

# **BUILDING INTERNAL BRAND AWARENESS AND ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE ACCOMPLISHED BY SELF-SERVICE TECHNOLOGY (SST)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The majority of studies on internal brand equity look at its different aspects and how they relate to one another. Although earlier research has identified organizational practices important for successful internal branding, there is still little knowledge on how key organizational characteristics affect internal brand equity. This study focuses on organizational resilience, which is essential for an organization's survival not only in times of crisis but also in normal business operations. This study's primary goal is to determine how organizational resilience affects internal brand equity in light of the effects of self-service technology (SST) in retailing. Since technological advancements have significantly changed the retail industry over the past ten years, we investigate the effects of employees' views of SST performance. The findings of a survey of Madurai, retail workers show how internal brand equity, which encompasses brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand participation, and internal brand commitment, is greatly enhanced by organizational resilience and employees' impressions of technology developments.*

**Keywords:** *Commitment, internal brand equity, retailing, resilience, self-service, and, SST etc,*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2020, the unexpected global spread of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 led to the COVID-19 pandemic, which claimed an astonishing five million deaths over the course of two years and had an unimaginably destructive effect on corporations and other organizations. In this situation, resilience is clearly a crucial quality that determines whether or not people, businesses, and the entire society will survive the challenges. Resilience is crucial for overcoming unforeseen challenges that call for adaptability, flexibility, and rebounding on the parts of both individuals and organizations, according to psychology and organizational studies (Youssef and Luthans 2007; Fletcher and Sarkar 2013; Britt et al. 2016; Linnenluecke 2017; Liu et al. 2019; Tarba et al. 2019). According to Lengnick-Hall et

al. (2011) on page 244, organizational resilience is the capacity that allows organizations to "effectively absorb, develop situation-specific responses to, and ultimately engage in transformative activities to capitalize on disruptive surprises that potentially threaten organization survival." According to earlier studies (Kuntz et al. 2016; Branicki et al. 2019; Stokes et al. 2019), resilience is important for settings that involve significant adversity and harsh situations as well as for daily life and stable environments. We respond to calls for research on organizational resilience in the workplace and look at the micro-processes important for creating a resilient organization throughout daily operations in this study (Branicki et al. 2019; Hartmann et al. 2020). In branding study, organization and organizational resilience are not well-examined. The majority of branding studies that take resilience into account adopt a consumer perspective and offer empirical proof of consumer resilience to unfavorable information (Elbedweihy et al. 2016; Japutra et al. 2018; Torres and Augusto 2019), resilience intentions (Jung et al. 2021), and brand attitude resilience (Sweldens et al. 2010). Previous research on place branding examines resilience in connection to city branding (Coafee and Rogers 2008; Naef 2020) and nation branding by using a different theoretical framework (Tamaki 2019). Additionally, only a small number of studies in the field of branding have looked at the importance of brand resilience for business performance (e.g. Testa et al. 2017; Boukis et al. 2021). In general, previous branding research offers sporadic theoretical claims and scant empirical support for resilience. Applying an employee viewpoint, we fill these research gaps in our study by looking at how organizational resilience affects internal brand equity, the primary goal of internal branding.

As stated by Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010) on page 1250, "the incremental impact of branding on employee behaviour" is how we define internal brand equity. Each person in an organization can be viewed as "an active force and decision maker in internal branding, and hence brand cocreation," according to a modern perspective on internal branding (Merrilees et al. 2021, p. 813). Building a successful corporate brand therefore depends on how each person perceives and reacts to internal branding. We evaluate the four primary characteristics of internal brand equity—brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand engagement and internal brand commitment—in light of the claims made by earlier studies (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010). While previous branding research offers insights into the primary mechanisms of internal branding and relationships between the dimensions of internal brand equity (Saleem and Iglesias 2016; Iyer et al. 2018; Piehler et al. 2018; Leijerholt et al. 2019; Boukis and Christodoulides 2020; Barros-Arrieta and Garca-Cali 2021)

there is still a lack of knowledge about the organizational factors affecting an This study advances the body of knowledge on internal branding by examining how organizational resilience influences the dimensions of internal brand equity. It does this by drawing on earlier resilience studies that emphasize the importance of organizational resilience in influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Kuntz et al. 2016; Hartmann et al. 2020; Annarelli et al. 2020).

