

Brighton Nyagadza
Ernest. M. Kadembo
Africa Makasi

A conceptual model of corporate storytelling for branding

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to ascertain the relationship between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate brand. The paucity of existing knowledge found in reviewing a variety of literature sources relating to corporate brand storytelling spurred the authors into carry out the research. The link between themes and elements of corporate stories for branding and strategies for impression management indicates that these elements relate to audiences' perceptions of the corporate brand. From the literature review, there is a link between elements of corporate stories for branding (such as corporate personalities, corporate activities, corporate values, and corporate associations) and internal stakeholders' perceptions and emotional attachment to a corporate brand. Corporate management needs to actively involve internal stakeholders in developing corporate stories for branding as this is crucial in creating positive corporate brand perceptions. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by allowing listed corporates to maximise the effectiveness of their corporate stories for branding in shaping the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. The paper suggests a conceptual model for depicting the relationship between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions.

Keywords: corporate stories for branding; listed companies; literature review; internal and external stakeholders; conceptual model.

Brighton Nyagadza is a doctoral student at the Midlands State University (MSU) Zimbabwe and a Lecturer at Marondera University of Agricultural Science & Technology (MUASt), Zimbabwe. He holds the degree of M.Com. in Marketing Strategy from the MSU. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7226-0635>

Prof. Ernest. M. Kadembo is Professor of Business and postgraduate supervisor at Richmond, the American University in London, UK. He has a PhD in Story Branding from the Business School, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom.

Dr Africa Makasi is a Senior Lecturer and postgraduate supervisor at the National University of Science and Technology (Namibia). He has a PhD in Marketing from the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, South Africa. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5457-358X>

INTRODUCTION

Corporate stories work with people and for people, and stories always work on people, affecting what people are able to see as real, as possible, and as worth doing or best avoided (Boje, 2001). Corporate storytelling has been used in organisations for many years, with some of the earliest research in this area dating back to the early 1980s (Weick & Browning, 1986; Wilkins, 1984; Mendonca, 2015). It has helped many large corporations achieve higher levels of effectiveness and communication (Mendonca, 2015). Kadembo (2016) notes that branding is an important marketing tool that helps in giving a product a unique identity to differentiate it from other similar products that perform the same or similar functions. Choudhury (2001) defines a brand as a way of creating an identity for a product, somewhat like identifying a specific person within a large crowd. A brand is essentially the sum total of the particular satisfaction it gives consumers and other stakeholders. It relates to a totality in the name, ingredients, price, packaging, distribution, reputation and ultimately to its performance (Kadembo, 2016). There is a strong link between corporate storytelling and branding since the former tends to shape the latter. The authors believe that internal stakeholders are an important audience of the corporate stories for branding since they are the primary custodians of the corporate brand. Their perceptions towards the corporate brand as a result of corporate stories for branding have a bearing on how companies tend to survive the competition in both private and public sectors. This is so because the feelings of internal stakeholders reinforce adoption of the corporate culture and values, and ultimately the corporate reputation.

1. CONTEXT

It is of utmost importance to know that, in agreement with Kadembo (2016), corporate storytelling for branding paves way or gives a room for the organisations to differentiate themselves with a unique identity. However, if the corporate stories for branding are positive or negative, questions are thrown to investigate their effects on the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions! Because of the knowledge gaps exposed in literature reviewed, the aim of this paper is to evaluate the relationship between brand storytelling and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. This will help to business practitioners, academic researchers and content strategists in understanding the connection between corporate associations, emotional attachment, corporate activities, corporate values and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Having the knowledge would assist them in crafting corporate strategies from corporate branding and impression management.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

From the background and the preliminary literature review the following issues have been ascertained. Internal stakeholders are vital advocates and recipients of corporate stories for branding (Abratt & Keyn, 2012). A well-crafted corporate story branding needs to bear qualities

which promote corporate reputation and this suggests that the main reputation platforms are necessary initial points (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Spear & Roper 2013; Nyagadza et al., 2019). Corporate stories for branding that result in making interested parties see the corporates as more genuine, different, truthful, transforming and lovable, then it will polish up the corporate reputation (Dowling, 2006; Spear & Roper, 2013). Due to this, corporate stories for branding have an emotional element which lures internal and external stakeholders, and which leads to trust and support (Dowling, 2006; Nyagadza et al., 2019). Based on this, the problem statement was formulated for this study. It was proposed as follows: to what extent do the corporate stories for branding represent the truth within listed companies and how does this relate to internal stakeholders' perception of the corporate brand? In view of the aforesaid the study aimed to address the following question: Do listed companies in Zimbabwe carry genuine corporate storytelling for branding narratives in shaping the perceptions of internal stakeholders about corporate brands?

