



## **Branding Orientation in the Accommodation Industry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper starts by clarifying the role of branding orientation (BO) among academic studies. It shortly introduces the development of the BO concepts. The empirical part consists of a search for and analysing of academic articles using a meta-analysis that consider BO in the accommodation industry. According to the results, significant appraisal of the branding building activities among higher star rating and luxury accommodation businesses are taking place due to the increasingly demanding guests. Thus, there is an upward pressure on small and medium accommodation businesses to survive or perform well. This paper recommends that scholars study the owners-managers, employees, and customer perspectives altogether, to better comprehend how large accommodation businesses displaying BO can generate superior performance. For the small and medium accommodation businesses, the emphasis is the owners-managers perceptions since they are the main decision-makers, and due to infancy of the small and medium enterprise branding application.

**Keywords:** Branding Orientation, Accommodation Industry

**JEL Classifications:** L83, M31

### **1. ROLE OF BRANDING ORIENTATION (BO)**

Customers view the purchase risk for services are much higher than tangible goods (Berry, 2000; Klaus and Maklan, 2007). Normann (1991) cites it would be vital for the service providers to institute a high customer confidence level. A service brand can help to achieve this Bruhn (2001) describes the term service brand as being unique and leaves a distinctive image in the customer's mind. The customer purchase risk and uncertainty will be lessen with the service brand existence (Burmman, 2005; Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001; Grove, et al., 2002).

Stauss (2004) adds a brand is a quality indicator for businesses. The author has explained quality brands offer symbolic information that forms the customer's high expectations of the business performance. Other results include stronger customer's trust and more certainty, while protecting the businesses from imitators. Therefore, it is rational for service businesses to focus their efforts in building strong brands (Krishnan and Hartline, 2001; Tomczak and Brockdorff, 2000). Therefore, the primary role of entrepreneurs is to develop a coherent and consistent brand

identity, a prior condition for forging customer trust and customer retention (Meffert and Burmann, 2005).

Hankinson (2001) cites that BO is an element of a firm's marketing orientation. One fundamental aspect of BO is the entrepreneur's brand awareness. It starts by the entrepreneur knowing that a brand must be developed and does not come automatically when the business is set-up.

The brand has to portray clear identity and features that distinguish apparently from the competitors' brand, conveying their superior benefits to offer to their customers. Wee (2004) adds that such a brand identity can create the brand personality. Staff plays a vital function within the firm's BO due to the frequent communication with the customers. The customers' perception and brand evaluation can relate to the staff behaviour (McDonald et al., 2001). Thus to assess an entrepreneur's BO, the individual's brand awareness and tasks performed to develop brand symbols with the staff participation have to be measured. It is crucial to better understand the entrepreneurs' perception of the organisation's brand through the views of both the staff and customers. In the next section, the development of the BO concept is discussed.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE BO CONCEPT

There has been a keen interest in the BO concept since the 1990s (Louro and Cunha, 2001; Urde, 1999; 2009). BO has been defined and redefined over the years. Refer to Table 1 for the varied definitions provided by different scholars.

The primary features of BO operationalisation has also evolved over time (Baumgarth, 2009; Bridson and Evans, 2004; Ewing and Napoli, 2005; Hankinson, 2002; Napoli, 2006; Reid et al., 2005; Wong and Merrilees, 2007).

Referring to Table 2, Gromark and Melin (2011) found there are three key factors which include capabilities, attitude, and behaviour as important for forging a successful BO. Mostly, the combination of two or three of these key factors will be required. Within the BO operationalisations, Ewing and Napoli's (2005) study discusses the link of BO to external stakeholders, while Reid et al. (2005) connects BO with capabilities. Gromark and Melin (2011) did find the BO operationalisations intriguing. However, BO still remains abstract and unable to capture fully the multidimensional construct of BO. There is still an absence of forming a holistic and systematic framework of BO and its dimensions.

Gromark and Melin (2011) explain companies need to earn strong brands but brand building is a process rather than a project. BO has been the highlight as one possible approach to facilitate the brand building process since the early 1990s. The aim of BO is to describe how a firm can internally work so as to forge and maintain strong brands.

In the recent years, the focus on BO is because higher brand equity will probably be the outcome from the stronger brands that BO forms (Hankinson, 2001; Reid et al., 2005; Wong and Merrilees, 2005). It is difficult to find empirical studies that study on the impact of BO. There is little effort in studies that use brand equity as the dependent variable while researching on the impact of a high degree of BO (Wong and Merrilees, 2007). Other researchers select other dependent variables instead, such as stakeholders' ability to accomplish both short and long terms goals (Napoli, 2006), voluntary income through fundraising (Hankinson, 2002), and the strength of a retailer's advantage (Bridson and Evans, 2004).

