ENHANCING HOTEL EMPLOYEES' BRAND UNDERSTANDING AND BRAND-BUILDING BEHAVIOR IN CHINA

Ceridwyn King
Temple University
Kevin Kam Fung So
Griffith University

To participate effectively in the present Chinese hotel market, multinational companies must achieve a competitive advantage, which they attain by building the brand. This study promotes employee brand understanding as a precursor to positive brand-building behavior. Results indicate that internally oriented brand activities, especially brand-oriented recruitment, brand-oriented training, and brand-oriented support, exert a significant influence on employees' brand understanding, leading to subsequent exhibition of pro-brand behavior. In developing brand understanding, hotels must take into account the potentially limited knowledge of mainland Chinese employees regarding global hotel brands. The findings suggest that Chinese hotel employees' understanding of multinational hotel groups' brand is critical to successful brand-building behavior.

KEYWORDS: *hotel; internal brand management; employees; China*

Since the opening of the Chinese economy in 1978, there has been a tremendous growth in hotel development, with the number of hotels rising from 137 hotels in 1978 (Pine & Phillips, 2005) to 12,280 star-rated hotels in 2012 (China National Tourism Administration, 2012). This trajectory has been largely fuelled by international investment, with top multinational hotel groups (MHGs) identifying China as their focal investment platform (Guillet, Zhang, & Gao, 2010). In addition to Hilton, Starwood, Hyatt, Kempinski, and Four Seasons, the Accor Hotel Group, Intercontinental Hotel Group, Marriott, and Shangri-la have all joined the Hong Kong Peninsula Hotel Group, the first MHG to operate in China (Guillet et al., 2010). As a result of such foreign investment, the major hotel business formats in China are management contracts and franchises of globally recognized brands (Guillet et al., 2010). Thus, the effective management of these brands, as reflected in organizational marketing and management practices, in the Chinese hotel industry has become of central interest (Zhou, Gao, Yang, & Zhou, 2005).

International hotel companies consistently outperform domestic independent operators in China (Yu & Huimin, 2005), because of their expertise in brand management as reflected in high-standard management skills (Guillet et al., 2010), as well as established brands, marketing, and reservation systems (Heung, Zhang, & Jiang, 2008). Therefore, in an endeavor to reform China's hotel industry from the traditionally poor performance of domestic hotel operations (Yu & Huimin, 2005), internationalization of the industry in China through joint ventures and MHG management contracts is considered a requirement (Chan & Yeung, 2009). However, to realize the benefits of brand affiliation, hotels must have effective brand management practices. In particular, the translation of an MHG's brand values into operational decision making is a prerequisite for successful hotel operation. From this perspective, MHG hotels in China focus on employee issues such as the service concept and culture (Guillet et al., 2010), because for service brands "employees are most likely the most important vehicle in building and communicating brand core values" (Thorbjornsen & Supphellen, 2011, p. 68). Thus, service employees are considered to play a significant role in the brand's success (e.g., King, 2010).

Despite the importance of developing employees to compete effectively, in China, MHG general managers' attention is largely focused on reducing labor costs (H. Q. Zhang & Wu, 2004). This focus overlooks the potential of the employee as a resource for providing exceptional service, as "skills and quality of staff are among the most important factors in underpinning the competitive success of the hotel" (Kong & Baum, 2006, p. 509). Although this understanding is held worldwide, in the China hotel industry employee development has been of low priority, which has led to problems associated with poor employee service quality in this market (e.g., Kong & Cheung, 2009). Ensuring that employee performance aligns with the hotel's brand is particularly important for MHGs operating in China, because a customer's anticipation of the hotel service experience will be based on the hotel brand's country of origin (Zhou, Murray, & Zhang, 2002). That is, despite the fact that the hotel operates in China, guests still expect a Western experience if the hotel brand originates in a Western market. MHGs must, therefore, develop their employees' service behavior to align with customer perceptions of the brand.

Although expatriates have a significant presence in the managerial landscape of MHGs hotels in China (H. Q. Zhang & Wu, 2004), the majority of hotel employees come from mainland Chinese hospitality schools (Ferreira & Alon, 2008). In general, many Chinese hotel employees have no work experience in hotels or the hospitality industry (Ferreira & Alon, 2008). Therefore, MHGs may need to provide Chinese hotel employees with extensive training and development, not only in terms of hospitality skills but also in relation to the MHG brand. Without such development, employees are less able to deliver a brand experience that leads to customer satisfaction. However, aligning employee behavior with the brand is a complex undertaking when the hotel brand's country of origin (e.g., the United States) is foreign to the market in

which it is operating (e.g., China). The corporate identity (i.e., brand) of an MHG is less known in foreign markets, requiring the development and effective management of that brand to realize positive service quality perceptions in those markets (Zhou et al., 2002). Just as Chinese travelers may be new to tourism and hotel services and, therefore, unfamiliar with hotel standards (Hung, 2013), Chinese hotel employees may be unfamiliar with MHGs' service standards. Since MHGs rely on Chinese employees to deliver a foreign brand promise, developing and effectively managing the brand internally becomes important.

This study examines the impact of a Western hotel's internal brand management practices aimed at enhancing employees' understanding of the brand so they are able to deliver service quality in line with the brand promise. This investigation addresses the following research question.

> *Research Question*: How can Chinese hotel employees' brand understanding and brand-building behavior be enhanced to champion the multinational hotel group's brand?

Although working for a foreign brand seems to hold strong potential for a hotel employee to experience role confusion, the literature contains no empirical investigation of this phenomenon. This omission is surprising, given the global nature of the hotel industry and the rapid development of MHGs in the Chinese market over the past 10 years (Guillet et al., 2010). Additionally, prior investigators have noted the need for research to understand the effects of increasing globalization on aspects such as employees' working attitudes and behavior (Chen, Cheung, & Law, 2012). This study responds to this call by examining the activities of an MHG aimed at ensuring that its employees are able to deliver its brand promise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer satisfaction emerges from an evaluation of expectations versus reality. For MHGs, the brand generates customers' expectations, and the employee is responsible for turning the brand proposition into the brand reality for the customer (Berry, 2000; Miles & Mangold, 2004). Therefore, Chinese employees must be knowledgeable about the MHG's brand promise.

> [T]he key to employees being able to deliver the brand promise is brand knowledge . . . . [I]f employees are void of brand knowledge, they are not able to behave in the manner desired by the organization, nor are they able to make brand-related decisions [brand-building behavior]. (King & Grace, 2009, p. 129)

Employees understand the brand when they are aware of the brand promise being made to customers (i.e., they have brand knowledge) and when they know the brand's implications for their role in delivering the promise.

When employees share brand understanding, the result is a committed work force that delivers more than good service (Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2008). Specifically, brand-building behavior, defined as employee behavior that is above and beyond the formal job description, contributing to the organization's value proposition that ultimately drives customer satisfaction. Brand-building behavior is reflected in "what employees do [i.e., brand-consistent behavior], say [i.e., brand endorsement], and are intending to do in the future [i.e., brand allegiance] with respect to the organization's brand" (King, Grace, & Funk, 2012, p. 284).