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INQUIRY

The research sought to contribute important findings, which include but are not limited to a contribution towards improving pedagogical understanding of corporate storytelling for branding. It seeks to provide direction for professional practitioners wishing to explore potential corporate storytelling for branding opportunities, specifically those in the corporate sector and beyond. The study provides a foundation for the situation-specific analysis that is always needed to arrive at good decisions. Analysis and interpretation of research information assisted the researchers in improving analytical skills which are vital in making decisions in today's listed companies, and international business environment, which is totally volatile, unpredictable, complicated and aggressive (VUCA environment). The research was confined to the corporate private sector and provides a conceptual framework with which practitioners can evaluate the potential of their own corporate stories for branding concepts.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

This conceptual paper integrates corporate storytelling for branding constructs which make it functional to produce a theoretical framework understanding of the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. The theoretical framework that best explains the relationship between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions is Impression Management (IM) theory. Therefore this section considers previous theoretical frameworks used so as to identify the best one for this thesis, in sync with its trajectory. Table 1 below provides a summary of previous theoretical frameworks used to evaluate corporate storytelling for branding, together with the methodologies used.

Table 1:Theoretical approaches used in prior research relating to corporate storytelling for branding and corporate branding.

Theory	Area	Author	Methodology
Impression management theory	Corporate communication	Brennan, Guillamon-Saorin, & Pierce (2009)	Empirical and quantitative.
Impression management theory	Corporate reputation	Spear & Roper (2013)	Empirical and content analysis.
Impression management theory	Corporate communication	Connolly-Aher & Broadway (2007)	Empirical and content analysis.
Impression management theory	Consulting	McFall (2017).	Empirical and quantitative.
Impression management theory	Brand storytelling	Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull, & Howe-Walsh (2017).	Conceptual.
Impression management theory	Marketing communications	Young & Gardener (1994).	Empirical and content analysis.
Impression management theory	Marketing communications	Wu & Shang (2012).	Empirical and content analysis.
Narrative theory	Corporate stories	Woodside (2008)	Conceptual
Narrative theory	Metaphor in conversations	Doyle & Sims (2002)	Empirical and content analysis.
Narrative theory	Narrative processing	Escalas (2004).	Empirical and content analysis.
Narrative theory	Storytelling	Kadembo (2012)	Conceptual.
Narrative theory	Storytelling	Daugaard & Eriksen (2018).	Empirical and content analysis.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate identity	Spear & Roper (2013)	Empirical and content analysis.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate identity	Balmer, Fukukawa, & Gray (2007)	Conceptual
Stakeholder theory	Corporate reputation	Spear & Roper (2013)	Empirical and content analysis.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate reputation	Dickinson, Delaporte, Beverland, & Lindgreen (2010)	Empirical and quantitative.
Stakeholder theory	Corporate reputation	Mahon (2002)	Empirical and quantitative.
Consumer storytelling theory	Storytelling	Woodside (2008)	Conceptual
Consumer storytelling theory	Storytelling and sense making in organisations	Weick (1995).	Empirical and quantitative.
Consumer storytelling theory	Storytelling	Wertime (2002)	Conceptual
Drama theory	Cognitive and affective responses	Wells (1988).	Empirical and quantitative.
Signalling theory	A communication review	Connelly, et al. (2011)	Theoretical review.

Source: Researchers' own conception (derived from literature and theoretical review) (2019).

The core of each theory include the following; Stakeholder theory advocates that organisations have a mandate which obliges them to look into the interests of major players that are influenced by their activities (Srivoravilai et al., 2011, Daugaard & Eriksen, 2014; Nyagadza et al., 2019). On the other hand Narrative theory depicts the basis for the formation of corporate storytelling for branding behaviour which leads to the uptake of corporate story for branding descriptors as well as content (Woodside, 2010) and Consumer storytelling. Impression Management theory propounds that socialisation is viewed as dramaturgical in nature and that humans as stakeholders to certain things usually end up conducting performances in front of selected audiences (Goffman, 1959; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Spear & Roper, 2013; Nyagadza et al., 2019).