It will be also important to link BO and financial performance. The efforts in BO must pay off, for a firm to encourage a higher degree of BO. A few studies have offered to investigate about the financial performance deriving from the value of BO through objective measurements (Wong and Merrilees, 2007). On another

**Table 1: Definitions of BO**

| Author                   | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Urde (1999)              | Organisation processes that create, develop, and protect the brand identity through constant communication with the targeted customers by achieving competitive edge through form of brands                                                                                                   |
| Hankinson (2001)         | The extent of the firm's acceptance of branding theories and practices as well as the degree the firm regards the organisation as brands                                                                                                                                                      |
| Bridson and Evans (2004) | The extent the firm values brand and the activities are focused on developing brand capabilities                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Ewing and Napoli (2005)  | A company-wide approach to generate and sustain a brand meaning that is shared and offer superior value to stakeholders and also superior organisational performance                                                                                                                          |
| Baumgarth (2009)         | A form of marketing orientation, and it is highly relevant are the brands to the top managers. It requires firm systematic processes to brand management so that it portrays consistent, constant and relevant to the targeted customer and has a distinctive difference from its competitors |

Source: Gromark and Melin (2011). BO: Brand orientation

**Table 2: Operationalisations of BO**

| Author                    | Key concepts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Comments                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hankinson (2001)          | Understanding and communicating the brand<br>Brand is a strategic resource and requires deliberate and active processes in brand management                                                                                                                                           | BO is a model with four elements that are linked with firm's capabilities and behaviour                                                         |
| Bridson and Evans (2004)  | Distinctive, functional, value adding, and symbolic capabilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | BO is the extent the firm values brands and the degree in which its practices are associated with the four respective firm's capabilities       |
| Reid et al. (2005)        | Shared brand vision, brand functionality and brand positioning<br>Brand ROI, symbolism and value-adding capability                                                                                                                                                                    | BO is a model comprising of six elements linked with a firm's capabilities and attitudes                                                        |
| Ewing and Napoli (2005)   | Interaction, orchestration, affect                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | BO is described by three concepts linked with the firm's capabilities                                                                           |
| Wong and Merrilees (2007) | Branding flows through the firm's marketing activities<br>Branding is essential to the firm's strategy<br>Branding is essential while running the business<br>Long-term brand planning being critical in the firm's future success<br>The brand being an important asset for the firm | BO encompasses the five items primarily emphasising on the firm's behaviour and attitudes                                                       |
| Baumgarth (2009)          | Values, norms, artefacts, behaviours                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | BO is described by four concepts covering the firm's behaviour and attitudes, and more uniquely artefacts that are being compared to the others |

Source: Gromark and Melin (2011). ROI: Return on investment, BO: Brand orientation

note, it is clear that researchers agree with Urde (1999) that for BO to happen, it will rely on the organisation's approach to brands. However, several researchers will like to stress that it entails a deliberate approach since that firms tend to possess an adhoc approach to brand building (Baumgarth, 2009). Gromark and Melin (2011) findings are that most research work agrees with Urde (1999) that customer interaction is vital to BO and the brand is a firm's competitive edge. Gromark and Melin (2011) also goes on to explain that many researchers agree with the perception of another two scholars, Ewing and Napoli (2005), that suggests BO helps in forging superior performance.

However, there is an additional essential that the rest of scholars do believe is that the interaction should encompass ties with all internal stakeholders and the rest of the external stakeholders (Gromark and Melin, 2011). Thus the focus here is to accentuate the point of making the brand as the foundation of a firm's processes (Gromark and Melin, 2011), that surpasses the thoughts on top of the initial suggestion by Bridson and Evans (2004) that the primary reliance is mostly on a firm's ability to develop brand equity.

Despite BO potential contributions, it is notably found by Ahonen (2008) that studies about branding in small and medium enterprise (SMEs) seemed rare among academics. The theoretical background is often dominated by product branding, even though the studies cover corporations. The scholar also have realised that majority of the studies are primarily seen in marketing journals, instead of in entrepreneurship journals.

Ahonen (2008) has found the following conclusions through 15 articles relating to the subject between year 2001 and year 2008. One out of the 15 articles by Abimbola (2001) is solely conceptual in nature. Another conceptual paper by Merrilees (2007) has used the case study approach to make certain of the quality of the findings. It is then noted due to the rare number of conceptual studies, have led towards a lukewarm attempt of a common definition for branding. Another observation is for tourist destination branding studies, collecting empirical evidence is lacking and remained mostly conceptual in nature (Saraniemi and Ahonen, 2008).

As for the empirical studies about branding in SMEs, both primary and secondary data have been used. Merrilees (2007) sets the novel trend in using secondary data as the scholar finds that secondary data will be more useful than primary data. Ahonen (2008) also finds majority of the empirical studies that collected primary data are mainly case studies. This shows a distinct lack of quantitative studies except until recent times, when Holverson and Revaz (2006) have done otherwise. Yin (2003) explains this phenomenon of why case studies are more popularly used is due to the novel significance of branding studies among SMEs. The analyses of quantitative studies are still lagging behind in the multiple level analysis and structural equation modelling.