Of paramount importance is employees' comprehension of their role in the brand's success and of actions required to deliver the brand experience. Although this perspective is emphasized in the literature, empirical models tend to assume employee understanding of the brand when modeling relationships between organizational activities and employee attitudes and behavior. However, such an assumption may be false, particularly where the local employees' national culture differs from the organization's national culture (Tarnovskaya & de Chernatony, 2011). In fact, cultural diversity has the potential to negatively influence organizational performance through a lack of understanding between cultures (e.g., Chen et al., 2012; Webster & White, 2010). Therefore, explicit assessment of brand understanding will ensure that employees know how to behave as the organization intends. Furthermore, assessment of employee's understanding of the brand aids in timely assessment of the success of organizational activities.

Brand understanding enhances employees' ability to deliver the intended brand promise as well as their internalization of the brand (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006). Internalization bodes well for competitively sustainable service experiences, because internalization manifests in a loyal and motivated work force. Such an outcome is particularly important for hotels in China, since employees often leave one hotel for another for a slight increase in hourly wage (Ferreira & Alon, 2008). To engender deeper employee commitment that goes beyond remuneration levels, MHGs must create employee passion for the brand (Ferreira & Alon, 2008).

An important distinction is that between understanding and knowing. An employee may be able to recite the brand values when asked, but may not necessarily reflect those values in brand-building behavior (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006; Tarnovskaya & de Chernatony, 2011). Brand-building behavior requires that employees understand what the brand values mean in terms of their roles within the organization (i.e., brand understanding; de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006; King & Grace, 2006; Tarnovskaya & de Chernatony, 2011). For example, the Grand Hyatt's brand essence is "authentic luxury." An employee may know this term and be able to recall it when asked, but delivery of the brand promise requires that the employee also understands the implications of "authentic luxury" in terms of performing his or her role in the restaurant, front office, or kitchen. Although this understanding is beyond the technical scope of an

employee's job requirements, such as serving food, registering a guest, or preparing a meal, it is still a requisite for service employees if the organization is to realize a competitive advantage (King & Grace, 2010). Therefore,

> *Hypothesis 1*: Employee brand understanding has a positive effect on brand-building behavior.

To be successful in this market, MHGs must deliberately engender employee brand-building behavior by motivating employees to understand the foreign brand and what it means for them in their role. However, hotels in China appear unable to motivate employees, as reflected by increasing staff turnover (Kong & Cheung, 2009) and the inability to retain high-caliber staff (Chan & Yeung, 2009). Despite the challenges organizational growth brings in recruiting, managing, and motivating employees, Chinese hotels' approach to managing human resources is still based on the mastery of traditional technical skills (L. Zhang, Cai, & Liu, 2002).

Prior investigators have called for a strategic approach to managing employees that fosters their maximum utility (e.g., discretionary effort) through "enhancing their value system, cultivating satisfaction, and instilling team-work spirit" (L. Zhang et al., 2002, p. 95), thus shifting the mindset of employees from "have-to-do" to "want-to-do." The internal brand management (IBM) literature also recognizes the need to motivate employees to exert discretionary work effort beyond their technical skills, so as to provide competitively sustainable service experiences (King & Grace, 2009).

Internal Brand Management (IBM)

An organization's brand creates mental structures that enable the employee to organize knowledge with respect to that organization (King & Grace, 2008). This knowledge informs future decision making and behavior. The significance of IBM is evident in the conceptualization of the attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, 1987), which posits that the three processes of attraction, selection, and attrition contribute to the organizational culture's reflection of the collective's personality (Lynn, Kwortnik, & Sturman, 2011; Ployhart, Weekley, & Baughman, 2006). The attraction process affords a fit between the individual and the organization, while the selection process enables the applicants and the organization to choose one another based on how they meet their respective needs. The attrition process reflects employees' opting out of the relationship because they do not fit with the organization (Lynn et al., 2011; Ployhart et al., 2006). Successful implementation of IBM practices allows prospective and current employees not only to become aware of what the organization stands for but more importantly to develop an understanding of what they must do to deliver the brand promise (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Therefore, IBM has the potential to facilitate the homogeneity hypothesis (i.e., "members of the same organization

should be more similar in shared personality than members of different organizations") that is the foundation of the ASA model (Ployhart et al., 2006, p. 662).

Two issues are fundamental to employees' delivering the brand promise (Mangold & Miles, 2007). First, do employees know and understand the desired brand image? Second, with respect to their motivation to behave in a brand-consistent manner, do they perceive that the organization is honoring their psychological contract? If employees perceive the organization is not fulfilling its promises, employee engagement and productivity can fall (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). To prevent such an occurrence, researchers advocate a hybrid approach to IBM that reflects both marketing and human resource practices (e.g., Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). The literature promotes initiatives such as internal communication (both formal and informal) and empowerment or support (Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann, & Herrmann, 2007), as well as training (Punjaisri et al., 2008), as ways of enhancing employees' understanding of the brand and effectively managing employees psychological contract so that they want to deliver the brand promise.

These practices can be classified as internally oriented activities. In some markets, an employee presumably has exposure to the brand and thus has some form of brand knowledge (King & Grace, 2009) so that IBM activities can focus on building on that brand knowledge. However, preexisting brand knowledge is not a given in a market where brands are new, as with global hotel brands in China. For this reason, in suggesting IBM as a requirement for realizing brand-building behavior, this study first considers brand-oriented recruitment as an antecedent to employee brand understanding and brand-building behavior.

Brand-Oriented Recruitment

Recruitment refers to the attraction of individuals whose values are congruent with the organization's brand (Punjaisri et al., 2008). The assumption is that such people, once trained, can successfully deliver the desired brand image (Mangold & Miles, 2007). However, the recruitment process is equally important for communicating to prospective employees what the organization stands for (i.e., its brand; Jiang & Iles, 2011). To compete effectively for talent in a competitive employee marketplace, organizations promote their brand as a good place to work. Through this promotion, they are making promises to prospective employees about the workplace environment and climate as well as communicating what the organization expects of its employees. In the recruitment stage, employees begin to develop their knowledge and understanding of the brand and also start to form their psychological contract (Mangold & Miles, 2007; Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

When prospective employees are looking for employment, their job search is often characterized by information asymmetry (Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010). This imbalance may be exacerbated in China, where information about hotel brands can be limited or even nonexistent, thereby restricting the

employee's ability to know about the brand prior to a selection interview. However, despite having limited knowledge, prospective employees form expectations about working for that brand as well as beliefs about what the organization expects of its employees. Should the prospective employee decide to work for that organization, these expectations form the basis of the employee's psychological contract with the organization (Mangold & Miles, 2007).

Since an individual's perceived fulfillment of the psychological contract is important to the person's subsequent behavior, organizations seek to communicate their brand values during the recruitment phase to address the issue of information asymmetry (Jiang & Iles, 2011). Brand-oriented recruitment is defined as the extent to which employees perceive that the recruitment process contributed to their understanding of the brand and brand-building behavior. Brand-oriented recruitment reflects the attraction process of the ASA model, enabling individuals to assess their fit with the organization. Brand-oriented recruitment thus sets the foundation for shaping employees' expectations with respect to pro-brand behavior. On this basis, we hypothesize the following:

> *Hypothesis 2*: Brand-oriented recruitment has a positive effect on employee brand understanding.
>
> *Hypothesis 3*: Brand-oriented recruitment has a positive effect on brand-building behavior.