Daily operations at work either strengthen organizational resilience or, in the worst scenario, weaken it. We argue that in this context of everyday resilience, the way technology advancements affect employees' perceptions and, ultimately, internal brand equity, is an area that has received little attention in previous study. Self-service technology (SST), such as self-scanning devices, self-payment machines, and mobile applications, can improve operational efficiency for retailers in the retail industry (Sorescu et al. 2011, Meuter et al. 2000), make shopping easier for consumers, and even increase the effectiveness for the entire ecosystem of actors working along customer journeys (Singh et al. 2019). Technology advancements might, however, also have unfavourable effects by altering the roles that customers and personnel play during service interactions (Larivière et al. 2017). When using SST, certain users, for instance, may experience feelings of embarrassment (Dabholkar and Bagozzi 2002), anxiety (Meuter et al. 2003), incompetence (Bulmer et al. 2018), or confusion (Johnson et al. 2021). Despite the timeliness of service and job performance benefits of SST, employees may encounter increasing workloads, additional stress from unclear responsibilities, and worries about future retention (Hsieh and Yen 2005; Di Pietro et al. 2014). Employees' negative opinions of SST may lead to poorer morale and worse levels of satisfaction, which could have an adverse impact on how they engage with customers and how loyal they are to their organisation (Verhoef et al. 2009). Although earlier research on SST suggests that it has a significant impact on employees' attitudes and behaviours, it mostly focuses on consumers and offers disproportionately little empirical data about employee-related and firm-centric results (Di Pietro et al. 2014; Taillon and Huhmann 2019).

This study's primary goal is to examine how organizational resilience affects internal brand equity. Taking into account the effects that SST has on retailing and we chose Madurai grocery stores as our research setting, focusing on the opinions of retail staff members about how things are done on a daily basis. This decision was motivated by the fact that the digital transformation of retailing led to the creation of new technological advances, which small businesses as well as huge chains must seize in order to succeed in a cutthroat industry. As a result, businesses are using SST more frequently to stay on the cutting edge of

technology. We performed an online poll with a panel of employees working at grocery stores that have implemented SST in light of the fact that SST complicates daily operations in these workplaces and may mediate the effects between organizational resilience and internal brand equity in these settings. Prior to the pandemic, we started our research to examine how organizational resilience functions in regular work settings and how it affects how employees view their companies' brands. Later on in the research process, we were astounded and surprised to witness how an unanticipated pandemic had quickly transformed grocery stores into contagious environments and transformed their employees into frontline essential workers, who demonstratively showed that organizational resilience represents a vital capability for organizations, which traditionally were not considered as extreme environments. By evaluating employees' perceptions of organizational resilience, SST, and internal brand equity, the study contributes theoretically to the field of internal branding research.

Additionally, we offer actionable advice for managers on how to boost internal brand equity by proactively boosting organizational resilience and minimizing the negative effects brought on by technological advancements on their workforces and organizational brands.

## **THEORETICAL STRUCTURE**

### **Internal brand equity**

Internal branding research has its roots in traditional notions that emphasize the critical role that loyal employees play in an organization's performance (Sasser and Arbeit 1976; Berry 1981). The modern perspective on internal branding includes organizational efforts made "to enable employees to regularly co-create brand value with diverse stakeholders," according to Saleem and Iglesias (2016). According to the findings of earlier studies, effective internal branding can influence employees' perceptions of an organization's brand favorably and have an impact on their behavior intentions (Burmman and Zeplin 2005; King and Grace 2008; Foster et al. 2010; Boukis and Christodoulides 2020; Carlini and Grace 2021; Leijerholt 2021). Because of this, among other benefits, a strong internal brand can aid in the implementation of corporate initiatives (Ahmed and Rafq 2003), enhance brand-consumer relationships (Burmman et al. 2009), enhance financial performance (Tuominen et al. 2016), and make it easier to gain a competitive edge (Gapp and Merrilees 2006).

Internal brand equity, also known as employee brand equity or employee-based brand equity, is the ultimate objective of internal brand management, according to the literature on

internal branding (King and Grace 2010; King et al. 2012; Schmidt and Baumgarth 2018; Jacobson et al. 2021). According to Baumgarth and Schmidt, internal brand equity generally refers to "the degree of workforce internalisation of brand identity, in support of branding at the customer interface" (2010, p. 1250). Numerous other models that identify the aspects of internal brand equity are provided by earlier studies on internal branding (e.g., Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010, Piehler et al. 2016, Boukis and Christodoulides 2020). We concentrate on the four primary characteristics of internal brand equity—brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand engagement, and internal brand commitment—while taking the claims made by earlier research into account (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010). First, brand orientation is defined as "a specific type of strategic orientation or corporate culture, characterized by high relevance of the brand as the basis of the business model" (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010, p. 1252). This definition comes from a strategic perspective on internal brand management (Urde 1994, 1999). Internal brand knowledge represents "brand related cognitive schemata," which are the cognitive responses of employees, according to Boukis and Christodoulides (2020, p. 45). Third, internal brand participation emphasizes "the personal relevance of the brand" (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010, p. 1253), with a focus on the affective reactions of employees. The last characteristic of internal brand commitment is "an employee's psychological relationship to the brand" (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010, p. 1253).

Although past research offers insightful information about internal brand equity, there is still disagreement over the precise connections made between its main components. However, research on internal branding shows that there may be a hierarchy of effects that progresses from brand orientation to internal brand knowledge, then to internal brand involvement, and finally to internal brand commitment. For instance, a study involving staff members and managers of business-to-business firms shows that brand orientation has a positive impact on internal brand knowledge (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010). A study done among service workers demonstrates the beneficial effects of internal brand management's cognitive results (such as brand comprehension and knowledge) on affective outcomes (such as brand identification underpinning internal brand involvement) (Piehler et al. 2016). Additionally, another study among service industry workers highlights the value of gauging cognitive and affective reactions to a corporate brand for raising internal brand equity (Boukis and Christodoulides 2020). The favorable effects of cognitive brand comprehension, such as employee brand knowledge, on affective brand connection, such as employee brand identification, are confirmed by a study involving frontline service workers (Ngo et al. 2020). Additionally, earlier research backs up the hypotheses of how internal brand engagement

affects internal brand commitment (Piehler et al. 2016). In light of these findings, we put up hypothesis on potential hierarchical effects between the four internal brand equity characteristics.

H1a Brand orientation is influenced favorably by internal brand knowledge

H1b Internal brand knowledge is positively impacted by internal brand involvement.

H1c Internal brand involvement is positively impacted by internal brand commitment.

### **Resilience of the organization**

Resilience has changed from being viewed as "an extraordinary, special gift that only a few people possessed" to "the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility" as a result of theoretical advancements in psychology research (Luthans 2002, p. 702). Early research on resilience places a high value on a person's capacity for "dynamic resourcefulness in sustaining a personally sufficient adaptational system," or just "resilience" (Block and Kremen 1996, p. 351). Later research on resilience supports this viewpoint by emphasizing the importance of organizational resilience, which describes an organization's capacity "to respond correctly to unforeseen challenges" (Mu and Butler 2009, p. 32). The initial research streams into organizational responses to adversity, organizational reliability, and employee strengths have been complemented by additional research streams into the general adaptability of business models and even resilient supply chain designs, according to a bibliographic mapping of business and management research on resilience (Linnenluecke 2017). According to the literature on resilience, companies must create plans to guarantee ongoing resilience enhancement and put procedures in place to control factors that might prevent it (Hartmann et al. 2020). Additionally, prior study (Kahn et al. 2018; Branicki et al. 2019) underlines the vital role that employees play in boosting organizational resilience.

Resilience has been extensively recognized in the field of organization studies as a significant element impacting attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in the workplace (Youssef and Luthans 2007; King et al. 2016). Although earlier branding research shows the importance of taking into account employees' personal characteristics (such as age, education, and length of service) for successfully implementing internal branding (Punjaisri and Wilson 2011), the impact of resilience is still comparatively understudied. However, organizational psychology research shows that utilizing employee resilience capacity results in positive adaptations that have favorable consequences, such as improved job performance, high levels of well-being, and healthy relationships (Britt et al. 2016). Prior research indicates that

programmes to enhance resilience that are adopted by an organization have the ability to promote resilient employee behavior as well as encourage learning, cooperation, and engagement across the business (Kuntz et al. 2017). As a result, measures made to increase organizational resilience may also benefit employees' comprehension of brand identity, relevance, and values, which together make up brand orientation. Prior studies have shown that the formation and utilization of cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and relational skill endowments, which change over time, are characteristics of the development of organizational resilience (Williams et al. 2017). These varied resource endowments are probably going to have a favorable impact on people inside of a company and their opinions of it (Williams et al. 2017). Prior research supports the expectation that organizational resilience capacity will positively influence not only overall firm performance but also a variety of desirable outcomes related to employee contributions and embracing various cognitive, behavioral, and contextual dimensions (Lengnick- Hall et al. 2011). The perceptions of an organizational brand and the cognitive and emotive reactions of employees are therefore likely to be positively impacted by organizational resilience. We predict that organizational resilience will have a favorable impact on the essential elements of internal brand equity, taking into account the results of previous research.

H2 Brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand involvement, and internal brand commitment are all positively impacted by an organization's resilience.

### **Technology that enables self-service in retail**

Organizations that adopt and incorporate technological innovations, such as SST in retailing, are motivated by both internal goals (such as enhancing the customer experience within a specific store) and the constantly changing social norms (Burke 2002; Weijters et al. 2007; Verhoef et al. 2009; Lin and Hsieh 2011; Reinartz et al. 2011). Prior studies highlight the need for additional support for the modern "working" consumer using new technologies, which is anticipated to be offered by retail staff and go beyond entirely taking over an operation (Cassidy et al. 2015; Collier et al. 2017). Novel technological advancements that interfere with human-to-human relationships as a result produce new expectations and increase strain on workers in the always shifting retail environment. According to earlier studies on the socio-technical systems theory (Pasmore et al. 1982), many stakeholder groups, such as management, employees, consumers, and channel members, may have an impact on a firm's preparation for the SST (Ramaseshan et al. 2015). Despite the fact that

several views must be taken into account for the adoption and implementation of SST to be successful. The past research has mostly applied a consumer perspective in this study.

In this study, we take the viewpoint of the employee to investigate how employees view organizational resilience, gauge how they feel about the internal brand, and investigate the effects of SST in retailing. Prior branding research has shown that, despite technological advancement, consumers still see employees as the ones that "humanize" an organizational brand and help customers form emotional ties with it, which supports the necessity of taking perceptions of employees into consideration (Morhart et al. 2009). A survey of the literature reveals that customer interactions with SST involve crucial value factors such as employee attitudes and support (Vakulenko et al. 2018). According to research on consumer roles in self-service systems by Kesson and Edvardsson (2018), some consumer groups find it difficult to participate in value cocreation, which includes using SST. As a result, they require employee assistance. Additional empirical data about the crucial role of employees is provided by prior retailing research that takes the perspective of the consumer. These studies show that, in the event of SST failure, consumers prefer to turn to staff in order to receive human support (Zhu et al. 2013). Discursive accounts of consumers' buying behaviours were investigated, and the results show that accessibility of staff and the help they offer customers are the primary external elements impacting their in-store experiences (Bulmer et al. 2018). According to a study done in the fast fashion industry, consumer's value service enhancements made by stores more highly than technological advancements (for example, extra support offered by a knowledgeable salesperson). Another study using a panel of self-service checkout users supports the notion that the presence of employees in the SST area is a significant situational component that influences consumers' perceptions of SST (Collier et al. 2015). Previous studies carried out in various empirical contexts have also produced conclusions that are similar. The attitude-intention model, for instance, indicates that customers' perceptions toward workers influence their intentions to use SST, according to a study conducted in the banking sector (Curran et al. 2003). Last but not least, prior study into the retail industry shows that there is an interpersonal influence chain, suggesting that staff have a significant impact on customers and, subsequently, on shop success (Maxham et al. 2008; Lichtenstein et al. 2010).

The capacities required for "recognizing the inevitability of failures and thoroughly understanding, coping with, and learning from them" are determined by the presence of high levels of resilience in an organization (Vogus and Sutcliffe 2012, p. 723). Employees in the retail industry may view the deployment of technology advancements in the form of SST as



technological turbulence, which necessitates a particular level of organizational resilience to successfully manage such changes (Schriber et al. 2019). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that an organization's capacity for resilience will have a significant impact on how its people build their attitudes toward SST and, as a result, how they perceive SST. The results of past studies show how important organizational awareness and resilience are before implementing new technology within firms (Nwankpa and Roumani 2014; Aanestad and Jensen 2016).

In light of these realizations, we put up a theory regarding the beneficial influence of organizational resilience on staff members' opinions of SST performance. H3 Perceptions of SST performance is positively impacted by organizational resilience.

Overall, it is reasonable to anticipate that technological advancements like SST will significantly affect workers' attitudes and behaviors. According to recent branding research, employees' overall perceptions of their employers and their organizational identification—which are formed based on their attitudes and expressed through their behaviors—determine their long-term commitment to and support for the accomplishment of organizational goals (Mael and Ashforth 1992; Dutton et al. 1994; Lichtenstein et al. 2010; Porricelli et al. 2014). The way that employees view new technologies might also shift from favorably to unfavorably. For instance, a study done in the hospitality sector shows that during the early stages of SST implementation and when management present technology advancements and employees can feel excitement and engagement (Montargot and Ben Lahouel 2018). However, later, when workers encounter unfavorable SST-related interferences with their task, they may sense frustration and anxiety (Montargot and Ben Lahouel 2018). According to earlier studies on SST, assessments of SST performance can serve as a stand-in for the overall SST experience (Nijssen et al. 2016). Employees' unfavorable attitudes and behaviors may therefore be triggered by their poor experiences with SST, which are defined by negative views regarding SST performance. According to evidence from earlier studies, favorable brand-related attitudes and behaviors can be facilitated by positive views of SST performance, which can be expected to increase a sense of psychological ownership towards the employer's brand (Chang et al. 2012). The dimensions of internal brand equity, which are based on employee responses to an organizational brand, are supported by prior research on internal brand equity, which emphasizes the critical role of organizational context and various organizational factors in shaping these responses (Boukis and Christodoulides 2020). Additionally, prior research suggests that an effective adoption of new technologies can empower workers and produce favorable results for internal branding (Li et al. 2018).

Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that positive perceptions of SST performance will positively impact the cognitive and emotive results of internal brand management as measured by the key aspects of internal brand equity.

H4 Brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand involvement, and internal brand commitment are all positively impacted by perceptions of SST performance.

## Methodology

Data from Madurai grocery store employees were gathered for the study. they were respondents, and We distributed an online survey to panelists for one significant marketing research company. There were two distribution rounds for the survey. The survey was initially distributed to a profiled sample that included grocery store personnel. A profiled sample was used to collect the data, and the response rate was 44.01%. In the second round, a random, unprofaned sample of panelists received the survey. An unprofiled sample was used to obtain the data, and the response rate was 28.04%. The survey's introduction letter made it clear that the study's main focus was on the opinions of grocery shop employees. There were 270 valid responses in total as a consequence of the data gathering.

There were 270 valid responses in total as a consequence of the data gathering. We contrasted the responses offered by the early respondents' (n = 135) and the late respondents' (n = 135) responses using the method for evaluating nonresponse error described in Collier and Bienstock's 2007 paper. The results were unaffected by nonresponse error because the independent samples t test failed to reveal any significant differences between these two groups across all variables.

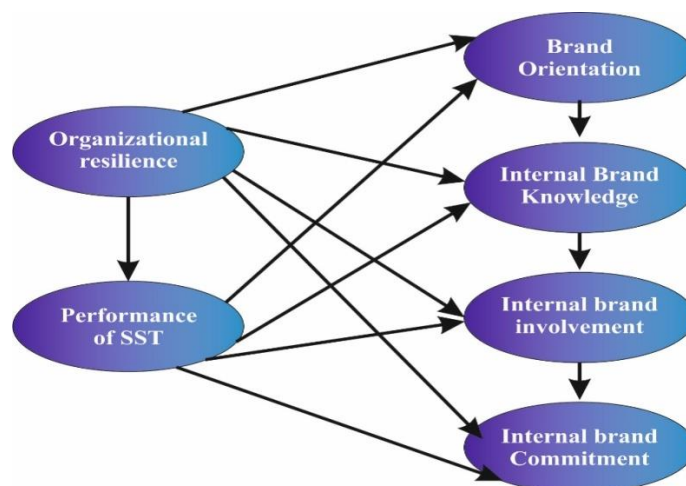


Fig:1 Conceptual framework

The majority of respondents (78.51%) worked for one of the three biggest supermarket chains—ICA, Coop, or Axfood—which roughly matched the distribution of market shares in the Madurai grocery industry. The grocery stores operated by these three market-leading chains, as well as those of its rivals, come in a variety of sizes, from tiny convenience stores to huge supermarkets. The majority of respondents in the sample were female (54.81%), and the majority (62.96%) had worked in the supermarket industry for more than five years. Less than 30 years old made up 35.92% of the age groupings, 30-49 years old made up 41.85%, and over 50 years old made up 22.22%. The four aspects of internal brand equity were measured using scales in the survey: brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand involvement, and internal brand commitment. The scales were modified based on results of a prior investigation into internal brand equity (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010). Scales measuring organizational resilience and staff views of SST performance were also included in the study. These constructs' scales were modified based on earlier research on organizational resilience (Mu and Butler 2009) and SST (Nijssen et al. 2016). Each construct's items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale.

### **Results of the analysis**

We used IBM SPSS Statistics 27 and IBM SPSS Amos 27 to analyse the data. We performed a Harman's single-factor test as part of the initial study to gauge the common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). There was no single dominant factor identified in the findings of the exploratory factor analysis using the principal components approach. A solution that retrieved 49.51% of the total variance was obtained by limiting the extracted number of components to one. In light of the outcomes of these tests, we failed to discover a typical technique bias in this investigation.

Values on the diagonal—AVE (average variance extracted); values below the diagonal—correlations; values above the diagonal—squared correlations

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

We employed the principle components method to carry out the confirmatory factor analysis. In seven rounds, the varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization reached its convergence. Six extracted components were used in the solution to account for 78.20% of the variation. We determined the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, average variance extracted, and construct reliability for each construct to evaluate its reliability and validity. The findings

demonstrated that the levels of reliability and validity for all independent and dependent variables utilized in the research were satisfactory.

The proposed conceptual model was tested using structural equation modelling. We used the method of maximum likelihood estimation. The organizational resilience, SST performance, and four aspects of internal brand equity (i.e., brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand engagement, and internal brand commitment) were among the six variables that were the subject of the structural model's analysis. Standardized loadings for each item across all constructs are shown in Table 3. Variance extracted and construct reliability results for each construct included in the structural model were sufficient (Hair et al. 2006).

The estimated fit indices indicated that there was a satisfactory fit between the structural model and the data. The findings showed that brand orientation had a statistically significant positive impact on internal brand knowledge ( $r = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), internal brand participation ( $r = 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and internal brand commitment ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The data validated hypothesis H1a, H1b, and H1c regarding the hierarchy of effects amongst the internal brand equity's fundamental characteristics. Brand orientation ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), internal brand knowledge ( $r = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), internal brand involvement ( $r = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and internal brand commitment ( $r = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were all found to be significantly positively impacted by organizational resilience. As a result, the following hypotheses about the influences of organizational resilience on the aspects of internal brand equity were shown to be true: H2a, H2b, H2c, and H2d. The results supported hypothesis H3, which claimed that organizational resilience positively affected workers' opinions of SST performance ( $t = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Internal brand commitment ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and brand orientation ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) were found to be significantly positively impacted by employees' perceptions of SST performance, supporting H4a and H4d. Employees' assessments of SST performance did not appear to have any discernible direct influence on internal brand participation or knowledge ( $p = 0.26$  and  $0.43$ , respectively). The H4b and H4c hypotheses were therefore unsupported. Overall, the results showed how crucial organizational resilience and staff views of SST are for increasing the fundamental elements of internal brand equity and, subsequently, for creating a powerful internal brand.