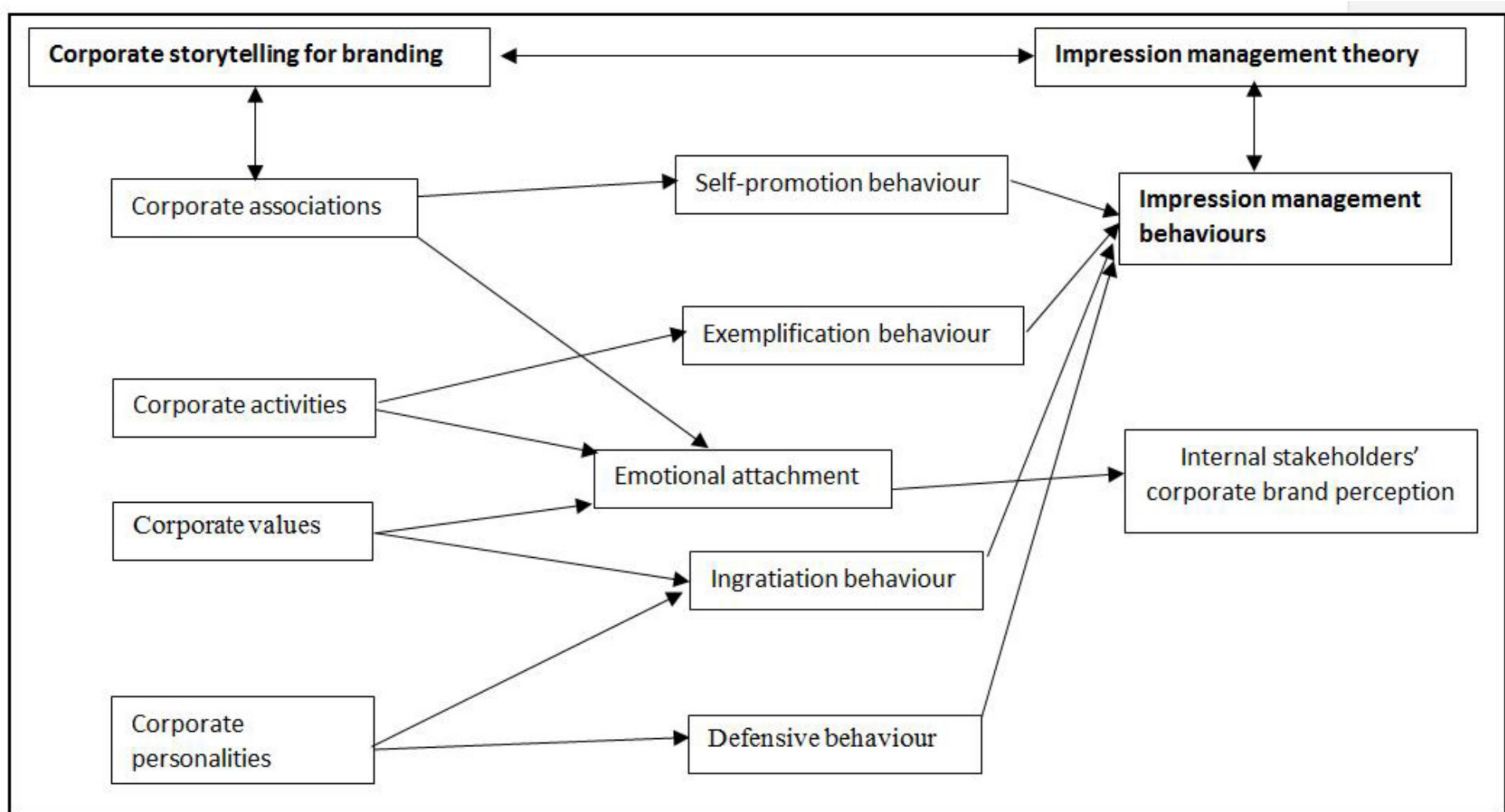


Figure 1: Analytical framework depicting the link between corporate storytelling for branding and impression management theoretical behaviours

Source: Researchers' own conception (derived from literature and theoretical review) (2019).