If the psychological contract that results from the recruitment process is to be upheld, effective IBM needs to encompass message consistency once the individual has been employed (Mangold & Miles, 2007), since failure to manage messages is likely to result in poor employee performance (Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng, 2010). Therefore, managers need to consider brand-oriented training and brand-oriented support, which facilitate message consistency within the organization.

Brand-Oriented Training

Training reinforces the brand values and standards that were put forward to employees at the recruitment stage, providing employees with context for them to understand how performing their role contributes to the brand promise. In particular, the information presented to employees when they first join the organization is extremely important because it counteracts the information asymmetry that exists prior to joining (Jiang & Iles, 2011). Brand-oriented training helps employees understand the brand and exhibit brand-building behavior. This training is synonymous with formal management control mechanisms that are advocated as an antecedent of employee brand performance (Henkel et al., 2007). By prescribing appropriate behaviors for routine situations, brand-oriented training enables employees to deliver the brand promise (King & Grace, 2010). This training does not focus on developing technical skills, such as checking

someone in. Rather, it conveys brand values or standards in a manner that make them both meaningful and relevant to all employees' roles and responsibilities (King & Grace, 2006). Relevance is particularly important in Chinese MHG hotels given the potential for employees' limited brand knowledge and comprehension of foreign brand values. As part of a holistic IBM strategy, brand-oriented training significantly affects employees' brand performance (Punjaisri et al., 2008). Therefore,

Hypothesis 4: Brand-oriented training has a positive effect on employee brand understanding.

Hypothesis 5: Brand-oriented training has a positive effect on brand-building behavior.

Given the complexity of the hotel service interaction, however, planning for all scenarios is not possible. In competitive service industries, employees need to be flexible and able to respond to each customer (Henkel et al., 2007). Therefore, in addition to advancing more formal approaches, advocates of IBM encourage initiatives that are less structured, but nonetheless important. Freedom for discretionary action suggests the organization supports employees in doing what they believe is necessary for brand success.

Brand-Oriented Support

In large organizations, the messages employees receive at the recruitment and initial induction stage are often at odds with their experiences on the job. This information asymmetry can be a primary motivation for organizations to adopt IBM as a way to align internal systems and the organizational culture (Vallaster, 2004). That is, "the setting the organization provides, together with the implicit and explicit cues it gives service employees, helps to determine the content of the employee role" (Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985, p. 109). Employees not only need to know and understand their role in delivering the brand promise but also feel empowered or supported in doing so (King & Grace, 2010). Brand-oriented support is the extent to which employees perceive that the organizational environment contributes to their understanding of the brand and enables them to exhibit brand-building behavior. This support is an important facilitator of positive employee behavior. Since discretionary employee brand-building behavior often cannot be scripted, employees need to feel confident that the organization will stand behind their actions when they undertake brand-building behavior. Chinese tourism and hospitality employees have been perceived as lacking a positive service attitude (e.g., H. Q. Zhang & Lam, 2004; H. Q. Zhang & Wu, 2004), a characteristic attributed to "the traditional Chinese scornful attitude toward service related jobs" (Chan & Yeung, 2009, p. 219). A "services attitude" is new to most Chinese (Ferreira & Alon, 2008, p. 4), and as a result, Chinese hotel employees often differ markedly from Western employees when it

comes to service attitudes and behaviors (Ferreira & Alon, 2008; Magnini & Ford, 2004). For example, the cultural influence of needing to "save face" may inhibit Chinese employees from showing the initiative that service encounters often require, for fear of saying something inappropriate or making the wrong decision and "losing face" (Ferreira & Alon, 2008). These differences must be taken into account when hotels develop human resource initiatives for the Chinese market (Magnini & Ford, 2004). Thus, brand-oriented support is critical for successful hotel operation in China. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

> *Hypothesis 6*: Brand-oriented support has a positive effect on employee brand understanding.
> *Hypothesis 7*: Brand-oriented support has a positive effect on brand-building behavior.

In the management literature, a supportive climate is termed employee involvement (e.g., Riordan, Vandenberg, & Richardson, 2005) and is characterized by participative decision making, information sharing, training, and performance-based rewards to create an effective and productive workforce. Brand-oriented support builds on this thinking, which extends the traditional tenants of empowerment and also reflects a level of accountability. Employee accountability is essential if positive actions such as employee brand-building behavior are likely to occur (Wallace, Johnson, Mathe, & Paul, 2011). An organizational expectation of "following through" with respect to brand behavior motivates employees to increase their level of understanding and fosters their confidence in delivering the brand promise.

In a globally competitive and customer-centered market, hotels have to differentiate themselves through valued service uniqueness to gain customer loyalty (Gronroos, 2000; McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Although the hotel market in China is in its infancy relative to the well-established markets of the United States and Europe (Chan & Yeung, 2009), being new to managing tourism businesses (Hung, 2013) does not excuse China from the competitive realities of the global marketplace. In a service context, a competitive advantage is achieved through an informed workforce that is committed to delivering the brand promise and is able to do so (Aurand, Gorchels, & Bishop, 2005). However, owing to Chinese hotel employees' limited exposure to foreign MHG brands, attainment of such a workforce in China may require a strong emphasis on translating brand values.

The preceding discussion describes the hypothesized relationships between the three IBM activities of brand-oriented recruitment, training, and support and employees' brand understanding and brand-building behavior. Specifically, employees' brand understanding is proposed to partially mediate the effect of brand-oriented recruitment, training, and support on brand-building behavior. Although employees' understanding of the brand bodes well for delivery of the brand promise, not all employees will have a correct or positive understanding

of the brand. However, these employees may still be able to practice brand-building behavior if they have been informed as to what is expected of them (i.e., if they do what they are told). Empirical evidence demonstrates that internal branding, coordinated training, and internal communications influence hotel employees' brand-supporting behaviors in delivering the brand promise (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Wilson, 2009; Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2009). However, the provision of brand knowledge also enhances employees' role clarity, which in turn leads to brand-oriented behavior (King & Grace, 2010). Therefore,

> *Hypothesis 8*: Employee brand understanding partially mediates the effect of brand-oriented recruitment, brand-oriented training, and brand-oriented support on brand-building behavior.

Finally, by the nature of their roles and responsibilities within the organization, front-line and management employees will differ in their response to brand-related activities that enable the delivery of the brand promise (King, 2010). With respect to the hotel market in China, these differences may be apparent not only in job responsibilities. Given the scarcity of Chinese managerial employees with the requisite expertise and professionalism (H. Q. Zhang & Lam, 2004), MHGs often relocate qualified hotel professionals to manage the Chinese operations. Therefore, managers of Chinese MHG hotels may have a relationship with the brand that differs from that of front-line employees, not only because of their roles and responsibilities but also because of their previous experience with the brand. This study considers how front-line employees' responses to IBM activities differ from the response of management. Therefore,

> *Hypothesis 9a*: The positive effect of brand-oriented recruitment, brand-oriented training, and brand-oriented support on employee brand understanding differs between front-line employees and management.
>
> *Hypothesis 9b*: The positive effect of brand-oriented recruitment, brand-oriented training, and brand-oriented support on brand-building behavior differs between front-line employees and management.
>
> *Hypothesis 9c*: The positive effect of employee brand understanding on brand-building behavior differs between front-line employees and management.