## **Findings**

The study's findings show that there are hierarchical influences amongst the fundamental components of internal brand equity. According to the evidence for hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c, internal brand equity develops from brand orientation to internal brand knowledge, then from internal brand participation to internal brand commitment. A company's systematic efforts to improve brand orientation within the organisation lay a strong basis for the positive cognitive and emotive responses of its employees to internal branding, according to the hierarchy of effects between the fundamental components of internal brand equity. Additionally, these responses have an impact on the development of internal brand commitment, which is one significant result of internal brand management. The findings support the hypotheses put forward in earlier research regarding potential interactions between internal brand equity's various characteristics (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010, Piehler et al. 2016, Boukis and Christodoulides 2020, Ngo et al. 2020). The study supports the hierarchical structure of these impacts and the increasing influence of internal branding on an organizational brand, to be more precise.

The study emphasizes organizational resilience, which might be anticipated to have an impact on Employee perceptions are a significant influence determining internal brand equity (Kuntz et al. 2016; Hartmann et al. 2020; Annarelli et al. 2020). The supported hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, and H2d show how organizational resilience positively influences internal brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand involvement, and internal brand commitment. Surprisingly, brand orientation is most strongly influenced by organizational resilience. This finding suggests that organizational efforts to boost organizational resilience are also advantageous for assisting with the implementation of a strategic vision for an organizational brand and the upholding of brand values, taking into account the strategic nature of brand orientation. The results show that organizational resilience plays a significant part in influencing employees' beliefs and feelings, which affect how loyal they are to the organization's brand.

Our findings support the idea that resilient businesses have the ability to successfully address a variety of issues that arise in their daily operations and offset unfavorable workplace influences. The evidence in favour of hypothesis H3 demonstrates how organizational resilience significantly affects employees' perceptions of technology advancements used in their workplaces. The study offers empirical proof that resilience capabilities of firms are important for influencing how employees see SST, which is one sort of technology innovation used in retailing. Additionally, the evidence supporting hypothesis H4a shows how these views affect employees' assessments of brand orientation. Due to the

significant impact that technology advancements have on modern organizations, it is possible to understand the relevance of this influence (Burke 2002; Reinartz et al. 2011; Montargot and Ben Lahouel 2018). As a result, establishing a strategic vision for the organizational brand is strongly related to the organizational activities devoted to acquiring a competitive advantage through the adoption of novel technology. However, given the lack of evidence for hypotheses H4b and H4c, employees' opinions of SST performance do not appear to have enough clout to significantly influence their cognitive and emotive reactions to an organization's brand. One argument is that these responses may be more strongly influenced by other organizational characteristics than SST, such as the psychosocial work environment or certain internal branding activities, such as internal communication. However, as evidenced by the support for hypothesis H4d, employees' opinions of SST can affect their commitment to the internal brand, even if this effect is much less significant than that of organizational resilience and internal brand engagement. The widespread use of SST and its less contentious role compared to other types of technology, like robotics and artificial intelligence, which have the potential to endanger the job security of employees in the retail industry, may help to explain these disparities.

## **Conclusions**

This study's primary goal was to examine the effects of organizational resilience on internal brand equity in light of the consequences of SST in retailing. By illustrating a hierarchy of impacts between the four dimensions of internal brand equity—brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand participation, and internal brand commitment—the study adds to the body of literature on internal brand equity. We demonstrate how these impacts grow over the dimensions and improve internal brand equity by following the assertions regarding potential hierarchical effects between the dimensions of brand equity (Baumgarth and Schmidt 2010; Piehler et al. 2016; Boukis and Christodoulides 2020; Ngo et al. 2020). By confirming the importance of organizational resilience for creating a powerful organizational brand and raising internal brand equity, the study contributes theoretically to the body of research on internal branding. Our findings not only confirm the general significance of organizational resilience, which was suggested in earlier organization studies (e.g. Youssef and Luthans 2007; King et al. 2016), but also emphasize the crucial part that organizational resilience plays in influencing the internal brand equity, which is the main result of internal branding. More specifically, the results show that organizational resilience directly improves each of the four internal brand equity aspects.