Many Impression Management strategies and tactics have been utilised in human interactions, which is also meant for functional use in corporates (Carter, 2006; Verma, 2009, 2010; Spear & Roper, 2013; Nyagadza et al., 2019). The links are projected based on the theoretical literature made by authorities who confirm the link that exist between Impression Management and Corporate storytelling for branding. The respective links are explored further with a view to

demonstrate their impact on corporate story for branding. Impression Management behavioural elements include self-promotion, exemplification, acclamation, intimidation, and ingratiation. These behavioural strategies were outlined by Spear and Roper (2013:495).

Table 2: Links between themes and elements of corporate storytelling for branding and impression management strategies & behaviours.

Impression Management strategy	Impression Management behaviour	Definition
Assertive – the organisation proactively manages impressions about themselves to create a desired image (Tetlock and Manstead, 1985)	Ingratiation	Seeking to be viewed as likeable by flattering others or doing favours for them
	Self-promotion	Communicating the organisation's abilities and accomplishments, to appear competent
	Exemplification	Showing the organisation as doing more or better than is necessary, going beyond the call of duty, to appear dedicated or superior.
	Supplication	Showing the organisation's weaknesses or limitations
	Intimidation	Threatening or bullying others
Defensive – the organisation reactively manages impressions about themselves in order to protect their established image (Tetlock and Manstead, 1985)	Apologies	Admitting that an act the organisation is involved in is wrong and expressing the organisation's regret
	Excuses	Attempting to minimise the organisation's linkage to or responsibility for a bad act
Demonstrative – providing facts or details about the specific activities undertaken by the organisation (current activities) (Bolino, et al 2008)	Justifications	Altering audiences perceptions of an act the organisation is involved in, minimising the amount of harm done, or transforming the act from bad to good
Illustrative – making broad generalisations about the organisation, for example its wider purpose or aims (Bolino, et al 2008)	No behaviours identified	N/A

Source: Based on Spear & Roper (2013:495), Bolino et al. (2008); Bolino & Turnley (2003); Schlenker & Weigold (1992).

Spear and Roper (2013:495) suggest that Impression Management behaviours are a very important indicator of how corporate storytelling for branding influences the corporate brand image towards the audience. Schlenker and Weigold (1992) and Bolino et al, (2008) have identified these behaviours, as shown in Table 2 above. The comparison between the various corporate storytelling behaviours is a necessary element of Impression Management. The behaviours can be used as components of ingratiation behaviour.

5.1 BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

In companies, corporate stories of branding emerge in different formats such as images, narratives, audios or videos (both online and offline). These tend to influence perceptions of the internal stakeholders of the corporate brand. Once corporate stories for branding are important in the architecture of what the corporate is known for, ultimately it is necessary to understand their relation to internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions (Spear & Roper, 2013; Janssen et al., 2012). A variety of authors have written more on how corporate storytelling for branding in line with how it results in emotional arousal in the organisations. Currently, there are high prompts in academic research on corporate storytelling for branding (Spear and Roper, 2013). However, there is still limited research conducted on how corporates actually convey corporate stories for branding (Smith & Keyton, 2000; Mossberg, 2008; de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Spear & Roper, 2013), and how these affect internal stakeholders' corporate brand perception. The next section gives an account on the literature survey. The next section gives an account of the literature survey.

5.2 BRIEF LITERATURE SURVEY

Corporate storytelling for branding is a storyline which depicts the corporate's courageous purpose and links a stakeholder's internal state of mind with its corporate brand (Allen et al., 2018; Nyagadza et al., 2019). It is an original, fascinating story that causes a desire to know more, and which enhances the brand that it represents. A corporate story for branding is one that can represent the organisation well can also be known as a signature brand story. In line with this, the next subsection gives a critical review of literature based on the research propositions.

5.3 CORPORATE ASSOCIATIONS

Corporate associations equally influence corporate brand attachment to the stakeholder (Souiden et al. 2006; So, Yap & Parsons, 2013). The authors explain that not all internal stakeholders' believe that the corporate brand will satisfy their prospects through the brand oath. This is so because they first check on the reliability of the organisation and how trustworthy they are with their brands before being attached to them. Any customer or stakeholder desires to be connected with a corporate brand with a great and positive brand story. When internal stakeholders see the firm as a truthful mate, they desire to improve the

state of their minds to focus on the corporate brand (So, Yap & Parsons, 2013:409). Internal stakeholders also learn to understand and perceive a corporate brand through the relevant associated corporate stories for branding (Escalas, 2003; Chen & Seng, 2016).

5.4 CORPORATE ACTIVITIES

Furthermore, corporate storytelling for branding activities are suggested to depict the important actions cardinality of what the corporate is highly involved in (Spear & Roper 2013, 492; Nyagadza et al. 2019). If an organisation loses its corporate image as result of the bad activities, it may lead the level of loyalty to be less positively attached emotionally to the corporate brand. Main corporate activities provide the great qualities of corporate stories for branding which build the perception of the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions (Larsen, 2000; Janssen et al., 2012). The authors agree with the notion that activities such as corporate social responsibility can be a strong brand story element, which fixes a desired brand imaging in the stakeholders mind. Activities show the things that are started or triggered by the corporate to keep in touch with internal stakeholders with its corporate stories for branding (Spear & Roper, 2013. p.492). All stakeholders, be they internal or external, have an intuitive approach towards activities.

5.5 CORPORATE VALUES

In sync with the above, corporate stories for branding are intended to effect the corporate's plans of action, through the corporate purpose, core actions and belief systems (Marzec, 2007). Corporate values as important elements of corporate stories for branding and they denote the core purpose of a firm which are guided by its mission and vision (Urde, 2003). This could be an obsolete statement as changes have since taken place in the way organisational values and behaviours evolve. Corporate branding and values have much more impact on primary internal stakeholders than the generality of the stakeholders bunching as a whole. Once the internal stakeholders develop an affiliation, it adds value to their belief system. The researchers argue that strategic corporate values are an essential element of corporate stories for branding. This is so because the corporate vision and mission elements are normally expressed towards shaping the corporate brand itself.

5.6 CORPORATE PERSONALITIES

When internal stakeholders hold reliance in a corporate brand, it means they have self-assurance in the corporate brand to prospectively satisfy them, thus they desire to have positive corporate brand perception (So, Yap & Parsons, 2013). Internal stakeholders express themselves through corporate brands (Escalas, 2004; Sheri & Traoudas, 2017). This translates to the notion that there is a strong psychological connection between the corporate storytellers for branding and the benefits embedded in the corporate story for branding. The reason why

the authors agree with the fact that internal stakeholders express themselves through corporate brands is because they have an inner connection with the corporate story for branding. However, not all corporate stories for branding can easily be recalled (Megehee & Woodside, 2010; Sheri & Traoudas, 2017). Since corporate stories for branding are believed to carry a personality trait according to the researcher, they tend to modify the way the employees as primary stakeholders behave too. But as result employees might behave in line with corporate stories for branding personality effects.

5.7 EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

As internal stakeholders' become more connected to a corporate story for branding, they are in close ranks with the corporate brand due to the presence of the attracting element yielding joy, freedom from apprehension and contentment. Thus, it is believed that internal stakeholders who have a higher level of psychologically loyalty towards the corporate brand would be connected to it for a prolonged period of time (Nyagadza, 2019). With this, the authors agree that corporate brand perceptions are the way that stakeholders evaluate or see an organisation in its entirety and give it a position against other brands. The concept of perception is a psychological matter that is related to mental processes and imaging upon assessing a variable (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Smith & Wheeler, 2002).

6. METHODS FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYSING LITERATURE

Qualitative analysis was employed to collect and analyse the literature. The research was done using the Google search engine. The words such as corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions were used to guide the search process. The literature search was conducted in May 2019 and was not restricted to certain years. Articles that were not related to the study area were deleted from the selection because the focus of the current paper is on corporate storytelling for branding. All non-empirical articles were excluded. The process of search resulted in summation of 120 papers that the authors coded subsequently. The discovered articles were heralded between 1959 and 2018. Most of the articles were from the Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Marketing, Harvard Business Review, Journal of Marketing Communications and Journal of Marketing. To discover the main areas in 120 papers, each journal was analysed and given codes with descriptions. The keywords were then analysed and populated into defined and identifiable strategic themes. The tables that follow show sample journals for a particular area.

Table 3: Major sample articles on corporate storytelling for branding

Major areas	Key References
Corporate Storytelling for Branding	Denning (2000)
	Spear & Roper (2013)
	Boje (1995)
	Woodside (2008)
	Kadembo (2012, 2014, 2016)
Corporate Associations	Morgan & Hunt (1994)
	Romaniuk et al. (2007)
	Souiden et al., (2006)
	So, Yap and Parsons (2013)
Corporate Activities	Fournier (1998)
	van Riel and Fombrun (2007)
Corporate Values	Fournier (1998)
	Bhattacharya & Sen (2003)
	Urde (2003)
	Dowling (2006)
	Driscoll & McKee (2007)
Corporate Personalities	Morgan & Hunt (1994)
	Aaker (1997)
	Thomson et al. (2005)
Emotional attachment	Park et al. (2010)
	Papadimitriou et al. (2016)
	Reichheld (1996)
Internal Stakeholders' Corporate Brand Perception	Smith & Wheeler (2002)
	Siamagka et al. (2015)
	Denning (2000)

Source: Researchers' own conception (2020)

Table 4: Major sample articles on theoretical framework

Major areas	Key References
Impression Management theory	Goffman (1959)
	Jones & Pittman (1982)
	Schlenker (1980)
	Schneider (1981)
	Tedeschi & Melburg (1984)
	Baumeister (1982, 1986)
Stakeholder theory	Branco & Rodrigues (2007)
	Daugaard & Johansen (2014)
	Freeman (2001)
Narrative theory	Denning (2000, 2006)
	Boje (2008)
	Woodside (2008, 2007)
	Fog et al. (2005)
	Kadembo (2014, 2016)
	Ghodeswar (2008)
	Papadatos (2006)
Drama theory	Grove & Fisk (1992)
	Woodside et al. (2008)
	Moisio & Arnould (2005)
Consumer storytelling theory	Jung (1916, 1959)
	Bruner (1990)
	Schank & Ableson (1977)
	Zukier (1986)
	Hiltunen (2002)
	Holt & Cornelissen (2013)
Signalling theory	Ross (1973)
	Jensen & Meckling (1976)
	Stiglitz (2000)
	Elitzur & Gavious (2003)
	Connelly et al. (2011)

Source: Researchers' own conception (2020)

6.1 FUTURE RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION AND DATA SOURCES

Due to the reason that the future research will be based on qualitative inquiry methods for data analysis maybe different to distinguish the data collection amongst non-relevant respondents with those who understand brand story telling issues. For the ease of data analysis, content analysis, discourse analysis and creating verbatim can be used to record the data. From the responses, conclusions will be made about on whether there is a link between brand story telling issues and external stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions.

6.2 Findings from Literature Review

Literature was very essential in the assimilation of meaning of this conceptual paper. The literature enabled the researcher to achieve extraction of knowledge gaps through the seven inquiry objectives.

Inquiry Objective 1: *To assess the relationship between internal stakeholders' corporate association's perception and emotional attachment.*

Finding: A gap exists on whether there is a connection between corporate associations of listed companies and emotional attachment to the corporate brand by internal stakeholders. The researcher supports the view that emotional corporate brand attachment is directly linked to the corporate associations and stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Once the employees are captivated by the corporate stories for branding in an organisation, it becomes easy for them to be emotionally attached to the corporate brand itself. The target audience of corporate stories for branding are influence with how they evaluate the level of sense making in the latter (Nyagadza et al., 2019; Nyagadza & Nyauswa, 2019). Not all corporate stories for branding acknowledge the element of conflict as noted by some authorities in the literature. The way internal stakeholders position a certain corporate brand in their minds, shows clearly the degree to which an organisation is competent. This ultimately results in increased corporate brand equity and brand recognition.

Inquiry Objective 4: *To assess the relationship between internal stakeholders' corporate personalities perception and emotional attachment.*

Finding: In line with the literature review both internal and external stakeholder see corporate stories for branding as capable of possessing personality traits (So, Parsons & Yap, 2013; Nyagadza, 2020). Focusing on the academic written work it is clear that corporate personalities are highly almost similar to human like qualities that are line with corporate story for branding elements (Aaker, 1997; Vingirayi, Nyagadza, Mavhunga, Munjeri, 2019). The authors contend that there is a gap between the behaviour of employees and the influence of brand personalities. However, there is overwhelming evidence that brand stories may create that sense of insecurity if improperly expressed to the targeted audience. Trust is key element in

building confinements and confidence in the corporate brand. Emotions are strongly related to the brand story expressions. This results in emotional attachment which leads to a certain level of perceiving the corporate brand. There is a knowledge gap on the link between corporate personalities and emotional attachment to the corporate brand. This study targets to close this gap, by researching on the connection between the mentioned variables (corporate personalities and emotional attachment).

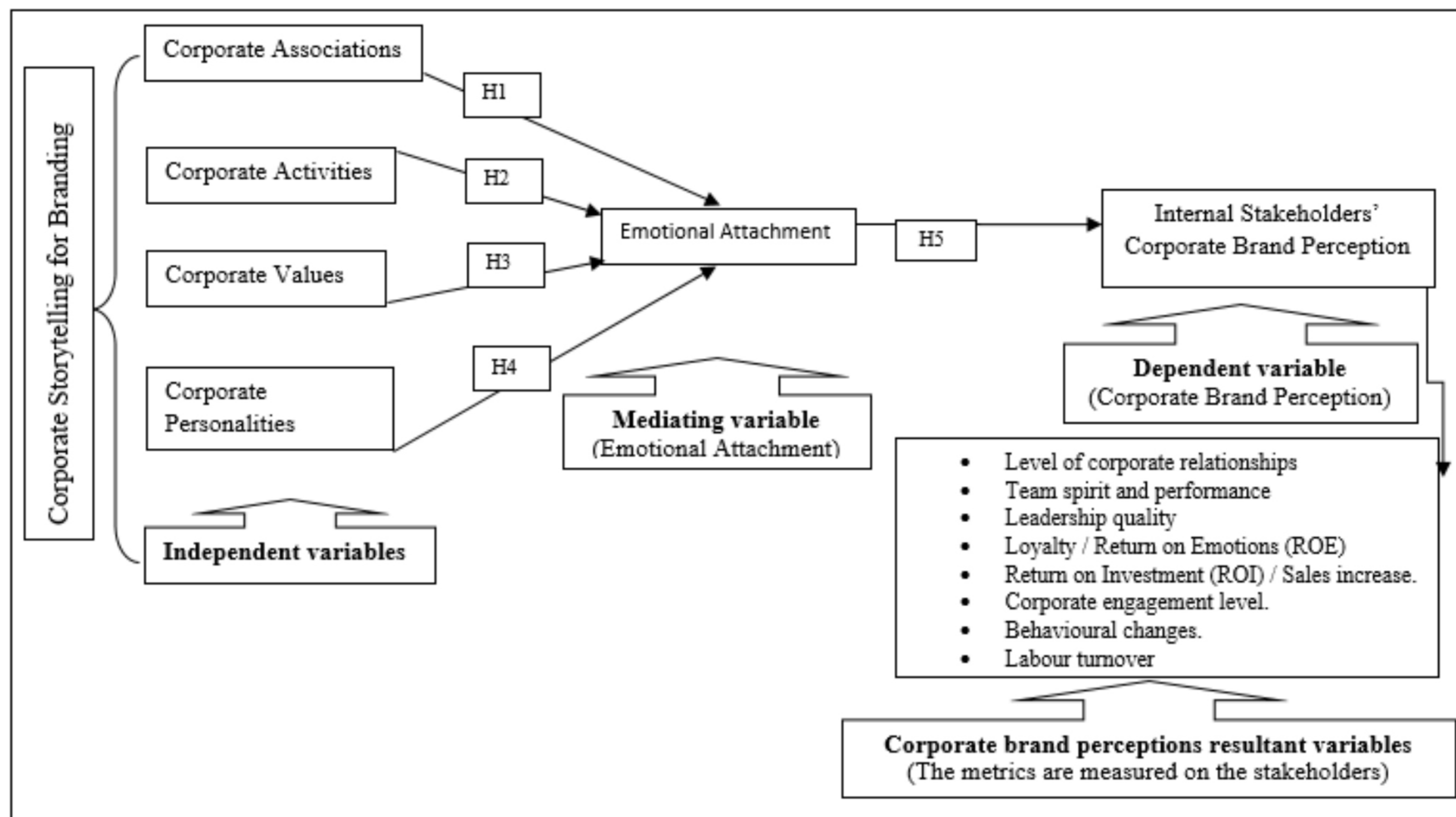
Inquiry Objective 5: To evaluate the relationship between emotional attachment and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perception.

Finding: As internal stakeholders' are attached to a corporate corporate story for branding, they are likely to result in nearness to the corporate brand due to the existence of emotions. With this knowledge already tapped, a gap exists on whether there is an association between corporate storytelling for branding and internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Therefore it is argued that more connection to the corporate storytelling for branding then there is more probability of internal stakeholders' attached to the corporate brand (Nyagadza & Makasi, 2019). The current study seeks to close the gap by evaluating the link on internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions and corporate storytelling for branding. There is a strong link between emotional attachments to the corporate story for branding. Once internal stakeholders are emotionally attached to a brand story, this leads to the directed change to positive perception to the corporate brand. The reverse is true.

6.3 Research Conceptual Model

The mediator variable of this research is emotional attachment, the dependent variable stakeholders' corporate brand perception and independent variables include corporate associations, activities, corporate values and corporate personalities. The existence of emotional attachment as the mediator variable is supported by the views made by So, Parsons, and Yap (2013). The link between the constructs and the dependent variable will be empirically tested through scientific approach, statistically). The suggested study model is as follows;

Figure 2: Research Conceptual Model



Source: Researchers' own conception (derived from literature review) (2020).

In accordance with the research model, the simple regression model below has been derived to determine the linear relationships between variables:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon$$

Where Y = Internal stakeholders' corporate brand perception.

- β_0 = Corporate associations.
- β_1 = Corporate activities.
- β_2 = Corporate values.
- β_3 = Corporate personalities.
- β_4 = Emotional attachment.
- ϵ = Unobserved error term.

*Y is the dependent/response variable.

*From β_1 to β_5 represent the independent/explanatory variables.

7. Discussion

Corporate stories for branding as the most important element of impression management tactics for the organisations have the ability to improve the strategic elements. The activities element in corporate stories for branding forms an important part of the demonstrative strategy that organisations can use to differentiate themselves from competitors (Nyagadza, 2019a,b,c).

It is also a vital factor in passing message to corporates on what they will be doing in their organisations (Boje, 1991b; Marzec, 2007; Nyagadza, Chodeva & Vingirayi, 2018). Corporate stories for branding can be used to motivate internal stakeholders to create strong emotional bonds and close ranks with the corporate brand itself. The corporate stories for branding form self-promotion behaviour which in turn creates positive reputation for the corporates. It shows they are a tool vital for corporate survival. The likeability of the communicated benefits by internal stakeholders can be made through an ingratiation behaviour resembled in the corporate stories for branding. Corporate values can be used as a gateway towards how corporates can share their corporate culture (beliefs and principles) and express what the corporate means to the business world (Nyagadza et al., 2020a,b,c). Managers can use the corporate stories for branding to engage with their subordinates, as internal stakeholders, so that they can appreciate their valuable contribution to the organisation.

8. Conclusion

The conceptual paper shows that there are more existing knowledge gaps as exposed by the development of the corporate brand story telling research model. Many issues need to be addressed in regard to corporate associations, emotional attachment, benefits themes, activities and corporate brand perceptions. The research advances knowledge on corporate associations as they serve as crucial information cues for internal stakeholders. Alternatively, it advances theory on branding concepts through researching into ways to promote internal stakeholders' brand loyalty, and positive brand perceptions through corporate brand storytelling from the corporate' perspective. The suggested corporate storytelling for branding research model can serve as a guide to management and executives in managing their corporate stories for branding in shaping the internal stakeholders' corporate brand perceptions. Another issue that was drawn from this conceptual paper is that there are more influences on internal stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate brand than others. The study can be applied in some sections of the business globally, regionally or locally to determine its universal applicability. More interrogation is required on evaluating the corporate stories for branding if they are not linked to the corporate strategy. Paralleled corporate vision and achievement of corporate goals in the organisation may lead to different results. The authors again believes that a research can be done to see whether the internal stakeholders can continue to remain loyal, especially when corporate activities are not in line with their perceptive preponderances. If the organisation loses its corporate image as a result of bad corporate activities, this may affect their level of loyalty and they may not continue to be positively affected by the corporate brand.

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