METHOD

To test the hypotheses, this study adopted a quantitative method that included the use of a survey to measure the five constructs. The data were collected from employees who worked in a five-star Western-branded hotel in Guangzhou, the third largest city in China, where the opening of several new global hotel brands within a relatively short time has created an intensely competitive landscape for

both customers and good employees. For example, 2010 saw the opening of two Hilton Hotels, a Sheraton, and a Sofitel within a 3-month window. Although nothing opened in 2011, Four Seasons and Marriott opened in 2012, and the Mandarin Oriental and The W are scheduled to open in 2013.

All of the subject hotel's 570 employees (of which 557 were local mainland Chinese) were invited, during work time, to complete the self-administered survey, seal it in an envelope, and pass it to the hotel's training manager. All items and instructions were initially translated into simplified Chinese by a bilingual academic (Powpaka, 2008). In addition, the survey was back-translated by a different scholar for comparison with the original English version (Brislin, 1970; Byrne & van De Vijver, 2010; Powpaka, 2008). In reviewing the back-translation and the original survey, the principal investigator, the original translator, and the back-translator discussed and resolved any discrepancies. As a result, the translated survey was considered to be appropriate for implementation.

The items that reflected brand-related human resource practices were based on the internal brand management work of Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley (2009). Specifically, nine items that related to the integration of brand management principles into traditional human resource management functions were examined. As these items had been operationalized only once, and as the idea of combining marketing and human resources practices to effectively manage employees is rather new, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Results revealed three distinct factors that reflected brand-oriented recruitment (BOR; 3 items), brand-oriented training (BOT; 3 items), and brand-oriented support (BOS; 3 items). Furthermore, employee brand understanding (EBU) was measured by four items from the same source (Burmann et al., 2009). To assess the behavioral outcomes that result from the adoption of IBM practices (i.e., brand-building behavior [BBB]), this study relied on the multidimensional employee brand equity scale (King et al., 2012), which consists of 11 items (brand endorsement, 4 items; brand allegiance, 4 items; brand-consistent behavior, 3 items). Although this scale has proven to be valid and reliable, it too was subjected to an exploratory factor analysis. As a result, one item was removed from the brand endorsement and brand allegiance constructs owing to insufficient loading on the respective construct.

RESULTS

Of the 304 returned surveys, 13 were deleted owing to the omission of a large proportion of responses, leaving a total of 291 usable cases. Of the respondents in the sample, 52% were female and 53% were under age 25, 46% were between 25 and 45, and 1% were more than 45 years old. In terms of job status, 89% of the respondents worked full-time, with position levels consisting of 53% entry level, 25% supervisor, 20% middle management, and 2% senior management.

The research data were analyzed through structural equation modeling using AMOS 18. Following the two-step procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we evaluated the measurement model and subsequently tested

the hypothesized structural relationships among the five constructs. In addition, we analyzed the mediating effect of employee brand understanding as well as the path differences between front-line employees and management.

Measurement Model

To assess the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first conducted with the second-order factor model of BBB. The proposed CFA achieved good fit, with $\chi^2 = 43.68$, $df = 24$, $p < .05$, $\chi^2/df = 1.82$, *goodness of fit index* (GFI) = .97, *comparative fit index* (CFI) = .99, *Tucker–Lewis index* (TLI) = .90, normed fit index (NFI) = .97, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05, thus confirming the second-order factor structure. The second CFA was then conducted with all latent constructs modeled simultaneously as correlated first-order factors. The initial analysis indicates a marginal fit, with $\chi^2 = 499.98$, $df = 188$, $p < .05$, $\chi^2/df = 2.66$, GFI = .87, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, NFI = .88, and RMSEA = .08. The squared multiple correlations were inspected to determine the adequacy of the indicators as a measure of their respective constructs. The squared multiple correlations of two items fell below the recommended threshold of .50. Further examination of the modification indices suggests that several significant modification indices were associated with the same two items (one from BOR and one from BOT). These items were excluded from further analysis. The remaining items were subjected to a CFA and demonstrated a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 329.64$, $df = 149$, $p < .05$, $\chi^2/df = 2.21$, GFI = .90, CFI = .95, TLI = .93, NFI = .91, and RMSEA = .07). The results are presented in Table 1.

In addition, we examined the validity and reliability of each scale. As Table 1 shows, standardized factor loadings for all 20 items achieved the threshold of .70 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The associated *t* values for all standardized factor loadings were greater than 2.57 (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003), suggesting that they are significant indicators of their respective constructs ($p < .01$; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), and therefore convergent validity was supported.

Discriminant validity of the measured constructs was tested following the approach adopted by O'Cass (2002) and Gaski and Nevin (1985). This approach suggests that discriminant validity exists when correlations between constructs are not greater than the reliability estimates of the respective individual constructs. As Table 2 shows, no correlation was higher than its respective reliability, thus demonstrating discriminant validity.

Scale reliability was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha and average variance extracted (AVE). As Table 1 shows, all seven factors exceeded the recommended level of construct reliability of .70 (Hair et al., 2006), with Cronbach's α values ranging from .82 to .86. Furthermore, the AVE of all constructs achieved the .50 cutoff recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), demonstrating sufficient indicator reliability. Overall, the preceding statistical tests

Table 1
Results of the Measurement Model

Construct/Item	SL	CR	AVE
Employee Brand Understanding		.84	.58
Without having to think too long, I could explain what our company/ organization brand stands for	.77		
I know the origin and tradition of our brand	.77		
I know the personality of our brand	.80		
I know how I am expected to behave to ensure that our brand has a positive image with our customers	.70		
Brand-Oriented Support		.82	.61
I have influence on how my department/team translates what the brand stands for into measure/actions	.76		
I have written guidelines with detailed instructions on how to behave according to our brand	.82		
It is regularly controlled whether I behave according to our brand identity	.77		
Brand-Oriented Recruitment		.85	.74
Job advertisements and recruiting activities of my employer have given me a correct picture of what the brand stands for before joining the organization	.84		
I have applied for a job with my current employer because I identified with the brand even before joining the company	.88		
From the beginning, all of our new employees fit in with the brand very well—DELETED			
Brand-Oriented Training		.82	.71
When I started in the organization, they took great care to give me an understanding of the brand	.80		
In all our education and training programs the relevance of the particular training topic to the brand is demonstrated	.88		
In our organization, promotions depend on whether you behave according to the brand and enhance the brand image—DELETED			
Brand Endorsement		.86	.69
I say positive things about the brand that I work for	.74		
I would recommend the brand I work for to someone who seeks my advice	.87		
I talk positively about the brand that I work for to others	.87		
Brand Allegiance		.85	.67
I plan to be with the brand I work for, 5 years from now	.87		
I would turn down an offer to work for another brand if it came tomorrow	.71		
I plan to stay with the brand I work for	.87		
Brand Consistent Behavior		.84	.63
I demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with the brand promise of the brand that I work for	.83		
I consider the impact on the brand that I work for before communicating or taking action in any situation	.85		
I am always interested to learn about the brand that I work for and what it means to me in my role	.70		

Note: SL = standardized loadings; CR = construct reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. Goodness-of-fit statistics: χ^2 = 329.64 (p < .05, df = 149), χ^2/df = 2.21, *goodness-of-fit* index = .90, *comparative fit index* = .95, normed fit index = .91, *Tucker–Lewis index* = .93, and root mean square error of approximation = .07.