In this study, we offer more proof of how crucial it is for businesses to have resilience capabilities. These capabilities are necessary not just in contexts of extreme situations, but also in stable environments where daily operations take place. We investigate the potential for a trigger in the form of SST to modulate the effect of organizational resilience on internal brand equity. The study shows how organizational resilience affects employees' perceptions of SST performance in retailing, building on the hypothesis that organizational resilience can affect employees' perceptions of technological innovations implemented in their workplaces (Nwankpa and Roumani 2014; Aanestad and Jensen 2016). Additionally, the results demonstrate that these perceptions have both direct and indirect favorable impacts on internal brand commitment, internal brand knowledge, and internal brand orientation. The study analyses distinct organizational characteristics that are crucial for achieving success in a technologically sophisticated marketplace by adopting an employee viewpoint to explore the impact of technological developments on internal branding.

### **Managerial implications**

The report offers helpful suggestions for marketing managers in charge of an organization's internal branding. They are urged to systematically evaluate both the changes in organizational resilience and the internal branding results that have been attained. It is advised that marketing managers include resilience-related topics in staff training because, as the study's findings show, organizational resilience can either support or contradict the results of internal branding. Training programmes can incorporate resilience exercises that target individuals, groups, and the entire organization, such as individual mindfulness practices, team-building activities, and organizational-wide scenario-based trainings, to promote organizational resilience. Marketing managers are able to develop and put into action the actions that are required to encourage organizational resilience inside their firms, working in tandem with HR experts or organizational psychologists. Marketing managers may help staff become more resilient by taking a proactive approach to doing so. This will help them not only deal with challenges and the drawbacks of utilizing new technologies like SST, but also perform their routine activities more effectively. Marketing managers are generally urged to contribute extra initiatives promoting opportunities for boosting organizational resilience to internal brand building operations.

When evaluating the overall effectiveness of internal brand management, the key dimensions of internal brand equity constitute significant variables that should be taken into account. It is advised that marketing managers include clear and detailed objectives

addressing each aspect of internal brand equity in their strategic plans as well as measures for strengthening each aspect. Marketing managers must adopt a holistic perspective on internal brand equity and make sure that internal branding initiatives would address all of these dimensions because there are hierarchical effects between brand orientation, internal brand knowledge, internal brand involvement, and internal brand commitment. For collecting internal brand equity, the study's fundamental dimensions are crucial. By taking into account additional factors, marketing managers can supplement this method of maintaining internal brand equity. These factors may be crucial for determining how employees perceive their organization's brands and how they will react to internal branding.

### **Limitations and future research**

The empirical setting of this study, specifically the Madurai retail industry, is one of its limitations. This environment was advantageous for examining attitudes about SST, resilience, and internal branding given the growing efforts made by Madurai stores to integrate technology advancements. However, for future research, we advise investigating these issues through a cross-cultural study, which would allow a comparison of perceptual variations across other nations. Future study could also look into a variety of subjects that combine internal branding, resilience, and technology advancements. These topics could be examined in contexts other than commerce, such as different business-to-business markets or the public sector. The employee viewpoint used in this study was helpful for developing the field's present body of knowledge, which primarily focuses on a consumer perspective, but it is still restricted to only one internal stakeholder group. Future research, we propose, should adopt a stakeholder approach and take into account how various stakeholders can affect or be influenced by the application of technical breakthroughs. Future studies may compare how various stakeholder groups perceive various SST kinds and take into account how other technologies, like as artificial intelligence, may affect how various stakeholders make decisions. This study supports the necessity for further internal branding research that explores numerous organizational aspects and looks at how these factors affect organizational success. We lack information on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected organizational resilience and employee perceptions in the retail sector because this study was started before the pandemic. Although this group of workers has rendered significant services to society, they have gotten little, if any, public attention for their exceptional accomplishments.

In other words, they went from working in a typical setting to one that the government advised others to stay away from. It is therefore interesting to investigate the elements that



impacted organizational resilience and retail employees' views during the epidemic. In addition, increased online grocery shopping during the pandemic has further encouraged people to use SST, creating a need for expanded services. The ability of internal brand management in the retail industry to handle and support the rising digitalization of these services is therefore a topic for future research. In general, the post-pandemic recovery provides a significant and engaging context for studying organizational resilience, technical advancements, and internal branding.

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