

Corporate storytelling for branding: Underpropping or thwarting internal stakeholders' optimistic corporate brand perceptions?

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Abstract

There are many instances when pervasive and/or retrogressive corporate stories for branding are experienced and not reported truthfully in the organisations. If corporate stories for branding are negative, it can therefore be questioned to what extent they underprop or thwart internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Due to this, there are theoretical and literature gaps existing related to corporate storytelling for branding and its influence on internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. As a result, purposively sampled fifty-four in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2020 (within six selected Zimbabwean listed companies, from six different industrial sectors), to inquire for responses basing on the research study questions modelled from the research problem. Qualitative methodology was applied to execute the research, with evidence from interview transcripts, corporate documents and physical observations being analysed systematically, using conventional, summative and directed content analyses, respectively. Results showed that there are extensive differences in the responses related to how internal stakeholders perceive the corporate brand, as a result of shared corporate stories for branding. Originally, the study depicted that Impression Management (IM) theory is utilitarian in exploring the influence of corporate stories for branding on internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. The research study contributes to corporate storytelling for branding and Impression Management (IM) theory, practice and future research directions.