competitive advantage. Given the arguments presented above, the following hypothesis is made.

H₄: Mission positively and significantly influences employee-based brand equity.

Research methodology

This study adopted a quantitative approach and used a cross-section survey research design. This approach and research design were the most appropriate to achieve the study's research objectives since the perceptions of the different categories of hotel employees was needed to determine how organisational culture can be leveraged for EBBE. The primary data was collected by means of questionnaires between August and October 2018 from hotel employees selected from branches of one of South Africa's leading hotel groups in Johannesburg. The hotel group from which respondents were selected ranged between two-star and three-star hotels in Johannesburg.

The sample size was 300 employees within the hotel brand, and this sample was chosen in line with the recommendations of Iacobucci (2010), who recommends a sample of at least 150 for testing structural models. In addition, the number of latent and observed variable in this study led to the decision to choose a sample size of 300 in line with the recommendations of Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham (2006), who emphasise that model complexity and model characteristics should be considered when deciding on the appropriate sample size. In total, 165 questionnaires were returned duly completed and deemed fit to be included for data analysis. This represents a response rate of 55% which is generally considered good. Data was collected by one of the researchers who happen to be employed at one of the hotel branches. Respondents were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that if at any point they felt they wanted to opt out of the study, they were free to do so. In addition, the researchers assured respondents that they would at all material times adhere to the ethical requirements of confidentiality and anonymity. All the respondents were 18yrs and older and were current and active employees, either employed on a fixed term contract or permanent on all levels.

In this study, data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Square (PLS) in SmartPLS (v.3.2.9). Partial least squares is a structural equation modelling (SEM) technique based on path and regression analysis that is increasingly becoming popular in social research (Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell & Gudergan, 2018). This method was chosen for its appropriateness in studies that seek to determine the direction and impact of relationships between. According to Ringle et al. (2018), PLS-SEM is highly appropriate for testing and validating exploratory models and relaxes requirements for the normality and randomness of the variables. Therefore, it is suitable for relatively small data samples as opposed to COV-SEM which requires larger sample sizes. A structured 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire adapted from previously validated instruments was used as a means for primary data collection. The questionnaire was adapted as follows: involvement from Piehler et al. (2016), consistency, adaptability and mission from Umrani, Memon, Samo and Shah (2016). Finally, the EBBE construct was adapted from King and Grace (2010).

Results

Table 1 presents the sample description of the respondents. This study explored the influence of organisational culture on EBBE in a hotel (hospitality) industry. Of the sample of 300 respondents, 165 usable questionnaires were processed for further data analysis. Seventy-seven (77) male respondents accounted for 46.7% of the total respondents while the 88 female respondents accounted for 53.3% of the total respondents. As shown in Table 1, 9% of the



respondents were from the admin and general department, 27.88% from the food and beverage department while housekeeping and the front office represent 29.09% and 33.94% respectively. The work experience was considered an important aspect of the study since, in some ways, it does have a bearing on how employees relate to the organisation.

Table 1: Sample description (n = 165)

		N	%
Gender	Male	77	46.7
	Female	88	53.3
Work Experience (in years)	Less than 5yrs	52	31.51
	5 – 10 years	69	41.82
	11 – 15 years	21	12.73
	Over 15 years	23	13.94
Hotel Department	Admin and general	15	9.09
	Food and beverage	46	27.88
	Housekeeping	48	29.09
	Front office	56	33.94

Source: own research

Reliability and validity tests

Reliability was tested using the Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). As presented in Table 2, all constructs exhibited Cronbach’s Alpha values exceeding 0.7, indicating reliability and internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and 0.6 for CR (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). In addition, convergent validity of the measurement scale was established by checking the loadings of all items as well as the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor.

Table 2: Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Involvement	0,910	0,912	0,514
Consistency	0,901	0,843	0,573
Adaptability	0,966	0,846	0,527
Mission	0,915	0,837	0,547
EBBE	0,982	0,795	0,565

Source: own research

An evaluation of the factor loading presented in Figure 2 below shows that all the item factor loadings exceeded 0.50, which proves convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, validity was measured by looking at the AVE and Table 2 reports the test results. All the AVE values were consistently acceptable, ranging from 0.514 to 0.573. The current study also assessed the discriminant validity of the key variables using the guidelines provided by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The square root of AVE of each construct was used to evaluate the construct discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As Table 2 shows, the square root of AVE was greater than all the inter-construct correlations, indicating that each construct is more highly correlated with its own measure than with any of the other constructs and that the measurement items display acceptable discriminant validity. Table 3 reports the inter-construct correlations.