Table 2
Correlation Matrix and Reliability

	Mean	SD	EBU	BOS	BOR	BOT	BE	BAL	BCB
EBU	6.16	0.95	**.84**						
BOS	5.96	1.02	.61	**.82**					
BOR	5.48	1.39	.54	.59	**.85**				
BOT	6.19	1.03	.67	.81	.63	**.82**			
BE	6.39	0.93	.77	.46	.55	.62	**.86**		
BAL	5.14	1.46	.52	.57	.51	.54	.52	**.85**	
BCB	6.24	0.80	.77	.63	.59	.59	.75	.67	**.84**

Note: EBU = employee brand understanding; BOS = brand-oriented support; BOR = brand-oriented recruitment; BOT = brand-oriented training; BE = brand endorsement; BAL = brand allegiance; BCB = brand consistent behavior. The bold diagonal elements are the reliabilities of the constructs. Off-diagonal elements are the correlations between constructs.

Table 3
Structural Parameter Estimates and Goodness-of-Fit Indices

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Hypotheses	Beta Weight	R^2
Brand-Building Behavior				.82
	Brand-Oriented Support	H7	.10	N/S
	Brand-Oriented Recruitment	H3	.24**	Sig
	Brand-Oriented Training	H5	.06	N/S
	Employee Brand Understanding	H1	.64**	Sig
Employee Brand Understanding				.49
	Brand-Oriented Support	H6	.21*	Sig.
	Brand-Oriented Recruitment	H2	.19*	Sig.
	Brand-Oriented Training	H4	.40**	Sig.
				AVA = .66

Note: N/S = not significant, Sig. = significant; AVA = average variance accounted. Fit statistics: χ^2 = 373.02 (df = 157, p < .05), χ^2/df = 2.38, *goodness-of-fit* index = .89, *comparative fit index* = .94, normed fit index = .90, *Tucker–Lewis index* = .93, and root mean square error of approximation = .07.
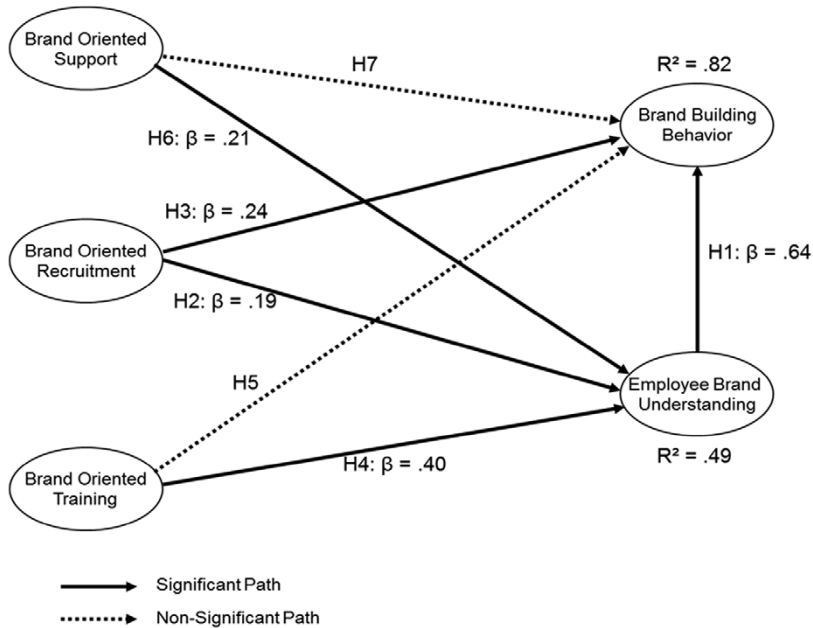* p < .05. **p < .01.

suggest that the measurement scales were valid and reliable measures of their respective constructs.

Structural Model

To examine the hypothesized relationships, we tested the overall structural model. The results presented in Table 3 indicate a reasonable fit for the

Figure 1
Results for Final Structural Model

hypothesized model (χ^2 = 373.02, df = 157, p < .05, χ^2/df = 2.38, GFI = .89, CFI = .94, NFI = .90, TLI = .93, and RMSEA = .07). Further examination of the structural path coefficients suggests that of the seven hypothesized paths tested, only two paths were not significant (i.e., Hypothesis 5: BOT → BBB; and Hypothesis 7: BOS → BBB). Dependent variables exhibited high R^2 values—BBB (.82) and EBU (.49)—resulting in an average variance accounted (AVA) of .66 for the model. Table 3 presents results of hypotheses testing with beta weights of the hypothesized paths, R^2 of the dependent variables, AVA, and model fit statistics. In addition, Figure 1 graphically depicts the results.

Testing for Mediation

To test the mediation effect of EBU hypothesized as linking the independent variables (BOS, BOR, and BOT) and the dependent variable (BBB), four alternative structural models were estimated following the test procedures outlined by James, Mulaik, and Brett (2006) and subsequently adopted by Grace and Weaven (2010) and Baldauf, Cravens, Diamantopoulos, and Zeugner-Roth

Table 4
Mediation Analysis Results

Fit Estimates	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	CFI	GFI	TLI	NFI	RMSEA
Model 1	399.08	160.00	Base comparison		.93	.88	.92	.89	.07
Model 2	197.94	95.00			.96	.92	.95	.93	.06
Model 3	445.86	158.00	46.78	2.00	.92	.87	.90	.88	.08
Model 4	373.02	157.00	26.06	3.00	.94	.89	.93	.90	.07

	Model 1: Full Mediation	Model 2: IV Affects DV	Model 3: No Mediation	Model 4: Partial Mediation
BOS → EBU	.22*	—	.16	.21*
BOR → EBU	.25***	—	.21***	.19**
BOT → EBU	.40***	—	.48***	.40***
BOS → BBB	—	.27**	.20*	.10
BOR → BBB	—	.35***	.36***	.24***
BOT → BBB	—	.28***	.39***	.06
EBU → BBB	.91***	—	—	.64***
R^2				
EBU	.57	—	.56	.49
BBB	.82	.61	.67	.82

Note: EBU = employee brand understanding; BOS = brand-oriented support; BOR = brand-oriented recruitment; BOT = brand-oriented training; BCB = brand consistent behavior; BBB = brand-building behavior; *GFI = goodness-of-fit* index; CFI = *comparative fit index;* NFI = normed fit index;TLI = *Tucker–Lewis index;* RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. Two-tailed significance testing.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

