

# Approbation of a Model for Measuring the Value of the Internal Brand in Companies from the Garment Industry in Bulgaria

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to present and validate a model for measuring and analyzing the value of the internal brand in enterprises in the garment industry. For this purpose, the theoretical basis for the concepts of branding in industrial markets, internal branding, employee brand, brand value, and staff engagement has been examined. The determinants that affect the internal value of the brand have been identified. The research combines desk-based analysis, as well as empirical work. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of internal branding and how it can be measured. The data sources consist of both primary and secondary, including academic literature and statistical information. The literature on internal brand value is limited. The study integrates qualitative and quantitative data to explore the topic more comprehensively. A questionnaire has been developed and a pilot study has been conducted of 5 enterprises in the garment industry operating on the territory of Bulgaria. The study offers an original contribution by presenting the approbation of a model for measuring internal brand value in the context of a specific industry.*

**Keywords:** internal brand, brand value, brand equity, determinants, garment industry.

## Introduction

A detailed analysis of the theory in the field of branding clearly highlights the importance of the employees of the enterprise, especially industrial ones. But it is clear to managers that they cannot closely control the interaction between their staff and customers. It is of great importance that the communication between them is supportive of the brand. This can only be possible when employees are internally convinced of the benefits of the brand and perceive its values as their own. In recent years, internal branding in industrial enterprises has rarely been the subject of empirical research in Bulgaria. To fill this gap, this study will focus on the concept of “internal brand value” and how it is perceived by different levels of the enterprise’s personnel structure – from top managers to ordinary employees at the lowest level. This study presents a methodology for evaluating internal brand value. It tests the model through a pilot study involving a limited sample of garment manufacturers in Bulgaria

## Literature review

### *Branding in consumer markets*

For a brand to be successful, it must create associations in the consumer's mind that are filled with meaning (Keller, 1993). When consumers make their choice among various competing offers, what can tip the scales in favor of one brand or another is the brand's reputation. Its image is key to

differentiation in the minds of customers and this is the reason why marketers invest money, time and attention in branding. (deChernatony L, McEnally MR, 1992) (Kapferer, 1995).

In consumer markets, the main strength of a brand lies in those parts of it that can be pronounced or written and that can be easily remembered by consumers (Kotler, 2002). Keller describes brand meaning as the strength in the minds of customers that identifies the brand under different conditions, as well as the degree to which the consumer is likely to remember the brand name. (Keller, 1993).

According to Aaker, successful branding depends largely on brand name recognition, especially when the consumer makes a repeated purchase decision based on previous experience. (Aaker D. A., 1989). Other studies have shown that strong positive associations can develop that can signify brand uniqueness, and its success depends on the consumer's understanding of the brand's core meaning and the consumer's ability to maintain a consistent image over the long term (Doyle, 1988).

The sustained understanding by consumers will lead to evidence of the quality, value, reputation, and trust in the desired brand (Zeithaml, 1988), which in turn can be associated with the formation of an overall favorable brand image for those consumers (Maathuis, 1993). Another author, Prophet, formulates several unchallengeable steps for creating a strong consumer brand: clearly defining the brand identity, creating a sense of value for consumers, making management decisions for each department based on their impact on the brand value, developing relationships with customers, and making efforts to strengthen the brand in the long term (Prophet, 2001).

Aaker identifies three fundamental components of branding: name awareness, which reflects the extent to which a brand is recognized by consumers; overall reputation, which includes perceptions of brand credibility and quality; and purchase loyalty, measured by the frequency of previous consumer purchases of the brand (Aaker, D., 1996). All these elements contribute to the strength of the brand and its long-term success.

In contrast, Keller perceives brand value mainly through brand awareness and the presence of unique brand associations (Keller, 1993). According to Keller, the strength of the brand is associated with how well it is fixed in consumers' memory and its ability to differentiate itself from the ones of the competitors. Aaker places additional emphasis on reputation and loyalty, whereas Keller stresses on the role of the unique associations of the perception of consumer.

#### *Branding in industrial markets*

The significance of branding in industrial markets remains relatively underexplored compared to its well-documented role in consumer markets. However, with the growing share of online sales in global trade and intensifying international competition, branding has become an essential tool for industrial marketers seeking to strengthen their competitive position in an evolving business ecosystem.

When it comes to the importance of branding in industrial markets, it should be kept in mind that it remains less well-studied compared to its importance in consumer markets. But with the increasing share of online sales in world trade and global competition, branding can certainly help industrial marketers improve their competitive position in the new realities of business. The branding of industrial products are a multi-layered structure that includes, in addition to the physical product, the logistics, the attitude and assistance provided to customers, as well as the corporate image and policy that accompany this product. (McQuiston, 2004)

In the industrial sector, a brand is a multi-level promise of value, which is built on more factors than just the presentation of the physical product. An integral part of brand recognition is

the manufacturer's ability to deliver its products and services immediately or in a very short time. This often happens through an intermediary. However, he is often not familiar with the product differentiation strategy, cannot indicate the benefits for consumers and, accordingly, cannot create a brand identity that is perceived as unique by the desired customer segment. To solve this problem, the manufacturer must take measures and familiarize his intermediaries with the brand strategy. Thus, they could pass it on to the end users. Another factor that is essential in industrial branding is the company's service. Employees of the organization must understand that customers often determine the value of the product due to the way in which the company representative meets their specific needs at a given time. Therefore, it is necessary for all members of the organization to respond to customers in a reliable, fast and efficient manner, enhancing the brand value promise in the customer's mind. The company's reputation and its share in the industry are also perceived as part of the brand, because loyalty in most cases is directed towards the entire company, not just to a specific brand (McQuiston, 2004).