Table 3: Inter-construct correlations

	Involvement	Consistency	Adaptability	Mission	EBBE
Involvement	1,000				
Consistency	0,633	1,000			
Adaptability	0,624	0,635	1,000		
Mission	0,619	0,712	0,684	1,000	
EBBE	0,676	0,643	0,676	0,569	1,000

Source: own research

Table 3 presents the results of the correlations between the various constructs. The results show all the inter-construct correlations of between 0.569 and 0.712. These inter-construct correlations also reflect discriminant validity. Discriminant validity represents the extent to which a construct is not excessively related to other similar, yet distinctive, constructs (Messick, 1989).

Structural equation estimation

Structural model estimation was carried out using SmartPLS (v.3.2.9) and was meant to test the hypotheses about the relationships among the latent constructs. We developed a hypothesis about how the constructs are related to each other and the results of the structural model estimation and path analysis are presented in Figure 2.

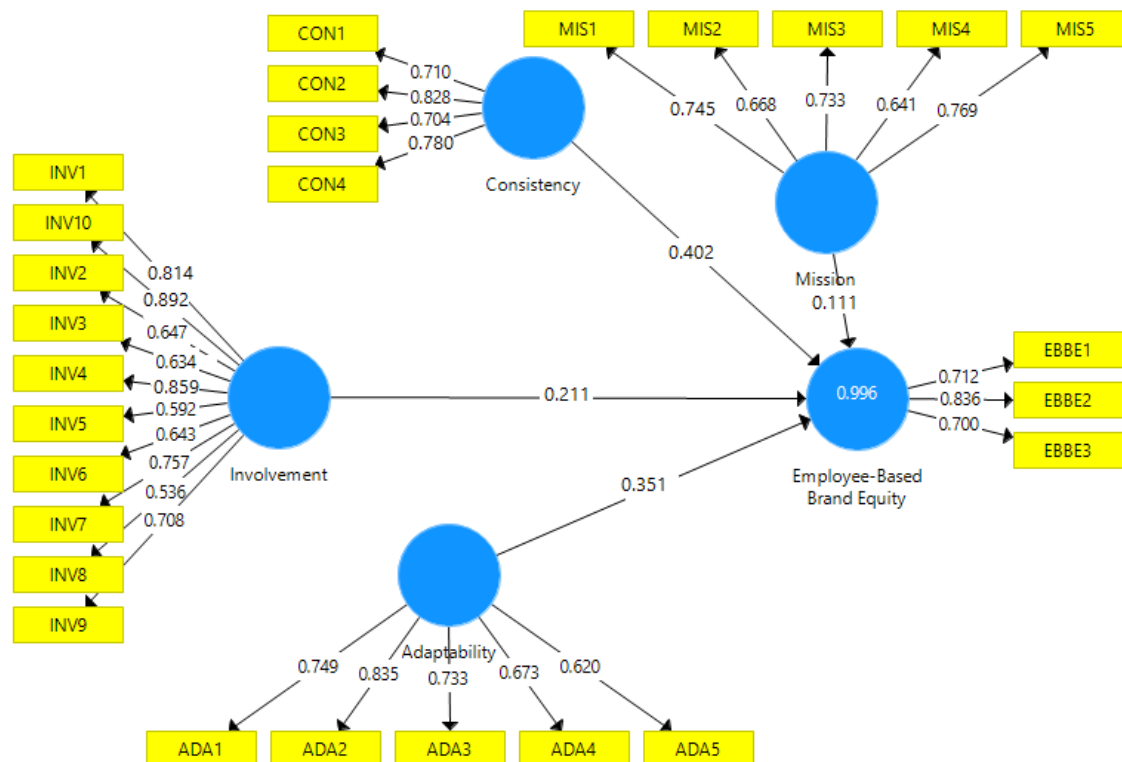


Figure 2: SmartPLS model evaluation result

The results from the study revealed that all the independent variable had statistically significant direct effects EBBE. This implies that when the respondents improve on the predictor variables in question, EBBE will also improve. Hypothesis 1 proposed that there is a



positive and significant relationship between involvement and EBBE. The results indicate that the path coefficient for the relation was $\beta = 0.211$, $p < 0.05$. H2 and H3 also proposed a similar relationship between consistency and EBBE and adaptability and EBBE, and the path coefficients came out as $\beta = .402$, $p < 0.05$. and $\beta = .351$, $p < 0.05$. respectively. Finally, H4 stated that the relationship between mission and EBBE will be a positive and significant one and a coefficient of $\beta = .111$, $p < 0.05$. proves this correct. Taken together, these results demonstrated that the hypothesis proposed in the conceptual model were all supported.

Discussion

Culture has been accepted as a pervasive notion applicable to business aspects like consumption and consumer behavior and has over the years been integrated into these aspects (Mooij & Hofstede, 2011). This study thus endeavored to contribute to knowledge on how organisational culture will influence EBBE, in the context of the hotel industry. The results from this study gives credence to the important role played by EBBE. In particular, the results show how organisational culture reinforces EBBE and how the various elements of organisational culture such as employee involvement, adaptability, consistency and the mission are valued by the employees in the hospitality. Of these four predictor variables, consistency had the greatest impact on EBBE. As presented in the results, consistency had a path coefficient of 0.402, which way above those obtained in the other variables. Involvement, adaptability and mission has path coefficients of 0.211, 0.351 and 0.111. This implies that for tourism industry firms to achieve the greatest impact on EBBE, there is need to focus more on consistency in planning and decision making, as this yields the greatest impact. This however does not discount the impact the other variable had on EBBE as the results indicate that there was positive and significant.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the more employees sense that they are being treated with respect, there is openness and sharing of information, and that their contribution is valued, they more they are likely to pull together in the same direction. According to Yilmaz and Ergun (2008), organisational culture is a significant antecedent of firm effectiveness. These results corroborate well with the findings in existing literature. Nogueira, Santarém and Gomes (2019) who studied EBBE among nonprofit organisations' brands came to conclusion that involvement is a critical component in driving employee driven brand equity. A study by Vito (2020) on the variations of organisational culture and leadership found that a strong organisational mission provides clear performance management guidelines which leads to an attainment of desired outcomes.

Implications and conclusion

This study was grounded on the SIT to develop and empirically test a conceptual model on the antecedents of EBBE in the tourism industry. There are significant theoretical contribution from this study to the subjects of organisational culture and EBBE. By setting involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission at the centre of this enquiry, this study provided empirical support and validation for both the Denison's (1990) model on organisational culture and the social identity theory, complementing existing research in the field management. The study also established that the role of intangible assets such as organisation culture cannot be underestimated.

Beyond the theoretical contribution, this study provides several managerial implications for managers. EBBE has been acknowledged as a significant component in the tourism industry that contributes to improved organisations performance (Wisker & Kwiatek, 2019). From a managerial standpoint, this study implies that for organisations to achieve competitiveness through brand equity, it is important that they focus on organisational culture



dimensions, namely involvement and consistency, adaptability and mission. Therefore, managers should strive to stimulate all employees towards embracing organisational culture dimensions as this in return will enhance EBBE. Managers should also bear in mind that motivating employees to be involved, consistent, adaptable and embrace the firm's purpose of existence will positively improve brand equity, a valuable asset for the organisation. The central implication for managers from this study is that in this dynamic and volatile environment, brand engagement is not only about customers, but also about other organisational stakeholders, particularly employees.

Notwithstanding the contributions flowing from the study, there are also some limitations that can be noted. Firstly the sample size was relatively small and a limited number of question were used to measure the variables, due to time and resource constraints. This limit the accuracy in the generalisation of the results to the entire population and the robustness in model assessment. According to Hair et al. (2006), large sample sizes increase the accuracy of model evaluation tests in structural equation modelling. Secondly, the participants in this study came from different departments and levels of employment within the hotels, and this may have affected their assessment of both organisational culture and EBBE. Secondly, this scope of the current study is limited to the impact of organisational culture, and future studies may extent this scope by incorporating contextual factors like organisational trust and prestige, as well as moderators such as employee characteristics. Having adopted a survey design may have somewhat deprived the study of the richness of the perspectives and views held by the respondents on the matter of organisational culture and EBBE. It is suggested that future research consider the abovementioned limitations since that can only enrich further our understanding of the need for EBBE in the hospitality and tourism industry in South Africa.

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