(2009). Four conditions must be met for the existence of mediation to be supported. The first condition is met if all the independent variables (BOS, BOR, and BOT) directly influence the mediator (EBU). The second condition is met if the mediator directly influences the dependent variable (BBB). Model 1 (Table 4) shows that both conditions have been satisfied. The third condition suggests that the independent variables must significantly influence the dependent variable. In line with Grace and Weaven (2010) and Baldauf et al. (2009), this condition was investigated in Model 2, with direct paths from the independent variables to the dependent variable, without the presence of mediator (EBU). As Table 4 indicates, all three paths were significant ($p < .01$), therefore satisfying this condition. The fourth condition is met if, after including the paths from the independent variables (BOS, BOR, and BOT) to the mediator (EBU), the direct paths from the independent variables to the dependent variable become nonsignificant (full mediation) or reduce their strength (partial mediation). Using the results presented in Table 4 in a comparison of Model 2 and Model 4 indicates that, after the inclusion of the mediator, of the three direct paths from independent variables to the dependent variable, two became nonsignificant (BOS → BBB and BOT → BBB), and one is weakened in its impact (BOR → BBB), thus satisfying the fourth condition.

Table 5
Multigroup Comparison: Front-Line Versus Management

Paths	Model A: Front-Line (n = 140), Beta Weights (t Value)	Model B: Management (n = 122), Beta Weights (t Value)	Chi-Square Difference, $\Delta df = 1$
BOS → EBU	.06 (t = .38)	.32 (t = 1.54)	$\Delta\chi^2 = .81$
BOR → EBU	.12 (t = .94)	.12 (t = 1.22)	$\Delta\chi^2 = .05$
BOT → EBU	.56 (t = 2.74***)	.25 (t = 1.26)	$\Delta\chi^2 = 1.78$
BOS → BBB	.07 (t = .53)	.44 (t = 2.64***)	$\Delta\chi^2 = 1.47$
BOR → BBB	.31 (t = 2.93***)	.19 (t = 2.32**)	$\Delta\chi^2 = 4.04**$
BOT → BBB	−.02 (t = −.12)	−.07 (t = −.52)	$\Delta\chi^2 = .01$
EBU → BBB	.65 (t = 5.02****)	.57 (t = 4.43****)	$\Delta\chi^2 = 2.85*$

Note: EBU = employee brand understanding; BOS = brand-oriented support; BOR = brand-oriented recruitment; BOT = brand-oriented training; BCB = brand consistent behavior; BBB = brand-building behavior.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$. ****$p < .001$.

The final test for full mediation involves testing whether the full mediation model (Model 1, with paths from BOS, BOR, and BOT going through EBU to BBB), produces a better fit than the no-mediation model where the path between EBU and BBB is not included, thus eliminating any indirect effect (Model 3). A chi-square difference test was conducted to determine which model achieves better fit. The results indicate that the no-mediation model (Model 3) was significantly worse than the full mediation model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 46.78$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .001$), supporting the full mediation model (Model 1). To test for partial mediation, the full mediation model was compared with the partial mediation model that includes both direct and indirect paths (Model 4). The results, however, show that Model 4 is significantly better than Model 1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 26.06$, $\Delta df = 3$, $p < .001$), providing evidence of partial mediation in support of Hypothesis 8.

Testing for the Moderating Effects of Job Position

To test the moderating effects of job position (i.e., front line vs. management), the sample was divided into two groups based on the indicated position of the respondents. Individual structural models were subsequently conducted on Model A (front line, $n = 140$) and Model B (management, $n = 122$), and the results are presented in Table 5. Prior to comparing the strengths of the paths formally across the two subsamples, a measurement invariance test was conducted using SEM to assess the invariance of measurement weights, which is considered to be a requirement for meaningful path comparison. The chi-square difference test suggests that the full metric invariance model was not significantly worse than the unconstrained model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 15.17$, $\Delta df = 13$, $p > .05$),

supporting measurement invariance. A multigroup moderation analysis was then performed in SEM. First, the structural model was estimated with paths to vary across the two groups, resulting in an overall χ^2 value and degrees of freedom. Second, for each hypothesized relationship, a constrained model was estimated with the path set to be equal across the two groups, generating a second χ^2 value and degrees of freedom. If the change in the χ^2 value is significant, differences in the slope estimates are evidenced (Byrne, 2009). The results presented in Table 5 indicate that, of the seven paths, only two (i.e., BOR $\rightarrow$ BBB, $\alpha = .05$ and EBU $\rightarrow$ BBB, $\alpha = .10$) are significantly different between the two groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 9 is partially supported.

DISCUSSION

As competition in the hotel market in China continues to intensify, so too does the pressure on general managers to not only maintain but also improve their hotels' performance. Therefore, at the property level the focus is on providing a service experience aligned with the brand promise. To achieve this experience, the recruitment and retention of brand-aligned and motivated employees is imperative. This study examined a market where the employee workforce may lack knowledge and/or understanding of MHG brand values and investigated the effect of an MHG's IBM practices aimed at realizing employee brand-building behavior.

Theoretical Contributions

The globalization of the hotel industry has created a need for multicultural research to explain the effects of merging different levels of culture (e.g., national cultures, organizational cultures; Chen et al., 2012). Especially important is examination of issues that emerge as a result of international expansion, such as consistency of the corporate culture (e.g., the brand) and local employees' perceptions of that corporate culture. This study contributes to this dialogue by investigating IBM practices aimed at enhancing local employees' understanding of a foreign hotel brand to ensure brand-consistent experiences.

Although the IBM literature promotes the benefits of employee understanding of the brand, previous empirical models fail to incorporate such a construct into the IBM process. In accounting for employees' brand understanding, this study adds to a more holistic understanding of the IBM process. Furthermore, it clearly shows that brand-building behavior requires employees' understanding of the brand. Since the employees in this study may have had limited exposure to foreign hotel brands prior to their employment, inclusion of employee brand understanding was considered critical to assessing the impact of IBM practices. Measuring an employee's understanding of the brand allows for immediate remedial action, particularly with respect to training and support. Without assessment, the first evidence of a lack of employee understanding may be customer dissatisfaction or a declining market share.

To develop brand understanding, brand-oriented training and support must be augmented by brand-oriented recruitment. Brand-oriented recruitment is particularly important given organizations' desire to attract employees who share the organization's values, as congruity bodes well for future employee brand-building behavior (Miles & Mangold, 2004). In addition, brand-oriented recruitment influences employees' brand understanding and brand-building behavior. This influence suggests that brand-oriented recruitment has a more immediate effect on employee behavior than do brand-oriented training and support.

The direct effect of brand-oriented recruitment on brand-building behavior makes clear the importance of ensuring that recruitment communicates an accurate, compelling, and relevant brand message to the employee market. Otherwise, the potential for misaligned brand behavior rises. In a market where the brand is foreign, accurate brand-oriented recruitment is not only fundamental to attracting candidates that fit well the brand but is also important for providing cues as to what behavior will be expected of employees once they are employed.

Although brand-oriented training and support are essential to employees' understanding of the brand, these activities occur after employment has begun and, particularly with brand-oriented support, contribute to brand understanding only after a sustained period of time. Therefore, brand-oriented recruitment is an essential IBM activity, because of it's immediate contribution to employee brand understanding and brand-building behavior.