The respondents of SME branding studies are wide-ranging from junior company members, owners-managers, and even founders. This is common in entrepreneurship studies in which the owners-managers, otherwise the entrepreneurs are mainly responsible

for the firm (Hill, 2001). In spite of this, Andriopoulos and Gotsi (2000), Harris and de Chernatony (2001), as well as Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006) have mentioned that studies from the staff perspective towards corporate branding are also important and it is still lacking.

Ahonen (2008) also finds that the researchers are aware that business-to-business (B2B) branding is unlike the traditional business to customer (B2C) branding. Both B2B and B2C branding studies have been researched upon, but mainly dominated by research about B2C organisations under the corporate branding literature. Ahonen (2008) also concluded that 73 percent of the publications have conducted firm level analysis, since the respondents are mainly founders or owners-managers.

Fascinatingly from Table 3, there seems to be a pick-up trend in quantitative studies using questionnaires to collect data between year 2010 and year 2013. There is an exception which the study by Muhammad et al. (2012) has embarked on a conceptual study using secondary data sources. Mostly the research work encompasses B2C branding studies at corporate level in a wide range of industries, from non-profit sector, to tourism and even multiple sectors. Such division on the approach in BO related studies is normal since there is still much to do in identifying BO frameworks and dimensions, in spite that the concept has been around for over two decades now.

Henceforth, it will be interesting to review the literature that has discussed about BO and its operationalisation in specific to the accommodation industry. Will the level and type of interest be the same with the above conclusion? To find out the answer, this present study will be covering the related literature from year 2003 till the present times.

### 3. OPERATIONALISATION OF BO WITHIN THE ACCOMMODATION INDUSTRY

Similar with Ahonen's (2008) findings, the studies about branding in SMEs in the accommodation industry seems rare among academics. Occasionally the BO related studies may use samples across hotel industry and compare with another industry. The study by Cobb-Walgren et al. (1995) have performed an empirical study on creating brand value and the effects on customers' preferences and purchase actions between two sets of brands. One is with the household cleaner industry from commonly a lower risk product category industry and the other from hotels that portrays a high level of functional and financial risks. The study findings for both sets encompass two brands. The hotel brand representation includes the Holiday Inn and Howard Johnson, while the household cleaner industry representation includes soft scrub and Bon Ami. Across both categories, the yield for the brand with higher advertising has generated higher levels of brand equity, which significantly accounts for the customers' preferences and purchase intentions.

Referring to Table 4, there is an upward trend in the interest of studying BO, primarily from year 2003 because of the literature gaps, though the branding studies are undertaken in different

**Table 3: Corporate branding studies between year 2010 and year 2013**

| Author (s)               | Approach                                                                                                                                  | Theoretical background                                                                                                                                               | Type                           | Data                                                                                                               | Respondents and interviewees                                                                                                                                     | Amount of respondents            | Unit of analysis*    | Industry                                                                                                 | Firm's business** |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mulyanegara (2010)       | Market orientation and BO from customer perspective an empirical examination in the non-profit sector                                     | Integrated marketing communications, market orientation and BO                                                                                                       | Quantitative                   | Questionnaire                                                                                                      | Attendees of 13 church organisations in Australia                                                                                                                | Sample 1854, 344 respectively    | CS                   | Non-profit sector                                                                                        | B2C               |
| Peters et al. (2010)     | The influence of entrepreneurial branding on entrepreneurial and growth orientations: an empirical study in the Austrian tourism industry | Marketing orientation, brand management, entrepreneurial branding                                                                                                    | Quantitative                   | Questionnaire                                                                                                      | 4-5 star hotel (small businesses) in the Alpine region, Austria                                                                                                  | Population 184, 60 respectively  | CS                   | Tourism industry                                                                                         | B2C               |
| Gromark and Melin (2011) | The underlying dimensions of BO and its impact on financial performance                                                                   | Brand management; strategy, identity and positioning                                                                                                                 | Quantitative                   | Questionnaire                                                                                                      | VA 500 (the Swedish equivalent of Fortune 500)                                                                                                                   | Population 500, 254 respectively | C                    | Multiple industries                                                                                      | B2C, B2B          |
| Hsu et al. (2012)        | An analytical model for building brand equity in hospitality firms                                                                        | Brand equity, evaluation criteria for service-base hospitality brand equity, building brand equity for hospitality firms, QFD, consistent fuzzy preference relations | Qualitative, then quantitative | Three phases: First phase: In-depth interview, second phase: Survey questionnaire, third phase: In-depth interview | T Restaurant: A GM, a SM in brand and a SM in marketing plan<br>Loyal customers of T Restaurant SMs – Marketing: 3, Store: 5                                     | 3<br>266<br>8                    | C<br>Individual<br>C | T Restaurant since 2001, a famous western-style steak-house with 26 stores in Taiwan<br>SMEs in Pakistan | B2C               |
| Muhammad et al. (2012)   | Relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, firm resources, SME branding and firm's performance: is innovation the missing link?    | Entrepreneurial orientation; firm resources; SME branding; innovation                                                                                                | Conceptual                     | Secondary data sources                                                                                             | More than 100 of conceptual and research papers written by prominent researchers in the field of entrepreneur-ship, innovation and brand management              | -                                | C                    |                                                                                                          | B2C, B2B          |
| Huang and Tsai (2013)    | Antecedents and consequences of brand-oriented companies                                                                                  | Building brand-oriented companies                                                                                                                                    | Quantitative                   | Questionnaire (e-mail, fax)                                                                                        | Manufacturers in Taiwan listed Dun and Bradstreet database; Common Wealth magazine; the Branding web site sponsored by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and BIPA | Sample 569, 106 respectively     | CP                   | Multiple industries                                                                                      | B2C, B2B          |
| Xiong et al. (2013)      | Exploring the employee perspective in the development of brand ambassadors                                                                | Creating brand ambassadors, employee brand understanding - job characteristics theory, employee perceived-brand knowledge, employee perceived-brand importance       | Quantitative                   | Online self-completing survey in early June 2011                                                                   | Casual (27.4%), part-time (24.8%), full-time (47.4%) from entry-level, to supervisory and middle and top management                                              | Sample 2500, 269 respectively    | CS                   | Hospitality industry                                                                                     | B2C               |

QFD: Quality functional deployment. \*S: Services, P: Product, C: Corporate, \*\*B2B: Business to business, B2C: Business to consumers, BO: Brand orientation

approaches. However, there seems to be a trend that the theoretical background in this field has more emphasis at studying BO from customers' and employees' perspectives.

There are nine studies in Table 4 that looks from the customers' perspective (Hsu et al., 2012; Hung et al., 2012; Kam and King, 2010; Kam et al., 2013; Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Kim, et al., 2003; Muhammad and Basharat, 2011; Xie and Heung, 2012; Xuan et al., 2013). A total of six studies that looks from the top to rank-and-file employees' perspective of the hotel brands (Dev et al., 2009; King, 2010; King et al., 2013; Narumon and Dimmit, 2007; Tsang et al., 2011; Xie et al., 2014). There is only one study about the BO influences on the entrepreneurial/growth orientation that examine from the hotel entrepreneurs' perspective (Peters et al., 2010). This is not surprising since many scholars in Table 4 find the customers and employees are important stakeholders in brand involvement activities.

It can be also gathered from Table 4 that the BO studies tend to concentrate on the hotels, a type of the accommodation facility rather other types such as backpackers, homestays, and hostels. Peters et al.'s (2010) study has had a different focus that is relying on the sample consisting of small tourism business rather than the more popular approach of gaining samples of larger or international hotels performed in the other studies. The higher level of interest in larger or international hotels could be attributed to one primary reason that is virtually impossible to gain objective or certifiable third-party measures at the business unit level for small and medium businesses (Dess and Robinson, 1984; Matsuno et al., 2002; Slater and Narver, 1994).

On another note, 14 out 17 studies in Table 4 adopt largely the quantitative rather the qualitative approach, and mainly use a range of survey questionnaires, to focus groups and in-depth interviews in one specific study location say Austria, Australia, China, Hong Kong, North Cyprus, Pakistan, Thailand, and USA. There is an exception for Hung et al. (2012) study that covers two locations, Taiwan and Macao as well as Dev et al. (2009) study across 56 countries. There is only one study that uses qualitative approach (Narumon and Dimmit, 2007), while there is a study by O'Neill and Mattila (2010) which reliance is using prior literature about hotel branding in the past 25 years. There is the other study about "a customer-based brand equity model for upscale hotels" by Hsu et al. (2012) in which the authors use mixed-methods. Interestingly in contrast to Ahonen's (2008) study, there seems to be more aggressive move in the development of BO empirical studies using the quantitative research methodology in the accommodation industry in the recent years.

A total of 12 studies in Table 4 have registered a higher interest at analysing individual rather than at the firm level among the BO studies in Table 4. There are seven publications that covers one popular topic - brand equity (Hsu et al., 2012; Hung et al., 2012; Kam and King, 2010; Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Kim et al., 2003; Muhammad and Basharat, 2011; Tsang et al., 2011), which demonstrates an increase in brand-equity related studies in year 2000s (Hankinson, 2001; Reid et al., 2005; Urde, 1994; Wong and Merrilees, 2005).

The other emphasis is to look at different BO variables and its role in different studies. Table 5 is constructed based on the several studies in Table 4 that displays the different roles assumed. BO variables primarily play the independent variable role (total 10 studies), followed by dependent role (4 studies), and lastly the mediating role (only 2 studies). One of the highlight here is more scholars are measuring brand equity as dependent variable after year 2007 in contrast with Wong and Merrilees's (2007) conclusion at that time, where there is little effort to do so in the past.

There is some interest in proposing a suitable brand model for the accommodation industry post Aaker's (1991, 1996) and Keller's (1993, 1998) model. It is encouraging to see Prasad and Dev (2000) developing a hypothetical brand-equity index model during their time. The model is aimed for the use of CEOs and top managers in hotels to evaluate the hotels' performance. Through a customer-centric framework, the model enables to perform the following which include monitoring customers' preferences about the hotel brand, developing remedial marketing strategies, measuring remedial actions and its effects, and monitoring the competitors' brand equity. The other notable brand-equity related model measurement has been advocated by Yoo and Donthu (2001, 2002). The model supports Aaker's (1991, 1996) and Keller's (1993, 1998) conceptualisation of brand equity. The model also combines with brand personality measures using data collected from Australian consumers.

Fascinatingly, Berry (2000) developed a service brand model that has a customer experience construct. Several years later, Hung et al.'s (2012) study have constructed an experience-based luxury brand equity model among luxury resort hotels in Taiwan and Macao.

Following similar footsteps are Hsu et al. (2012) when the scholars have proposed a customer-based brand equity model and tested against several others. The aim is to develop a model that better suit the hotel industry in the current times. There seems to be an increasing search in understanding the customers' perspective of the hotel brand. Several prior studies (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Berry, 2000; Hsu et al., 2012; Hung et al., 2012; Prasad and Dev, 2000; Yoo and Donthu, 2001, 2002) have focused on the development of customer-centric brand models. It is hard to put a strong standpoint in the direction of the brand models development in the future since the prior studies in the field are still in the infancy stage. The question should it be solely dependent on customers-centric models.

Finally, let's look at the BO measurements. 12 out of the 17 studies in Table 4 use subjective and descriptive measures (Hsu et al., 2012; Kam and King, 2010; Kam et al., 2013; Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Kim et al., 2003; King, 2010; King et al., 2013; Peters et al., 2010; Tsang et al., 2011; Xie and Heung, 2012; Xie et al., 2014; Xuan et al., 2013).

Among the 17 studies in Table 4, there are altogether five studies that have used the seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The five studies that are being referred here include those by Hsu et al. (2012); Kam et al. (2013); Kim et al.,

Table 4: BO studies in the accommodation industry from year 2003 till present

| Author (s)                      | Approach                                                                                                                      | Theoretical background                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Type                                                                           | Instrument                                                               | Respondents/<br>interviewees                                                                                                                               | Amount of<br>respondents                      | Unit of<br>analysis* | Industry                                                                                                                                                                   | Firm's<br>business** |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Kim et al.<br>(2003)            | The effect of<br>consumer-based<br>brand equity on firms'<br>financial performance                                            | Brand equity and<br>components, brand equity in<br>service industry                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Quantitative<br>(descriptive,<br>seven-point<br>scale)                         | Intercept<br>surveys<br>at Kimpo<br>Airport using<br>questionnaire       | Travellers staying<br>in luxury hotel (s)<br>for the past<br>2 years                                                                                       | 840, 513<br>respectively                      | Individual           | 12 luxury hotels                                                                                                                                                           | B2C                  |
| Kayaman<br>and Arasli<br>(2007) | Customer based brand<br>equity: evidence from<br>the hotel industry                                                           | Branding, service branding<br>and hotel brand equity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Quantitative<br>(descriptive<br>and subjective,<br>five-point<br>Likert scale) | Questionnaire                                                            | Hotel customers<br>from 11 different<br>countries                                                                                                          | 345                                           | Individual           | 5-star hotels in<br>Northern Cyprus                                                                                                                                        | B2C                  |
| Narumon<br>and Dimmit<br>(2007) | Employer branding:<br>the perspective of the<br>hotel management in<br>the Thai luxury hotel<br>industry                      | Employer branding and<br>internal marketing; employer<br>branding and human<br>resource management;<br>employer branding and<br>internal service quality<br>management; the employer<br>brand and internal branding;<br>employer branding and<br>internal communication;<br>employer branding as a<br>holistic approach | Qualitative                                                                    | In-depth and<br>focus groups<br>interviews                               | Three general<br>managers and five<br>human resource<br>management<br>directors<br>Hotel staff from<br>the luxury hotels<br>between 23 and<br>35 years old | Eight in-depth<br>interviews<br>Not available | C                    | Luxury hotels in<br>Thailand                                                                                                                                               | B2C                  |
| Dev et al.<br>(2009)            | Customer orientation<br>or competitor<br>orientation: which<br>marketing strategy has<br>a higher payoff for<br>hotel brands? | Contingency view of market<br>orientation, organisational<br>performance, economic<br>development, local market<br>environment                                                                                                                                                                                          | Quantitative                                                                   | Questionnaire                                                            | Hotel general or<br>senior managers<br>(a mix expatriates<br>and nationals)                                                                                | 184                                           | C                    | Independent<br>hotels or hotel<br>chains from<br>56 countries<br>that employs<br>an average 433<br>staff, operates<br>an average of<br>23 years with 365<br>rooms for sale | B2C                  |
| Kam and<br>King (2010)          | "When experience<br>matters": building and<br>measuring hotel brand<br>equity: The customers'<br>perspective                  | Six constructs deriving<br>from Berry's (2000) service<br>branding model                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Quantitative<br>(descriptive<br>and<br>subjective)                             | First stage:<br>Survey<br>questionnaire<br>Second stage:<br>Focus groups | Customers who<br>have consumed<br>hotel organisation<br>services                                                                                           | 288                                           | C                    | Hotels in<br>Australia                                                                                                                                                     | B2C                  |
| King (2010)                     | Tourism and<br>hospitality employees'<br>response to internal<br>brand management                                             | Brand commitment, role<br>clarity, brand supportive<br>behaviour, brand knowledge<br>dissemination                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Quantitative<br>(descriptive<br>and<br>subjective)                             | Self-<br>administered<br>online survey                                   | Entry level: 44.5%<br>Middle managers<br>46.7%<br>Senior<br>management 8.8%                                                                                | 137                                           | Individual           | Tourism and<br>hospitality firms<br>in Australia                                                                                                                           | B2C                  |

(Contd...)

Table 4: (Continued...)

| Author (s)                         | Approach                                                                                                                            | Theoretical background                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Type                                                                           | Instrument                                            | Respondents/<br>interviewees                                                                                                                                                       | Amount of<br>respondents                                                                                                                      | Unit of<br>analysis* | Industry                                        | Firm's<br>business** |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| O'Neill<br>and Mattila<br>(2010)   | Hotel brand strategy                                                                                                                | Value of hotel brands, how<br>brands create value, the<br>relationship between guest<br>satisfaction and hotel brands,<br>the past 25<br>hotel brand extension, the<br>relationship between hotel<br>branding and franchising<br>BO, entrepreneurial<br>orientation | Prior literature<br>of hotel<br>branding for<br>the past 25<br>years           | -                                                     | -                                                                                                                                                                                  | -                                                                                                                                             | -                    | Hotels                                          | B2C                  |
| Peters et al.<br>(2010)            | The influence of<br>entrepreneurial<br>branding on<br>entrepreneurial and<br>growth orientations                                    | Quantitative<br>(descriptive<br>and subjective,<br>five-point<br>Likert scale)                                                                                                                                                                                      | Questionnaire                                                                  | Hotel owners<br>or hotel<br>entrepreneurs             | 60                                                                                                                                                                                 | C                                                                                                                                             | Individual           | 4-5 star small<br>hotels in Austria             | B2C                  |
| Muhammad<br>and Basharat<br>(2011) | Interrelationship<br>between customer<br>based brand equity<br>constructs: empirical<br>evidence from hotel<br>industry of Pakistan | Quantitative<br>(five-point<br>Likert scale)                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Survey<br>questionnaire                                                        | Hotel customers                                       | 200                                                                                                                                                                                | Individual                                                                                                                                    | Individual           | Eight 4-5 star<br>hotels in Pakistan            | B2C                  |
| Tsang et al.<br>(2011)             | An examination of the<br>relationship between<br>employee perception<br>and hotel brand equity                                      | Brand equity – brand<br>image, brand awareness,<br>perceived-quality; employee<br>branding – employee<br>commitment, employee<br>identification, service quality                                                                                                    | Quantitative<br>(descriptive<br>and subjective,<br>five-point<br>Likert scale) | Questionnaire                                         | Hotel employees<br>from F&B,<br>front office,<br>receptionist,<br>reservation,<br>concierge,<br>housekeeping,<br>guest service,<br>sales and<br>marketing, and<br>event management | 129                                                                                                                                           | Individual           | Major brand<br>hotels in Hong<br>Kong           | B2C                  |
| Hsu et al.<br>(2012)               | A customer-based<br>brand equity model for<br>upscale hotels                                                                        | Brand awareness, brand<br>image, perceived-quality,<br>brand loyalty                                                                                                                                                                                                | Qualitative<br>Quantitative<br>(descriptive,<br>five-point<br>scale)           | Focus groups,<br>expert reviews<br>Consumer<br>survey | Travellers from<br>12 major cities in<br>China                                                                                                                                     | Focus group: 10<br>Chinese domestic<br>tourists and 8<br>foreign travellers<br>656 (318 domestic<br>hotels; 338 from<br>international hotels) | Individual           | Upscale<br>hotels (4-5 star<br>hotels) in China | B2C                  |
| Hung et al.<br>(2012)              | Developing<br>experience-based<br>luxury brand equity in<br>the luxury resorts<br>Hotel industry                                    | Experience-base luxury<br>brand equity, experience of<br>luxury                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Quantitative                                                                   | Survey<br>questionnaire                               | Tourists                                                                                                                                                                           | Taiwan: Sample<br>430, 426,<br>respectively<br>Macao: Sample 440,<br>425 respectively                                                         | Individual           | Luxury hotels<br>in Taiwan and<br>Macao         | B2C                  |

(Contd...)

Table 4: (Continued...)

| Author (s)            | Approach                                                                                                                                  | Theoretical background                                                                                                                                                           | Type                                                                | Instrument                                                                               | Respondents/<br>interviewees       | Amount of<br>respondents     | Unit of<br>analysis* | Industry                                                     | Firm's<br>business** |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Xie et al.<br>(2012)  | The effects of brand relationship quality on responses to service failure of hotel consumers                                              | Brand relationships in the service setting, the BRQ model, the attribution theory to service failures                                                                            | Quantitative (descriptive and subjective, five-point Likert scale)  | Questionnaire                                                                            | Hotel guests from six hotel chains | 419                          | Individual           | 4-5 star international and local own hotel brands in China   | B2C                  |
| Kam et al.<br>(2013)  | The influence of customer brand identification on hotel brand evaluation and loyalty development                                          | Brand loyalty, customer brand identification, The effect of customer brand identification on hotel brand loyalty, the effect of customer brand identification on service quality | Quantitative (descriptive and subjective, seven-point Likert scale) | Survey questionnaire                                                                     | Customer                           | 252                          | Individual           | Hotels in Australia (majority are upscale and luxury hotels) | B2C                  |
| King et al.<br>(2013) | The influence of service BO on hotel employees' attitude and behaviors in China                                                           | Employee customer orientation, service orientation, BO, service BO, employee brand-building behaviour                                                                            | Quantitative (descriptive and subjective)                           | Survey                                                                                   | Hotel employees                    | 207                          | Individual           | One 5-star foreign-brand hotel in Guangzhou                  | B2C                  |
| Xuan et al.<br>(2013) | Hotel brand personality and brand quality                                                                                                 | Brand equity, brand image and brand personality, brand quality                                                                                                                   | Quantitative (descriptive and subjective, seven-point Likert scale) | Survey, 22-item, 5 dimensions, seven-point Likert scale                                  | Hotel guests                       | 400 (194 males, 206 females) | Individual           | Six hotel brands, at Pensaco-la beach, USA                   | B2C                  |
| Xie et al.<br>(2014)  | Crafting and testing a central precept in service-dominant logic: hotel employees' brand-citizenship behaviour and customers' brand trust | Employee BCB, POS and BCB affecting customer's BT                                                                                                                                | Quantitative (descriptive and subjective, seven-point Likert scale) | POS and BCB data through employee questionnaires BT data through customer questionnaires | Hotel employees<br>Hotel customers | 106<br>73                    | Individual           | Hotels in Guang-dong                                         | B2C                  |

BCB: Brand citizenship behaviour, POS: Perceived-organisational support, BT: Brand trust, CBBE: Customer base brand equity, \*C: Corporate, \*\*B2B: Business to business, B2C: Business to consumers

**Table 5: BO variables assuming the independent variable/dependent variable/mediator variable/moderator variable role**

| Author (s)                   | Independent variable                                                        | Dependent variable                                                    | Mediating variable             | Moderating variable |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Kim et al. (2003)            | Customer-based brand equity                                                 | -                                                                     | -                              | -                   |
| Kayaman and Arasli (2007)    | Brand equity                                                                | -                                                                     | -                              | -                   |
| Narumon and Dimmit (2007)    | Employer branding                                                           | -                                                                     | -                              | -                   |
| Kam and King (2010)          | Company's presented brand, external brand communication                     | Brand equity                                                          | Brand awareness, brand meaning | -                   |
| King (2010)                  | Brand knowledge                                                             | Brand supportive behaviour                                            | Brand commitment               | -                   |
| Peters et al. (2010)         | Entrepreneurial branding                                                    | -                                                                     | -                              | -                   |
| Muhammad and Basharat (2011) | Brand equity constructs (perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness) | Brand equity constructs (brand loyalty, brand image, brand awareness) | -                              | -                   |
| Tsang et al. (2011)          | Hotel brand equity                                                          | -                                                                     | -                              | -                   |
| Hsu et al. (2012)            | Brand equity                                                                | Brand choice intention                                                | -                              | -                   |
| Hung et al. (2012)           | Brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand identity, perceived brand luxury      | Experience-based luxury brand equity                                  | -                              | -                   |
| Total                        | 10                                                                          | 4                                                                     | 2                              | 0                   |

2003; Xie et al. (2014); as well as Xuan et al. (2013). There are two other studies that have adopted the five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) which include Kayaman and Arasli's (2007); as well as Xie and Heung (2012) studies. Meanwhile, it is gathered one of the studies by Peters et al. (2010) has used the five-point Likert scale with the descriptor ("I agree fully" to "I do not agree"). The study by Muhammad and Basharat (2011) also uses the five-point Likert scale.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

To conclude, it is gathered from Table 4, research methods used in the studies reveal that the research in BO is more intense in the higher star rating and luxury accommodation businesses. Often quantitative methods are used. This is because the phenomenon has matured over the past decades, and in such phenomena, the aim is to examine the relationships of BO and/or other independent variables on dependent variables (Creswell, 2014) such as voluntary income or the retailer's advantage. Perhaps for this reason, the use of quantitative methods is rampant and the data analysing has been performed across a varied combination of BO dimensions. However, as often mentioned, large organisations differ from small firms. In contrast, BO studies are definitely still in the infancy stage for the small and medium accommodation ventures (Ahonen, 2008; Maznah and Noor, 2010). Despite Ahonen's (2008) call in the publication "Branding - does it even exist among SMEs?" to move further other than case studies, still up to now, there is novel research done about BO studies in SMEs, including those in the accommodation industry. Yin (2003) explains this phenomenon of why case studies are more popularly used is due to the novel significance of branding studies among SMEs. The analyses of quantitative studies are still lagging behind that has been found in this present study, hence a call for more scholars to explore in this SME branding field.

The study about BO dimensions in Table 4 tends to concentrate on the hotels, a type of the accommodation facility rather other types such as backpackers, homestays, and hostels. In fact,

the 4-5 star rating hotels and luxury hotels have been focused. Going over the articles to look for SMEs, there are barely article publications about branding among SMEs in the accommodation industry which concurs with a few scholars' observation (Ahonen, 2008; Maznah and Noor, 2010).

There are different collective set of BO dimensions that have been applied and are able to establish that BO is a critical factor in influencing in different manners on the business performance. Not surprisingly, it is found that there are a higher number of prior studies that have focused on studying from the customers' perspectives. Marketing functions have always been intensely studied surrounding the targeted customers' perceptions or experiences, which also had spurred towards a distinctive direction of the development of customer-centric brand models in the accommodation industry (Prasad and Dev, 2000; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; 2002; Hsu et al., 2012; Hung et al., 2012).

Moving forward, it should be contemplated to identify the specific BO variables that can contribute to sustaining the small and medium accommodation ventures. Several environmental factors probably have spurred this move even more intensely. Potential customers are more likely attracted to companies involved in internet marketing (Gautam, 2012) which enable customers to search for product information in the pre-purchase stage (Lin, 2011) about the available accommodation options. This makes branding recognition among the small and medium accommodation ventures even more important. Within the accommodation industry, Maznah and Noor (2010) mentioned the hotel groups are making tremendous efforts to build strong brands for the increasingly demanding guests. Thus, there is an upward pressure on small and medium accommodation businesses to be involved in branding activities to survive and perform better against their larger competitors. According to Beaver and Prince (2004), owners of independent businesses prominently value management autonomy highly. Henceforth, it is not surprising to see the owners-managers in these accommodation ventures would likely be very active in managing the property and could overlook practising branding activities (Maznah and Noor, 2010).

Hence, it will be a timely call of this present study to identify if owners-managers do practise BO and if there is linkage with the performance of their small and medium accommodation businesses.

The researcher will be also proposing to perform both subjective and descriptive research in which majority of the prior studies have also utilised the same approach to capture the BO activities, mainly the Likert point scale undertaken within the accommodation businesses. So far only a few studies have offered to investigate about the financial performance deriving the value of BO through objective performance measurements (Wong and Merrilees, 2007). Hence it explains why the respondent perceptions are more researched upon rather than getting the objective data to indicate a firm's performance. This becomes more challenging for small and medium businesses, as it is hard to gain objective or certifiable third-party measures (Dess and Robinson, 1984; Matsuno et al., 2002; Slater and Narver, 1994).

Though scholars agree customer interaction is vital to BO (Gromark and Melin, 2011; Urde, 1999), the interaction with other stakeholders are also important, example the employees. Employees also play a crucial role in the development and championing a trademark, as they reflect a direct part of the brand and brand personality (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007). In the service delivery process, the employees are the brand identity representatives (Peters et al., 2010). Managers and their brand orientation is also a vital influence in influencing the performance (Prasad and Dev, 2000; Kim et al., 2003; Peters et al., 2010). Henceforth, this present study is recommending that all three – The owners-managers, employees on top of the customer perspectives in BO should be studied all together, not mutually exclusive so as to better comprehend how large accommodation businesses that displays BO can generate superior performance (Ewing and Napoli, 2005). It will also enable large businesses to better understand the role of employees in branding (Peters et al., 2010), and the effect on customer experiences (Prasad and Dev, 2000; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; 2002; Hsu et al., 2012; Hung et al., 2012).

However, as this present study highlights research gaps in entrepreneurial studies, the higher level of hope is to inspire more scholars in small and medium entrepreneurial field to investigate branding issues from owners-managers' (before customers' and employees') perspectives. This is because in specific to SMEs in the accommodation industry is primarily run by the owners-managers (Hill, 2001). In other words, it is much dependent on these owners-managers' institutional entrepreneurship (Musa and Ibrahim, 2013), processes that include BO activities, that initiates entrepreneurial spirit that can lead the small and medium accommodation businesses into transformation and modernism (Musa and Ibrahim, 2013). Henceforth, it will make sense to determine the significance of BO activities as a strategic resource through the view of the owners-managers before exploring further the customer experiences or develop a model that encompass the three important stakeholders perspectives – customers, employees, and owners-managers. With these in mind, this present study

becomes as an important basis for studying entrepreneurial issues in more detail among SMEs in the accommodation industry. For example, how is the effect of BO on the small and medium accommodation businesses performance? Or does it primarily rely on the SME owners-managers' perception alone to initiate the BO activities?

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