Shipley and Howard (Shipley, D., Howard, P., 1993) find that industrial brands are particularly important for small firms to overcome what may be perceived as a relative disadvantage. Using Shipley and Howard's research as a starting point, Mitchell (Mitchell, P., King, J., Reast, J., 2001) aims to investigate the extent to which managers in industrial firms perceive the unique brand value of their products and whether or not these brand associations provide a competitive advantage. The findings indicate that industrial firms have positive attitudes about the benefits of the brand and consider it a major corporate asset.

According to some analyses, (Ward, S., Light, L., Goldstine, J., 1999) a management approach focused on promises, rather than an approach focused entirely on products and their features, would position the brand as a set of expectations that the product offers a certain type and level of value. And in order to create stable relationships with customers, this value needs to be provided to them in a real and consistent way. More recent studies show that customers make their decisions based more on subjective data than on objective data. (Mudambi, 2002)..

Generally speaking, a brand in industrial markets is "a distinctive identity that distinguishes a relevant, enduring, and credible promise of value associated with a product, service, or organization, and indicates the source of that promise..." (Ward, S., Light, L., Goldstine, J., 1999) The promise should be such that it provokes the desired target audience to understand, want, and be willing to pay for that promise.

#### *Comparison between consumer and industrial branding*

The similarities and differences between consumer and business markets have been analyzed by many authors. (Fern, E.F. & Brown, J.R., 1984) (Hutt, M.D. & Speh, T.W., 1995) (Kotler, Marketing management 10th ed, 2000) Table 1 presents comparisons between some of their main characteristics.

**Table 1. Personality materialism: competing measurement models**

| Consumer markets                                                            | Industrial markets                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emphasis on tangible product and intangible assets in the purchase decision | Emphasis on the tangible product and extended services at the purchase decision |
| Standardized products                                                       | Customized products and services                                                |
| Impersonal relationship between the buyer and the selling company           | Personal relationships between buyer and seller                                 |
| Relatively uncomplicated products                                           | Extremely complex products                                                      |
| Buyers are becoming more sophisticated                                      | Experienced buyers                                                              |
| Relying on mass market advertising                                          | Relying on personal selling                                                     |

Source: Authors' own research

#### *Internal branding*

Internal branding is a mechanism for motivating employees that aims to align their work behaviors and values with those of the brand. Internal branding works in two directions on the views of its employees regarding the brand. It aims to create job satisfaction and provide an inspiring work environment for its employees. It also familiarizes employees with the role and responsibilities of each one in implementing brand strategies. This is done through brand communications.

Internal branding serves two main purposes. First, it aims to enhance job satisfaction and provide a motivating work environment that supports employee engagement and commitment. Second, it helps employees understand their own role and responsibilities in the process of delivering the brand promise. Further it ensures that all members of the organization contribute to maintaining and strengthening the brand identity (Kenarova-Pencheva I. A., 2018).

Successful and strong businesses are achieved through consistency and coherence in brand efforts over time and in every activity that is carried out. This applies to both large companies and small businesses. In order for each team member to be able to support the brand strategy with their actions, they must be familiar with it and know the company's target markets (Sexton, 2008).

#### *Employee brand*

The employee brand refers to the impression that employees transfer to customers and other external stakeholders. Employees play an essential role in shaping how the company is perceived, because they are the first to communicate with customers. Their actions and attitudes can either support a strong, positive brand image or undermine it. That is why they can directly influence the organization's overall success, including its ability to remain agile and responsive in a competitive environment. (Penchev, 2024).

Employee branding is, by definition, the image that an organization's employees present to customers and other stakeholders. The staff of any organization has the ability to create both a very positive and a very negative image of the company. This, in turn, greatly influences its success. According to scientific research in the field, companies that manage this process are the ones that achieve better results (Mangold, W. G., Miles, S. J., 2007). The goal is to ensure that employees who have direct contact with potential and actual customers, partners, distributors or other stakeholders share a common understanding of the brand, feel equally enthusiastic about it and present it in a unified way (Baumgarth, C., Schmidt, M., 2010).

#### *Staff engagement*

When defining brand commitment as a concept, we proceed from scientific understandings of the general commitment to the organization and its goals. The definitions are divided into two groups.

The first group of authors presents commitment as “emotional belonging to a given organization, personal identification and involvement of the staff in it” (Mowday, R. T, M. Steers and L.W. Porter, 1979).

The second group of authors connects commitment with the willingness of the staff to make additional efforts to achieve organizational goals (Heffner,T.S and Reutsch, J.R, 2001) (Iverson,R.D., Mcleod, C.S. And Erwin , P.J, 1996).

Therefore, employee commitment to the brand can be formulated as the extent to which employees identify with it, feel committed and involved in its core values, and are accordingly willing to make additional efforts to implement brand strategies.

In the scientific literature, employee behavior in brand positioning is defined as key, as it is the main “ambassador” of the brand (Boyd, G. and M.Sutherland, 2006). Scientifically proven connections between staff attitudes and consumer perceptions of the brand (James, 2000)determine

the interest in the so-called internal marketing as an approach that can motivate and engage employees with the organization's brand (Mitchell, 2000).

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that successful internal branding plays an important role in promoting employee engagement (Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L., and Topolnytsky, L., 2002), strengthening brand identification (Papasolomou, I. Vrontis, D., 2006) and enhancing brand loyalty (Machtiger, 2004). A comprehensive review of the literature indicates that internal branding influences brand engagement through several key factors. One of these factors is the employer brand image. This concept was initially introduced by Ambler and Barrow. The term refers to the combination of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that employees receive after joining an organization. Internal marketing activities play a crucial role in shaping and managing the employer brand. This, in turn, serves as a mechanism for attracting and retaining high-quality specialists (Ambler, T., Barow, S., 1996). Another critical element is employee brand awareness, which reflects the level of commitment of employees not only to the organization but also to the brand itself. Awareness and understanding of the essential values of the brand are important for promoting this commitment. Internal communication strategies serve as a main tool for building and supporting brand awareness within the workforce.

Additionally, job satisfaction is a key determinant of motivation of the employees to engage with and communicate effectively the brand message (Kenarova-Pencheva I., 2021). Internal branding is based on the premise that satisfied employees are more motivated and committed to marketing goals and strategies (Pervaiz K., Rafiq, M., 2003).

Engaged employees contribute to brand development through two primary mechanisms (King & Grace, 2008). First, they directly influence consumer experiences associated with the brand of the organization using their behavior during customer interactions. The way employees communicate, deliver services, and represent brand values in their interactions significantly influences the perceptions and satisfaction of consumers.

Second, employees influence the brand indirectly by promoting positive relationships with their colleagues. Strong interpersonal connections within and across departments create a work environment that supports brand-consistent behavior. A consistent and coherent workplace culture helps to encourage employees to support and strengthen brand values. All this supports the overall brand identity of the organization.

Brand commitment can be effectively cultivated within the framework of internal branding. This approach emphasizes the importance of management acknowledging employees' needs and valuing their contributions, particularly when their efforts align with the organization's essential brand values. By promoting an internal culture of recognition and support, organizations can enhance employee engagement, which in turn strengthens the brand's market position.

Internal branding provides a framework for developing brand commitment. It stresses on the need for management to recognize employee needs and appreciate their efforts, especially when these efforts support main brand values. The culture of recognition and support, can help organizations to increase employee engagement and strengthen the position of the brand in the market.

### *Internal Brand Value*

Internal brand equity (Kenarova-Pencheva, I., 2019) refers to the added influence that branding has on employee behavior. It describes and measures the incentives that brand respect creates among employees for behavior that supports the brand, both in and out of the workplace, now and in the future. This concept captures the value created when employees respect the brand, which in turn

encourages them to bring into line their actions with its values. Internal brand equity can be defined as the incremental effect of branding on employee behavior. Internal brand equity is high when employee behavior is consistent with the brand identity and individual employees are willing to represent the brand in a positive and desirable light to internal and external stakeholders. (Baumgarth, C., Schmidt, M., 2010)

## Methodology

### *Internal Brand Value Measurement Model*

This paper applies an adapted measurement model for Internal Brand Value developed by Baumgarth and Schmidt (Baumgarth, C., Schmidt, M., 2010). The framework assesses an organization's internal brand equity by analyzing how branding influences employee behavior. It defines internal brand equity as the added impact which branding has on such behaviors. The model proposes that a strong brand orientation enhances employees' brand knowledge, which increases their involvement and ultimately strengthens their commitment to the brand. The framework provides a structured method for evaluating how effectively internal branding initiatives translate into behaviors that support and reinforce the brand.

According to Aaker, brand loyalty is a fundamental component of brand equity (Aaker D. , 1991). A study conducted by Wheeler, Richey, Tokkman, and Sablynski further supports this view. They found a significant relationship between employees' positive attitudes toward the corporate brand and their intention to stay with the company. It follows that one measurable indicator of the value of the internal brand is the intention to remain loyal to the brand and the company (Wheeler, A.R., Richey, R.G., Tokkman, M., Sablynski, C.J., 2006). This suggests that one of the measurable indicators of internal brand value is willingness of employees is to stay committed to both the brand and the company. A strong internal brand cultivates loyalty in the employees, which supports workforce stability and encourages consistent promotion of the brand over time.

Watzlawick and Beavin (Watzlawick, P. & Beavin, J.H., 1967) claim that it is impossible not to communicate in the workplace. Henkel (Henkel, S., Tomczak, T., Heitmann, M. & Herrmann, A., 2007) believe that routine communication of the employees will always include conversations which include the brand. One of the important elements in measuring internal brand value is that communications between employees should support the brand.

Research work proves that when employees demonstrate positive behavior outside of the workplace (Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Paine, J.B. & Bachrach, D.G., 2000), the results are likely to be beneficial to the overall performance of the company (Bell, S.J. & Menguc, B., 2002) (Koys, 2001) (Podsakoff, P.M. & MacKenzie, S.B., 1994). Therefore, the value of the internal brand is expressed by the willingness to commit to "brand behavior outside the workplace" (Burmman, C. & Zeplin, S. , 2005).

### *Determinants of internal brand value*

There are four key characteristics of organizational and individual behavior that influence internal brand value. The first is brand orientation. This is a type of strategic orientation or corporate culture. It places the brand in the center of the business model and reflects a specific mindset within the organization (Urde, M., 1994) (Urde, M., 1999). Brand orientation is marked by the dominance of the brand in strategic thinking. It also involves a branding strategy that is clearly differentiated from the one of its competitors (Hankinson, 2001) (Baumgarth, 2009). Brand orientation is a feature found in employees. The remaining three characteristics relate to individual behavior within the organizational environment.

Internal brand commitment is the psychological attachment that employees feel toward a brand. This attachment influences their willingness to act in ways that corresponds to the brand and supports its strategic goals. Internal brand knowledge adds significant value to the enterprise. It strongly affects how customers behave and depends on how well employees understand the brand. Internal brand knowledge refers to the mental image or understanding of the brand by the employees. Fiske and Linville describe this mindset as a "schema" (Fiske, C.A., Linville, P.W., 1980). A "schema" in this context is a mental structure formed by the past experiences of the employees. It organizes knowledge and guides behavior influence (Marcus, H., Zajonc, R.B., 1985).

Internal brand engagement is an activating psychological state. It arises from a personal connection to the brand. Research in this area reveals that this engagement increases awareness of information and signals connected with the brand (Celsi, R.L., Olson, J.C., 1988) and Zaichkowsky (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Individuals become more sensitive to signals from the brand when they feel personally connected to it. Hoeffler and Keller (Hoeffler, S., Keller, K.L., 2003) further support this idea. According to activation theory, branding enhances a person's ability to notice and process brand-related stimuli.

#### *The value of the external brand as a consequence of the value of the internal brand*

Extrinsic brand equity is a phenomenon that is described as the significance of the attitudes and behaviors toward a brand of actual and potential customers. They are formed by brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993). In other words, extrinsic brand equity is the extent to which a brand is able to create differentiation and preference in the minds of customers. The theory of "emotional contagion" (Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J.T., Rapson, R.L., 1993), which explains how feelings and emotions arise, supports the assumption of a direct relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic brand equity. Customers will synchronize their emotions toward the brand with the emotions that are manifested in the behavior of the brand's employees with whom they communicate.

#### *Structure and content of the questionnaire*

The questionnaire is composed of 42 items which are organized into six distinct sections. It begins with an item that identifies the respondent's position within the company. The initial section consists of nine questions. It investigates the intrinsic value of the brand. This is followed by a section of eight items that examine the intrinsic obligation to the brand. There is a group of seven questions designed to assess the knowledge of the respondents about the intrinsic aspects of the brand. The next section contains five questions and evaluates the intrinsic commitment to the brand. The next section contains eight questions that explore the brand orientation. The last group of questions is about the extrinsic value of the brand and contains 4 questions.

#### *Population definition, sample size and data collection*

According to the latest data of the National Statistical Institute, as of 2022, 198 enterprises under code 14 of the Classification of Economic Activities: "Manufacture of Clothing" operate in the territory of the Ruse Region in the Republic of Bulgaria. The economic activity is divided into 4 subsections: 14.1 "Manufacture of Clothing, Except Furs", where 188 enterprises operate; 14.2 "Manufacture of Clothing and Fur Products", which is not represented in the specific region, and 14.3 "Manufacture of Other Knitted Goods" - 10 enterprises. In order for the sample to be representative of the region, the survey must cover 5% of all 198 companies, i.e. 10 enterprises. The method of conducting the survey requires a high degree of willingness to cooperate among the

target companies, which is why personal contacts are very important. Therefore, the selected sample is not random, but systematic and purposeful. The enterprises are those with which personal contact can be made. Those companies that agreed to participate in the research received 3 questionnaires to be completed by a top manager, a brand/marketing/product manager and another employee. This will provide a comprehensive picture of the value of the internal brand as perceived by employees in different positions in the company.

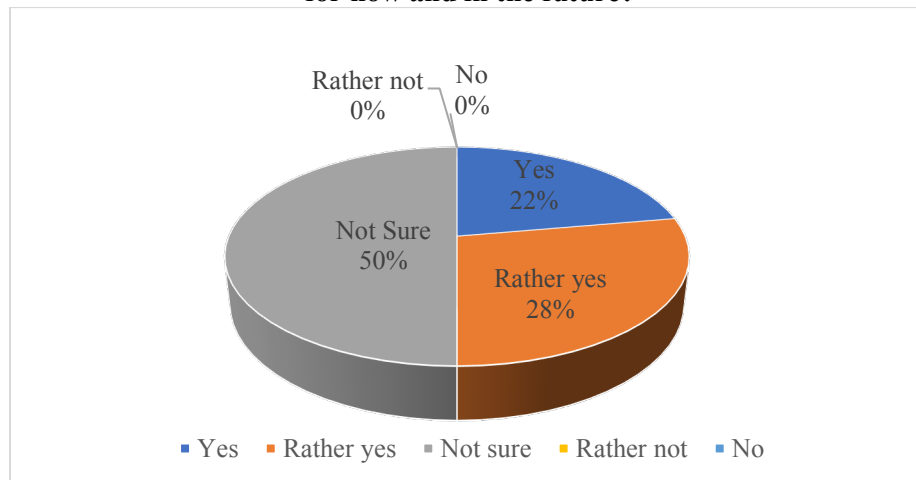
#### *Research constraints*

The present work is limited solely to testing the model for measuring the value of the internal brand in the garment enterprises in the Ruse region, Bulgaria. For this purpose, the results of the survey of 15 respondents from 5 enterprises operating under code 14 of the NACE<sup>1</sup> Rev. 2008 will be presented. The questionnaire was filled in by a top manager, a lower-level manager and an employee from each of the enterprises. The results of the survey of only the first group of questions are presented and analyzed. The aim is to test the model and to verify its functionality in terms of the internal value of the brand. The size of the sample and the possibility of deviation from it represent significant limitations for the generalized empirical finding, as well as the fact that the fieldwork was conducted in only one region of one European country. In addition, since all the variables were measured at one point in time, it will not be possible to assess the variations in the value of the internal brand. Any future replication of this study should aim for greater geographic diversity, larger sample sizes, and longer follow-up. Because the study design relies on subjective measurement of variables, their validity is often questionable. Further studies should use a combination of subjective and objective measures.

## **Results and discussions**

To the first question, “Do your colleagues want to work for the brand or company they work for now and in the future?” 50% answered that they were not sure, and the remaining 50% answered positively: 22% with “Yes” and 28% with “Rather yes.” No one gave a negative answer.

**Table 2. Do your colleagues want to work for the brand, respectively the company they work for now and in the future?**

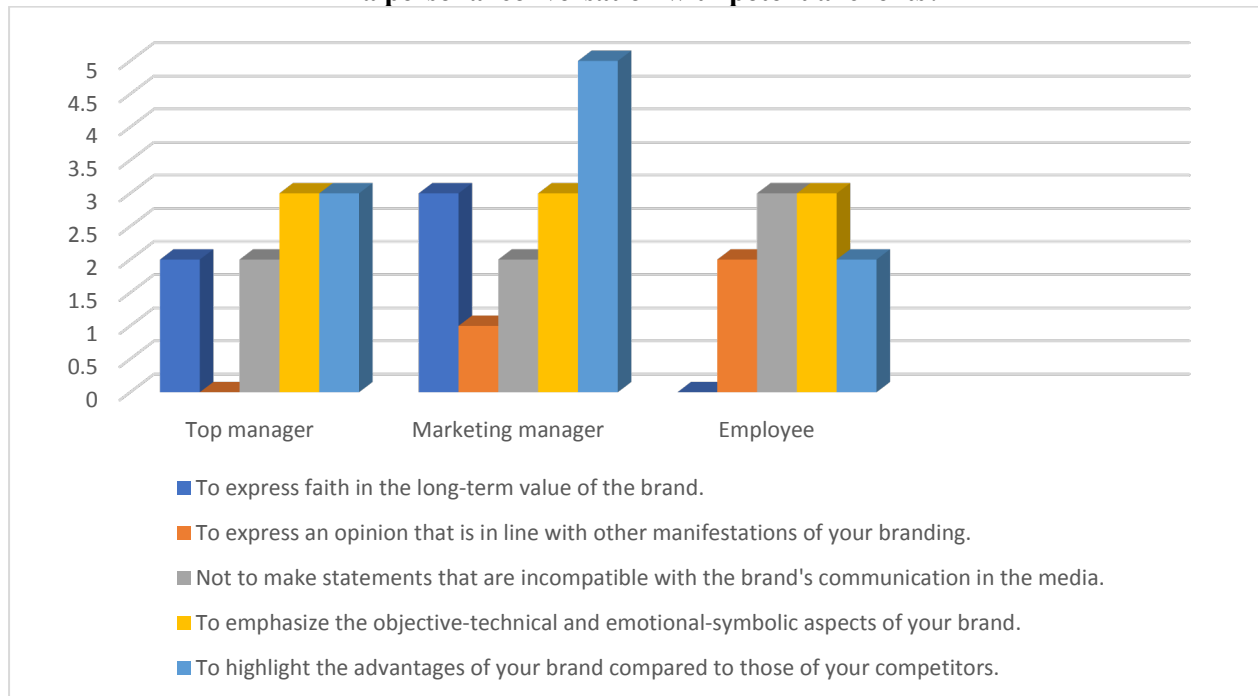


Source: Authors' own research.

<sup>1</sup> Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne.

The second question aims to determine which of the listed actions the interviewees' colleagues are willing to perform in a personal conversation with potential customers. Among top managers, "to emphasize the objective-technical and emotional-symbolic aspects of the brand" and "to emphasize the advantages of the brand compared to those of competitors" are the two most common answers. Among marketing managers, the latter answer prevails. Lower-level employees give priority to the answers "not to make statements that are incompatible with the brand's communication in the media" and "to emphasize the objective-technical and emotional-symbolic aspects of the brand". The results are in Table 3.

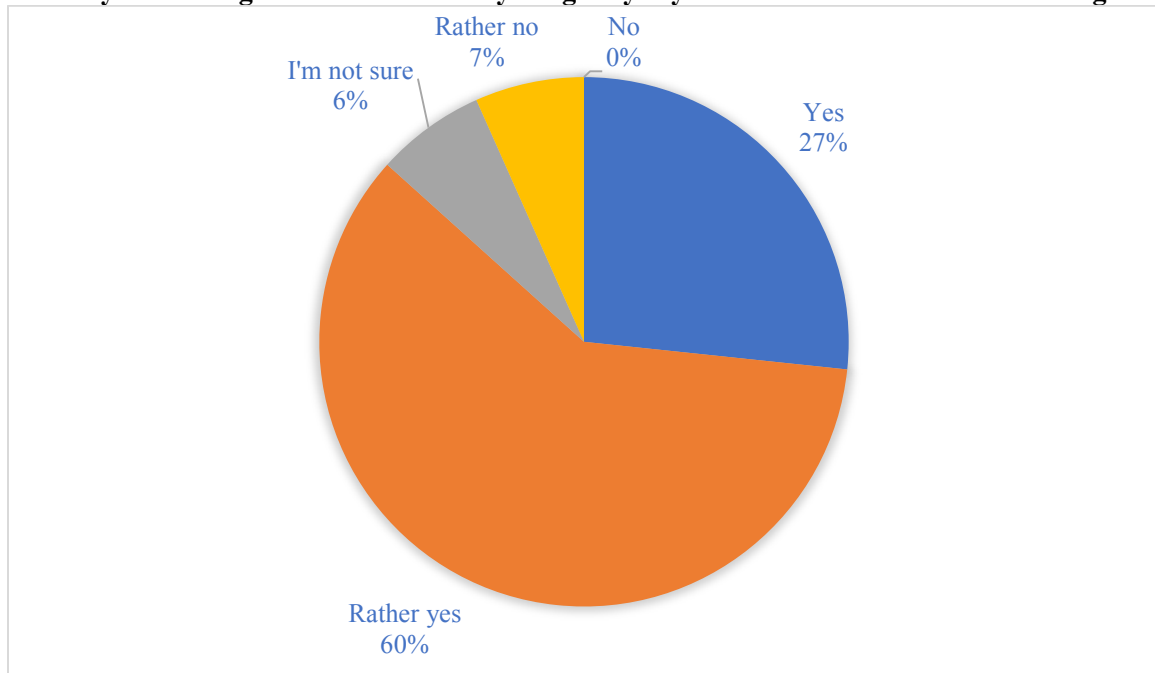
**Table 3. Which of the following actions are your colleagues willing to perform in a personal conversation with potential clients?**



Source: Authors' own research.

According to the answers to the third question, the respondents' colleagues are aware of the fact that everything they say or do can affect the brand image. 27% answered "Yes" and as many as 60% - with "Rather yes". That is, 87% answered positively. 6% - are not sure, and 7% answered "Rather no". No one gave the answer "No". These results speak of the staff's awareness of its impact on the brand image. The results are in Table 4.

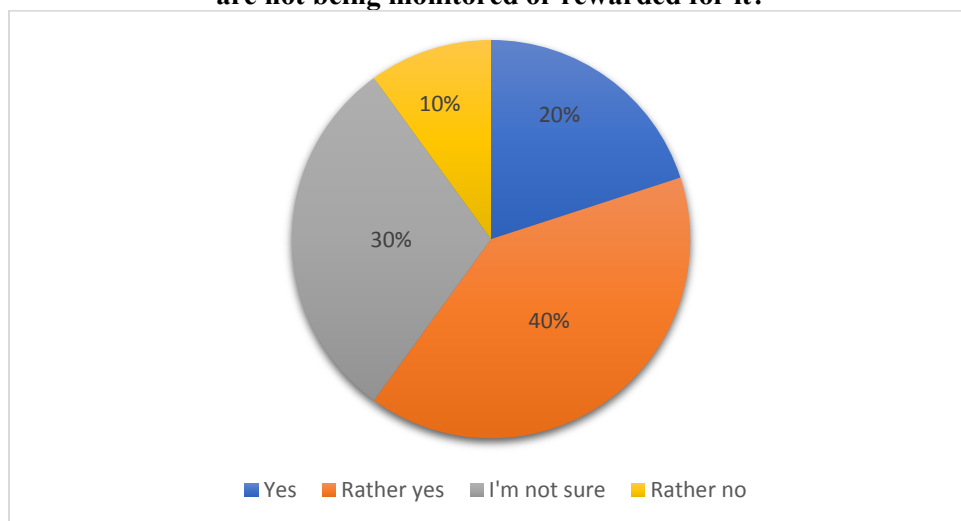
**Table 4. Are your colleagues aware that everything they say or do can affect the brand's image?**



Source: Authors' own research.

To the next fourth question, "Do your colleagues behave consistently about the brand values, even when they are not controlled or rewarded for it?" the answers are again mostly positive. Overall, 60% answer positively (20% with "Yes" and 40% with "Rather yes"). 30% are not sure, and 10% answer "Rather not." The results are in Table 5.

**Table 5. Do your colleagues behave consistently with the brand's values even when they are not being monitored or rewarded for it?**

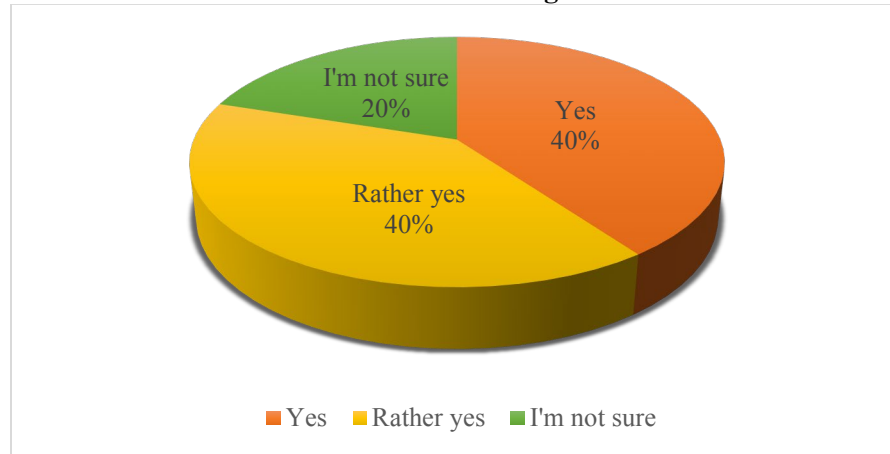


Source: Authors' own research.

To the question 5 "Do your colleagues work hard and worry about quality when it has a positive impact on the brand image?" a total of 80% of those surveyed answered affirmatively:

40% with "Yes" and 40% with "Rather yes". 20% answered "I'm not sure", and no one indicated a negative answer. The results are in Table 6.

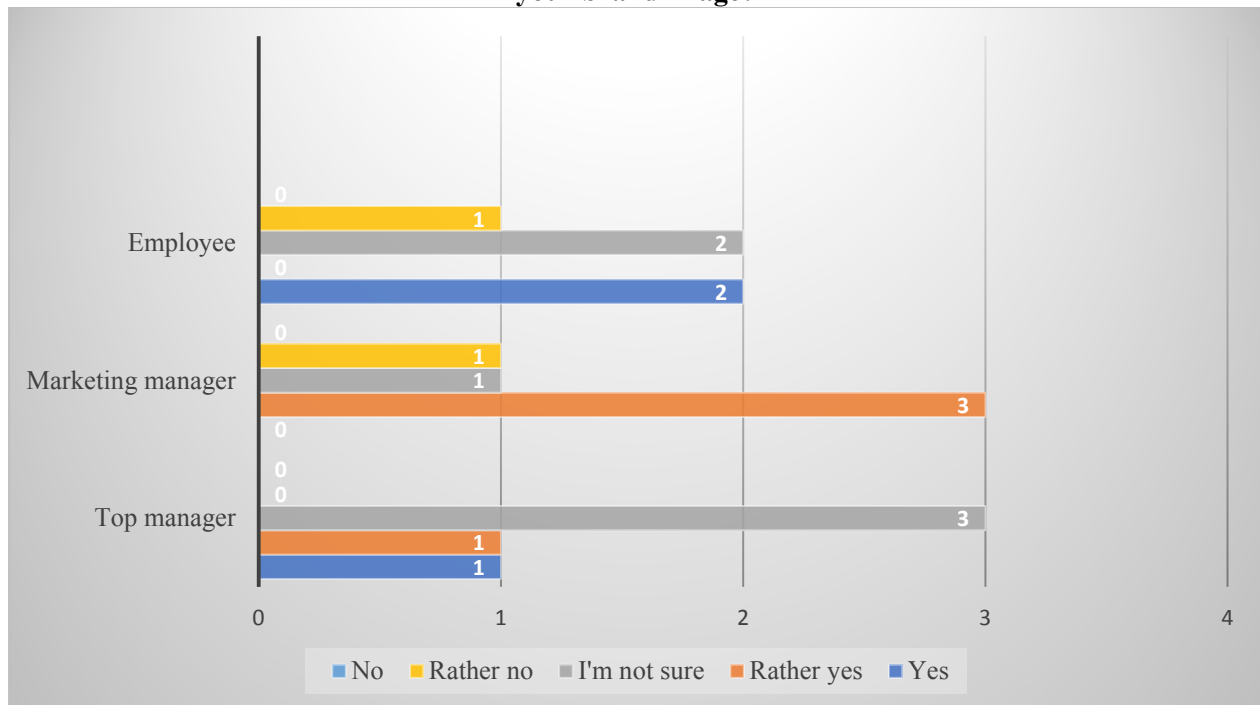
**Table 6. Do your colleagues work hard and worry about quality when it has a positive impact on the brand image?**



Source: Authors' own research.

To question 6, "Would your colleagues voluntarily work more hours if it would positively impact your brand image?", the majority of top managers surveyed responded that they were not sure, while lower-level managers responded more positively. The results are given in Table 7.

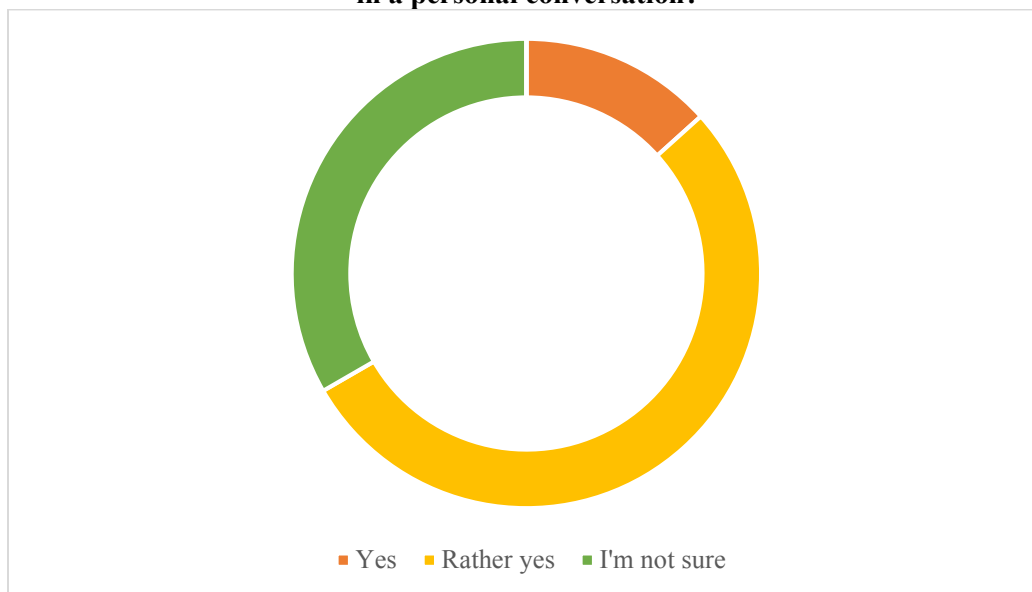
**Table 7. Would your colleagues voluntarily work more hours if it would positively impact your brand image?**



Source: Authors' own research.

When asked whether their colleagues would recommend the brand they work for to friends or relatives in a personal conversation (question 7), no negative answer was given. 1/3 of the interviewees answered that they were not sure, while the rest gave positive answers (13% - "Yes" and 53% - "Rather yes"). The results are given in Table 8.

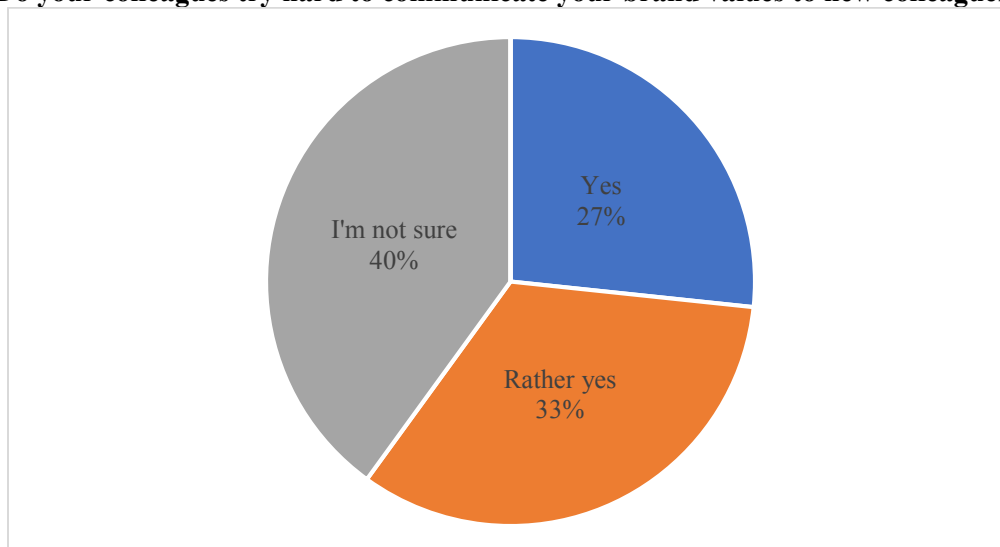
**Table 8. Will your colleagues recommend your brand to friends or relatives in a personal conversation?**



Source: Authors' own research.

To the eighth question, "Do your colleagues try hard to communicate your brand values to new colleagues?" 60% answered affirmatively, 40% were not sure, and no one gave a negative answer. The results are given in Table 9.

**Table 9. Do your colleagues try hard to communicate your brand values to new colleagues?**



Source: Authors' own research.

Question 9 in this section explores the attitudes and what staff members are willing to do to better meet customer expectations for the specific brand. According to top managers, their subordinates are most likely to “actively seek feedback from customers” and “develop new ideas.” In marketing managers, in addition to seeking feedback, employees are also willing to “immediately send feedback to those responsible.” Among employees, we have an equal number of answers for “participating in retraining courses” and “immediately sending feedback.” The results are given in Table 10.

**Table 10. Which of the following actions do your colleagues take to better meet the expectations of customers regarding your brand?**



Source: Authors' own research.

## Conclusion

This study aims to develop and test a model for measuring internal brand value in garment industry enterprises. It reviews key concepts from existing research, which include industrial branding, internal branding, employee perception of brand values, and employee engagement. The research combines a literature review with fieldwork. It uses academic sources and original data. This mixed approach allows for a more complete understanding of internal branding. There is still limited research on this topic, especially in the local context. The study is intended to fill this gap and integrate qualitative insights with quantitative data. Several key factors influencing internal brand value were identified through the analysis. A model was developed using a specially constructed questionnaire. It was tested in five Bulgarian garment companies. This is one of the first studies to apply such a model in this industry. The results offer practical guidance for companies seeking to improve internal branding practices.

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