Although a plethora of research champions the brand as a mechanism for engaging the employee market, investigators have scarcely considered situations where employees may have little exposure to the brand before joining the organization. Furthermore, most IBM studies have used Western samples (e.g., King & Grace, 2010). Although researchers have examined the effect of IBM on hotel employees in Thailand (Punjaisri et al., 2008; Punjaisri et al., 2009a), the presence of global hotel brands in Thailand is at the maturity stage. Therefore, the foundational knowledge of global hotel brands is likely stronger for the hotel employee market in Thailand than for the hotel employee market in China. This assumption is reinforced by the conventional operationalization of IBM to include only internally oriented activities (i.e., not recruitment) to develop employee brand knowledge. In contrast, as global hotel brands are only just now gaining a foothold in China, of importance in this study was extension of IBM practices to externally oriented practices (i.e., brand-oriented recruitment).

Further insight into the nuances of the hotel market in China came from front-line and management employees' responses to brand-oriented HR practices. These responses revealed differences between the structural paths contained in the proposed model. However, this result does not nullify the overall model results. Rather, it provides support for the assertion that when it comes to IBM, "One size does not fit all" (King, 2010, p. 517). The differences in models are consistent with findings that front-line and management employees' relationships with the organization's brand differ, in that front-line staff deliver the

promise and management facilitates the promise delivery (King, 2010). However, the context of this study could also be a factor. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the result of Hypothesis 9 suggests that future research might take a more in-depth qualitative approach. This approach could reveal whether the differences in response to IBM by role depend on the responsibilities of each role, or whether the differences result from Chinese front-line employees having limited exposure to global hotel brands and therefore a more limited understanding of them than their managers have. The finding that brand-oriented recruitment and employee brand understanding have a significantly stronger effect on brand-building behavior for front-line employees than for management suggests this may be the case.

Managerial Implications

This study advances IBM practices as a way to ensure that hotel employees understand the brand and are able to deliver the brand promise. Furthermore, the results validate the use of an innovative management strategy in a transitional economy where brand management practices are still in their infancy (Chen, Lam, & Zou, 2011). The study emphasizes the importance of disseminating brand knowledge at the recruitment stage (i.e., brand-oriented recruitment) and following up with brand-oriented training and brand-oriented support. These steps enhance employee brand understanding, which is a significant and strong contributor to the brand-building behavior that is essential for success in competitive markets. MHG managers in China must closely consider the brand messages that hotels communicate to potential and current employees, as these messages are fundamental to achieving brand consistency. In addition, managers must recognize that adopting a standardized approach to training Chinese hotel employees can be risky. The Eastern cultural nature of these employees requires an approach different from that used in training hotel employees from many other countries (Magnini & Ford, 2004). To ensure MHG brand consistency, managers of Chinese hotels need to do more than merely teach the technical skills for a specific job (L. Zhang et al., 2002). To achieve internationally consistent service standards, MHGs must also give attention to the cultural differences between Chinese employees and the foreign organizations that hire them (Magnini & Ford, 2004).

This study provides insight into how, through the adoption of IBM practices, MHGs can develop hotel employees so they are able to deliver a foreign brand's promise. Specifically, although employees' national culture has a greater influence on their behavior than the culture of the organization they work for (Li, 2008), the results of this study suggest that IBM has the potential to communicate the values of a foreign brand to local employees so that they are able to practice brand-building behavior. Such outcomes are critical for delivery of a consistent brand experience, which is ultimately what MHGs covet when operating in different countries.

Limitations and Future Research

Evaluation of the study's findings requires acknowledgement of several inherent limitations. First, the use of surveys to collect data may result in measurement error owing to the scales used or to the employees' inability to accurately report their perceptions and experiences with the hotel brand. Second, since this study adopts a cross-sectional research design, rather than stating casual relationships, the results can only imply associations among the constructs under investigation. Thus, future researchers could consider a longitudinal research design to establish a cause and effect relationship among constructs and investigate how IBM practices can lead to employee brand understanding and brand-building behavior. Third, to enhance the generalizability of the results, the study adopts measurement items that have been tested across multiple samples and industries. However, the sample of hotel employees for this study was drawn from a single hotel brand, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other hotel brands. Therefore, future researchers should consider sampling employees across multiple hotel brands in various categories (e.g., budget, mid-range, and luxury) to extend understanding of this important area of hotel brand management.

REFERENCES

Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, *103*, 411-423.

Aurand, T. W., Gorchels, L., & Bishop, T. R. (2005). Human resource management's role in internal branding: An opportunity for cross-functional brand message synergy. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *14*, 163-169.

Baldauf, A., Cravens, K. S., Diamantopoulos, A., & Zeugner-Roth, K. P. (2009). The impact of product-country image and marketing efforts on retailer-perceived brand equity: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Retailing*, *85*, 437-452.

Berry, L. L. (2000). Cultivating service brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *28*(1), 128-137.

Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *1*, 185-216.

Burmann, C., Zeplin, S., & Riley, N. (2009). Key determinants of internal brand management success: An exploratory empirical analysis. *Journal of Brand Management*, *16*, 264-284.

Byrne, B. M. (2009). *Structural equation modeling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Byrne, B. M., & van De Vijver, F. J. R. (2010). Testing for measurement and structural equivalence in large-scale cross-cultural studies: Addressing the issue of nonequivalence. *International Journal of Testing*, *10*, 107-132.

Chan, B., & Yeung, S. (2009). Hotel development in China: The hoteliers' perspective. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, *5*, 210-223.

Chen, R. X. Y., Cheung, C., & Law, R. (2012). A review of the literature on culture in hotel management research: What is the future? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *31*(1), 52-65.

Chen, X., Lam, L. W., & Zou, H. (2011). Antecedents and performance consequences of integrated brand management in China: An exploratory study. *Journal of Global Marketing*, *24*, 167-180.

China National Tourism Administration. (2012). *2012 Second quarter national star-rated hotels statistics*. Retrieved from http://www.cnta.gov.cn/files/yutian/2012/2012%20 08/20120815gongbao.pdf

de Chernatony, L., & Cottam, S. (2006). Internal brand factors driving successful financial services brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, *40*, 611-633.

Ferreira, T., & Alon, I. (2008). Human resources challenges and opportunities in China: A case from the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets*, *1*, 141-150.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(1), 39-50.

Foster, C., Punjaisri, K., & Cheng, R. (2010). Exploring the relationship between corporate, internal and employer branding. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *19*, 401-409.

Gaski, J. F., & Nevin, J. R. (1985). The differential effects of exercised and unexercised power sources in a marketing channel. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *22*, 130-142.

Grace, D., & Weaven, S. (2010). An empirical analysis of franchisee value-in-use, investment risk and relational satisfaction. *Journal of Retailing*, *87*, 366-380.

Gronroos, C. (2000). *Service management and marketing*. West Sussex, England: John Wiley.

Guillet, B. D., Zhang, H. Q., & Gao, B. W. (2010). Interpreting the mind of multinational hotel investors: Future trends and implications in China. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *30*, 222-232.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2006). *Multivariate data analysis* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Henkel, S., Tomczak, T., Heitmann, M., & Herrmann, A. (2007). Managing brand consistent employee behaviour: Relevance and managerial control of behavioural branding. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *16*, 310-320.

Heung, V., Zhang, H., & Jiang, C. (2008). International franchising: opportunities for China's state-owned hotels? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *27*, 368-380.

Hung, K. (2013). Chinese hotels in the eyes of Chinese hoteliers: The most critical issues. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *18*(4). doi:10.1080/10941665.10942012. 10658415

James, L. R., Mulaik, S. A., & Brett, J. M. (2006). A tale of two methods. *Organizational Research Methods*, *9*, 233-244.

Jiang, T. T., & Iles, P. (2011). Employer-brand equity, organizational attractiveness and talent management in the Zhejiang private sector, China. *Journal of Technology Management in China*, *6*, 97-110.

King, C. (2010). "One size doesn't fit all": Tourism and hospitality employees' response to internal brand management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *22*, 517-534.

King, C., & Grace, D. (2006). Exploring managers' perspectives of the impact of brand management strategies on employee roles within a service firm. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *20*, 369-380.

King, C., & Grace, D. (2008). Internal branding: Exploring the employee's perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, *15*, 358-372.

King, C., & Grace, D. (2009). Employee based brand equity: A third perspective. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, *30*, 122-147.

King, C., & Grace, D. (2010). Building and measuring employee-based brand equity. *European Journal of Marketing*, *44*, 938-971.

King, C., Grace, D., & Funk, D. C. (2012). Employee brand equity: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Brand Management*, *19*, 268-288.

Kong, H., & Baum, T. (2006). Skills and work in the hospitality sector: The case of hotel front office employees in China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *18*, 509-518.

Kong, H., & Cheung, C. (2009). Hotel development in China: A review of the English language literature. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *21*, 341-355.

Li, C. (2008). A study on the trans-culture management of international hotel in China. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *3*(7), 146-149.

Lynn, M., Kwortnik, R. J., & Sturman, M. C. (2011). Voluntary tipping and the selective attraction and retention of service workers in the USA: an application of the ASA model. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *22*, 1887-1901.

Magnini, V. P., & Ford, J. B. (2004). Service failure recovery in China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *16*, 279-286.

Mangold, W. G., & Miles, S. J. (2007). The employee brand: Is yours an all-star? *Business Horizons*, *50*, 423-433.

McDougall, G. H. G., & Levesque, T. (2000). Customer satisfaction with services: Putting perceived value into the equation. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *14*, 392-410.

Miles, S. J., & Mangold, G. (2004). A conceptualization of the employee branding process. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, *3*(2-3), 65-87.

Moroko, L., & Uncles, M. D. (2008). Characteristics of successful employer brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, *16*, 160-175.

Netemeyer, R. G., Bearden, W., & Sharma, S. (2003). *Scaling procedures: Issues and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

O'Cass, A. (2002). Political advertising believability and information source value during elections. *Journal of Advertising*, *31*(1), 63-74.

Pine, R., & Phillips, P. (2005). Performance comparisons of hotels in China. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *24*(1), 57-73.

Ployhart, R. E., Weekley, J. A., & Baughman, K. (2006). The structure and function of human capital emergence: A multilevel examination of the attraction-selection-attrition model. *Academy of Management Journal*, *49*, 661-677.

Powpaka, S. (2008). Empowering chinese service employees: A reexamination and extension. *Journal of Global Marketing*, *21*, 271-291.

Punjaisri, K., Evanschitzky, H., & Wilson, A. (2009). Internal branding: An enabler of employees' brand-supporting behaviours. *Journal of Service Management*, *20*, 209-226.

Punjaisri, K., & Wilson, A. (2007). The role of internal branding in the delivery of employee brand promise. *Journal of Brand Management*, *15*(1), 57-70.

Punjaisri, K., Wilson, A., & Evanschitzky, H. (2008). Exploring the influences of internal branding on employees' brand promise delivery: Implications for strengthening customer–brand relationships. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, *7*, 407-424.

Punjaisri, K., Wilson, A., & Evanschitzky, H. (2009). Internal branding to influence employees' brand promise delivery: A case study in Thailand. *Journal of Service Management*, *20*, 561-579.

Riordan, C. M., Vandenberg, R. J., & Richardson, H. A. (2005). Employee involvement climate and organizational effectiveness. *Human Resource Management*, *44*, 471-488.

Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology*, *40*, 437-453.

Solomon, M. R., Surprenant, C., Czepiel, J. A., & Gutman, E. G. (1985). A role theory perspective on dyadic interactions: The service encounter. *Journal of Marketing*, *49*(1), 99-111.

Tarnovskaya, V. V., & de Chernatony, L. (2011). Internalising a brand across cultures: The case of IKEA. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *39*, 598-618.

Thorbjornsen, H., & Supphellen, M. (2011). Determinants of core value behavior in service brands. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *25*(1), 68-76.

Vallaster, C. (2004). Internal brand building in multicultural organisations: A roadmap towards action research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *7*(2), 100-113.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *68*(1), 1-17.

Wallace, J. C., Johnson, P. D., Mathe, K., & Paul, J. (2011). Structural and psychological empowerment climates, performance, and the moderating role of shared felt accountability: A managerial perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*, 840-850.

Webster, C., & White, A. (2010). Exploring the national and organizational culture mix in service firms. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *38*, 691-703.

Wilden, R., Gudergan, S., & Lings, I. (2010). Employer branding: strategic implications for staff recruitment. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *26*(1-2), 56-73.

Yu, L., & Huimin, G. (2005). Hotel reform in China. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, *46*(2), 153-169.

Zhang, H. Q., & Lam, T. (2004). Human resources issues in the development of tourism in China: Evidence from Heilongjiang Province. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *16*, 45-51.

Zhang, H. Q., & Wu, E. (2004). Human resources issues facing the hotel and travel industry in China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *16*, 424-428.

Zhang, L., Cai, L., & Liu, W. (2002). On-job training: A critical human resources challenge in China's hotel industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism*, *1*(3), 91-100.

Zhou, K. Z., Gao, G. Y., Yang, Z., & Zhou, N. (2005). Developing strategic orientation in China: Antecedents and consequences of market and innovation orientations. *Journal of Business Research*, *58*, 1049-1058.

Zhou, L., Murray, I., & Zhang, B. (2002). People's perceptions of foreign hotel chains in China's market: An empirical study of the effects of country-of-origin and corporate identity. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *11*(4), 43-65.

Ceridwyn King, PhD (e-mail: ceridwyn.king@temple.edu), is an assistant professor in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. With a research interest in service management, she has successfully published several papers in the area of internal brand management and continues to pursue this area of research in line with both academic and practitioner interest. Her research can be found in leading international journals such as the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, International Journal of Hospitality Management, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Services Marketing and Journal of Brand Management. **Kevin Kam Fung So** (e-mail: kevinkamfungso@gmail.com), is a PhD candidate in the Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. His research interests lie in services marketing and service brand management. His work has appeared in internationally recognized journals including the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, International Journal of Hospitality Management,and Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing.