



How to Get Employees' Buy-in in Corporate Rebranding: The Chain Mediation Effect of Perceived Organizational Support and Psychological Capital

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Abstract. Based on a questionnaire survey of 997 employees from three subsidiaries of an aviation maintenance group in China, this paper investigated the chain mediating effect of perceived organizational support and psychological capital on the relationship between organizational rebranding activities and employees' buy-in to the organization and its brand. The results indicated that: 1) Organizational rebranding activities have a positive impact on employees' buy-in; 2) Employees' perceived organizational support and psychological capital play a chain mediating role in the positive impact of organizational rebranding activities on employees' buy-in; The conclusions not only enrich the research on the influence of rebranding within organizations, but also provide inspiration for organizational managers to process organizational change smoothly.

Keywords: rebranding, employee buy-in, perceived organizational support, psychological capital

1 Introduction

The essence of brand is the representative of unique value and high reputation, which means that the brand owners can provide to target customers superior products, services or other values with higher quality than their competitors [1]. Having a strong brand will enhance positive evaluations of an organization's product quality, maintain a high level of product awareness, and create a unified brand image [2]. Organizational brand is the strategic asset of an organization [3], and brand construction is a long-term brand strategy activity. One of the brand strategies is rebranding [4]. Organizational rebranding is one of the common practices for organizations to adapt to rapid changes in the macro and/or micro business environment [5-6]. Gaurav (2008) points out that organizational rebranding is a powerful and credible tool for changing an organization's image, logo, and slogan to present a new image.

In previous studies, rebranding mainly focused on its impact on external stakeholders such as customers [7]; In recent years, many studies have also focused on the consistency between external and internal [8]. Some have studied how employee "buy-in" behavior affects brand and organizational performance from an internal perspective [9], and how employee "buy-in" behavior is affected in the process of brand rebranding [10]. However, few studies from an internal perspective have explored which psychological factors will affect employees' acceptance and recognition of organizational changes in the process of organizational rebranding and ultimately reach the "buy-in"[7], to ensure that the brand value of the organization can be transmitted to all employees of the organization through rebranding activities and displayed in their daily work [11].

Therefore, it is critical for an organization to gain support of employees when implementing organizational rebranding strategies [12]. It can dilute or even threaten the effectiveness of an organization's brand without employees' buy-in [5]. We also often found that without adequate internal communication and trainings during organizational reform, employees may leave or the business may fail to change due to various factors such as resistance to change, cognitive conflict, and cultural conflict [13].

Therefore, from the perspective of positive organizational behavior and positive psychology, based on social exchange theory and organizational support theory, this paper will explore through empirical research that under the background of organizational groupization how rebranding activities affect employees' buy-in for organizations and their brands through the chain mediation of two dominating psychological factors: perceived organizational support and psychological capital.

2 Literature review and hypothesis

2.1 Corporate rebranding and employee buy-in

Corporate rebranding is often defined as a change in organizational attributes such as name, logo, color, and value, either individually or in combination [14-15]. Some studies believe that strategic change or brand repositioning is also deemed as rebranding [4] [16-17]. However, any form of rebranding may affect the consistency and continuity of the organizational brand vision, culture, and image that are necessary for organizational success [18-19]. During the rebranding process, it's requested to minimize the impact in the shortest time.

Rebranding is about changing the way stakeholders and competitors view a brand in the marketplace [10]. Thus, organizational rebranding often involves a variety of stakeholders [18] and requires consideration of all forms of organizational communication [20]. There are two main forms of brand activities, namely internal communication and training [7]. Internal branding through internal communication and training is considered to be a driving factor in the rebranding process of an organization and a key to its success [6].

The key to the success of an organization and its brand is whether employees can understand and identify the organizational brand, and whether they can perform work behaviors according to the standards of the organizational brand, that is, support the

organization's brand behaviors [11]. Many researchers believe that the necessary factor for successful rebranding is of the stakeholders' buy-in [10]. Stakeholders' buy-in is the process of bringing key stakeholders into a brand change and getting them to actively accept it. Miller et al. (2008) argue that stakeholders' buy-in is important both as an actual stage of the rebranding model and as a major contributor to successful rebranding.

Buy-in is a personal and specific commitment to proactively participate in a process, task, or initiative. Without buy-in, employees are more likely to go through the motions without making a level of change, let alone actively participating [21]. For an organization, having the support of employees is a key success factor [22]. Organizational brand that is undergoing rebranding requires employees to understand the changing attributes of the brand and its vision, mission, and commitment to its success [7].

According to social exchange theory [23], when employers and employees follow exchange rules, they are likely to have trust, loyalty, and commitment between them. With a good understanding of the brand strategy, employees can better assess how their activities can best add value to their brand; When employees understand what an organization's brand stands for, its values, and its commitment to customers, it can help them show greater intellectual and emotional attachment/commitment to the organization's brand [9] [24-25]. Rebranding activities affect the degree of employee support for change [7]. Therefore, below hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Rebranding activities have a positive influence on employees' buy-in to the organization and its brand.

2.2 The mediating role of psychological capital

Luthans et al. (2005,2007), from the perspective of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, defined psychological capital as a positive psychological state that an individual shows in the process of growth and development, which is characterized by: (1) having the confidence (self-efficacy) to undertake and make necessary efforts to ensure the successful completion of challenging tasks; (2) positive attitude towards present and future success (optimism); (3) stick to the goal and, if necessary, change the path to get there (hope); (4) facing adversity and difficult problems, never be discouraged, persevere, and upstream (resilience) to achieve success [26].

The reciprocal exchange rules based on the social exchange theory indicates that one party's actions are contingent on the other's behavior, which is the voluntary reciprocity and mutual dependence of both parties and they are encouraged for cooperation [32]. Positive reciprocity inclinations include the tendency to treat positively in return for treating positively [33]. Organizational brand knowledge in terms of brand vision and values gained through this process will help employees understand how their roles influence the brand and the behavior that delivers on the organizational brand promises [27]. When employees acquire knowledge of brand vision and value, they will have an understanding of organizational behaviors, be optimistic about their role and the development prospects of the organization, and be confident to overcome the difficulties and challenges brought by rebranding through their own efforts, and will have a positive

psychological state to work. Luthans et al., (2008) believes that employees with higher psychological capital are more likely to support organizational change.

Therefore, below hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Organizational rebranding activities have positive influence on employees' psychological capital;

H3: The higher the psychological capital of employees, the more they buy-in to organization and its brand;

H4: Psychological capital plays a mediating role in the relationship between corporate rebranding activities and employee buy-in.

2.3 The mediating role of perceived organizational support

The perceived organizational support (POS) was first proposed by Eisenberger (1986), which refers to the perception of organization members that the organization recognizes their own efforts and cares about their own personal interests. Eisenberger et al., (2001) as the first to explore exchange ideology based on social exchange theory, found out that exchange ideology strengthens the relationship between perceived organizational support and felt obligation. That is, when employees perceive support from the organization, they also feel obligated to contribute to the organization in exchange. With more perceived organizational support, employees are more likely to perform in-role behaviors and altruistic behaviors that are beneficial to the organization and others, and are more psychologically willing to give rewards, thus achieving higher performance output and being more supportive to the organization, making the exchange process between individuals and organizations more positive and effective [28].

Gaetane et al., (2015) showed that perceived organizational support was positively correlated with positive organizational behaviors. The perceived organizational support directly and significantly affects organizational citizenship behavior [29]. Islam et al., (2013) revealed that organizational support has a positive effect on affective commitment (emotional buy-in) and normative commitment (intellectual buy-in). Based on social identity theory and social exchange theory, Lohndorf & Diamantopoulos (2014) studied the impact of internal branding and employees' perceived organizational support on employees' brand-building behaviors, and found that employees' perceived organizational support helped them to make brand-building behaviors.

Therefore, we suggest that perceived organizational support may be an influential factor in the relationship between corporate rebranding activities and employee buy-in. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: The rebranding activities have positive influence on employees' perceived organizational support, making employees sensed more supportiveness from the organization;

H6: The higher the perceived organizational support employees catch, the more they will buy-in the new changes from the organizational rebranding, and the higher they will show their supportiveness to the organization;

H7: Perceived organizational support plays a mediating role in the relationship between rebranding activities and employee buy-in.

2.4 The chain mediating effect of perceived organizational support and psychological capital

The organizational support theory, based on the social exchange theory and the idea of organizational personification, believes that if employees feel cared, supported and recognized by the organization, they will be encouraged and perform well in their work [30]. This fulfillment of demands help employees generates a strong sense of affiliation to the organization, involving the integration of employees' membership and role status into their social identity [31].

Luthans et al., (2008) proposed that perceived organizational support can create favorable conditions for employees to exert their psychological capital, and employees with hope will actively explore solutions when encountering difficulties in the process of corporate rebranding. However, the lack of organizational support may inhibit or even destroy the psychological capital of employees, and make employees have negative resistance to organizational management, thus reducing their psychological capital level. Therefore, we believe that strengthening the perceived organizational support is conducive to increasing the employees' psychological capital, and thus better increasing the support of employees to the organization and brand. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H8: Perceived organizational support and psychological capital act as a chain mediator between rebranding activities and employee buy-in. (See Figure 1 the Conceptual Model.)

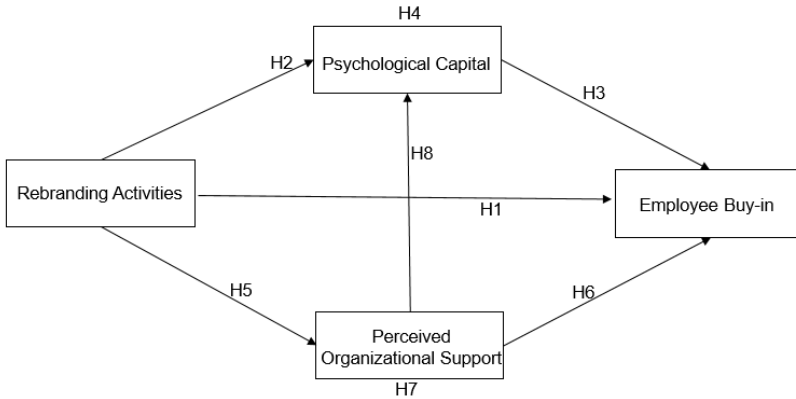


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

In this study, questionnaire was used to conduct the unanimous survey. Employees from three subsidiaries of a foreign-funded aviation maintenance group in Fujian were selected for this survey. The questionnaires were distributed and collected through their

direct managers/supervisors. In order to avoid the affect of common methodology bias on the research results, the questionnaire was distributed in 2 stages, which lasted for 4 months. At the same time, in order to screen out the random and careless answers, the questionnaire set two reverse questions to screen the effectiveness of the answers.

In this study, 1400 questionnaires were distributed, 1131 received, and total 997 questionnaires were screened out valid, with an effective response rate of 71.21%.

3.2 Variable Measures

All the variables were measured using exiting mature scales. Rebranding activities (RA) was measured using 4 items from the scale compiled by Thagichu, (2018) with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale is 0.79. Employee Buy-in (EB) was measured using the scale compiled by Thomson et al., (1999), 5 items of employees' commitment (emotional buy-in) and 6 items of employees' understanding (intellectual buy-in). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale is 0.88. Psychological Capital (PC) was measured via Psychological Capital Questionnaire PCQ-24, compiled by Luthans et al., in 2005 and revised by Li Suping. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.91. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) was measured via the scale of POS compiled by Eisenberger (2001). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.90. Apart from POS using Likert 6 points method (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree), the rest scales are adopted with Likert 5-point scoring method (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Meanwhile, this paper considered gender, age, education level, service years and position as control variables in the study.

3.3 Statistical analysis

SPSS29.0 was used for data statistics and processing. According to data types and assumptions, descriptive statistics, T-test, variance analysis, correlation analysis and other statistical methods were used to analyze the mean value, standard deviation, reliability, difference and correlation of each variable. Process4.1 was used to conduct statistical analysis and data processing on the mediating effect and chain mediating effect among variables, and the significance level was $p=0.05$ (bilateral test). In addition, the significance of indirect effects was calculated through 5000 bootstrap samples with a 95% confidence interval.

4 Results

4.1 Test of common method deviation

The research data in this study were collected by sending questionnaires. According to the suggestions of Zhou Hao and Long Lirong (2004), Harman single factor analysis was used to test the common method bias. The results show that the eigenvalues of 9 factors are greater than 1, and the variability explained by the first factor is 31.13%,

which is less than the critical standard of 40%. Therefore, there are no serious common methodological biases in this study.

4.2 Descriptive statistics and Correlations among all variables correlation analysis

Firstly, descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis of the variables are shown in Table 1. The results showed that rebranding activities, employee buy-in, psychological capital, and perceived organizational support are positively correlated with each other. The results provide preliminary support for hypothesis 1-3, 5 and 6 verification and feasible conditions for subsequent regression analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive & Correlative analysis(N=997)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender	1.33	0.47									
Age	1.85	0.82	0.04								
Education	2.50	0.68	0.03	-0.32**							
Service years	2.80	1.07	-0.05	0.56**	-0.01						
Position	1.29	0.58	0.09**	0.35**	0.05	0.31**					
RB	3.44	0.79	-0.05	0.04	-0.05	0.04	-0.04	(0.79)			
EB	3.65	0.63	-0.08**	0.09**	-0.01	0.03	0.00	0.46**	(0.88)		
PC	3.65	0.52	-0.12**	0.07*	0.00	0.11**	0.01	0.44**	0.67**	(0.91)	
POS	3.88	0.90	-0.10**	0.00	-0.07*	-0.06	0.00	0.40**	0.55**	0.58**	(0.90)

Note: RB: Rebranding; EB: Employee Buy-in; PC: Psychological Capital; POS: Perceived Organization Support; *P<0.05, **P<0.01

4.3 Hypotheses testing

4.3.1 The Chain mediating analysis.

The path analysis results are shown in Table 2. Hayes’ non-parametric percentile Bootstrap method was used to test the mediation effect. Model 6 of SPSS macro program was applied, under the condition of repeatedly sampling 5000 times and controlling variables such as gender, age, education level, years of service and rank, to examine the mediating effect of perceived organizational support and psychological capital on the relationship between rebranding activities and employee buy-in. Regression model analysis results showed that: organizational rebranding activities had significant positive effects on employee buy-in ($\beta=0.37, p<0.001$), perceived organizational support ($\beta=0.46, p<0.001$) and psychological capital ($\beta=0.37, p<0.001$), which verified hypothesis 1, 2 and 5. Both perceived organizational support ($\beta=0.15, p<0.001$) and psychological capital ($\beta=0.58, p<0.001$) had significant positive effects on employee buy-in. Hypothesis 3 and 6 were verified.

Table 2. Chain mediation models of POS and PC(N=997)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	(EB)		(POS)		(PC)		(EB)	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Gender	-0.09	-2.40*	-0.17	-3.13*	-0.1	-3.28*	-0.01	-0.21
Age	0.09	3.10**	0.002	0.04	0.02	0.73	0.08	3.467***
Education	0.05	1.61	-0.0713	-1.71	0.02	1.02	0.04	1.88
Service years	-0.03	-1.63	-0.08	-2.61**	0.04	2.11*	-0.04	-2.6**
Position	0.004	0.13	0.09	1.78	0.003	0.11	-0.01	-0.38
RB	0.37	16.38***	0.46	13.78***	0.15	8.76***	0.14	6.91***
POS					0.28	18.09***	0.15	7.35***
PC							0.58	16.47***
R ²	0.23		0.18		0.41		0.52	
F	48.21***		35.76***		96.62***		132.01***	

Note: RB: Rebranding; EB: Employee Buy-in; PC: Psychological Capital; POS: Perceived Organization Support; OCI: Organizational Cultural Identification; *P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001; the coefficient is the standardized coefficient

The mediation effect test was conducted using the Bootstrap sampling method (5000 samples) to evaluate the 95% confidence intervals of the three mediation paths. As shown in Table 3, in path 1 mediated by perceived organizational support (rebranding activity-perceived organizational support -employee buy-in), 95% confidence interval is [0.04, 0.09], excluding 0, indicating that perceived organizational support plays a mediating role between rebranding activities and employee buy-in. In path 2 mediated by psychological capital (rebranding activity - psychological capital - employee support), 95% confidence interval is [0.07, 0.12], excluding 0, indicating that psychological capital plays a mediating role in the relationship between rebranding activity and employee buy-in. In path 3 with perceived organizational support and psychological capital as chain mediators (rebranding activity - perceived organizational support - psychological capital - employee buy-in), 95% confidence interval is [0.06, 0.09], excluding 0, indicating that perceived organizational support and psychological capital play a chain mediating role in the relationship between rebranding activity and employee buy-in. Thus hypothesis 4, 7 and 8 are verified. Therefore, the indirect effect of the three paths is significant, and the chain mediation effect is significant. The data analysis of mediating effect shows that: the rebranding activity has a direct effect on employee buy-in, and the effect value is 0.14, accounting for 37.84%; the perceived organizational support and psychological capital play a partial mediating role in the relationship between rebranding activities and employee buy-in, and they form a chain mediating role in this relationship. The mediating effect is 0.23, accounting for 62.16% of the total effect of rebranding activities and employee buy-in (0.37), and the effect value of path 1 is 0.066. The effect value of path 2 was 0.089, accounting for 24.05%, and the effect value of path 3 was 0.074, accounting for 20%.

Table 3. Chain mediating paths between POS & PC

	Value	SE	Bootstrap95%CI		Relative effect (%)
			BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Total effect	0.37	0.02	0.33	0.41	
Direct effect	0.14	0.02	0.10	0.18	37.84%
Total indirect effect	0.23	0.02	0.19	0.27	62.16%
RB-POS-EB	0.066	0.01	0.04	0.09	17.84%
RB-PC-EB	0.089	0.01	0.07	0.12	24.05%
RB-POS-PC-EB	0.074	0.01	0.06	0.09	20.00%

RB: Rebranding; EB: Employee Buy-in; PC: Psychological Capital; POS: Perceived Organization Support; OCI: Organizational Cultural Identification;

5 Conclusions

5.1 The relationship of rebranding, perceived organizational support, psychological capital and employee buy-in

From the perspective of social exchange theory, this study explored and explained the specific mechanism between organizational rebranding activities and employee buy-in. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between rebranding activities and employee buy-in. Internal rebranding activities such as publicity and training played an important role in maintaining employee buy-in behavior post rebranding [7]. Schweiger & Denisi(1991) showed that when lack of internal communication, the overall brand performance, job satisfaction and employee commitment will decline in the process of rebranding. In other words, if the organization correctly carries out more and better communication, training and other related rebranding activities in the process of rebranding, employees will have higher support for the organization, which is consistent with the research conclusion of Thomson et al., (1999). The results of this study verify that in the process of rebranding, carrying out comprehensive and effective rebranding activities can effectively increase employee buy-in, which is conducive to the smooth rebranding of the organization and increase the possibility of successful rebranding.

This study also found that perceived organizational support and psychological capital played a positive role in this relationship. As pointed out by Luthans & Avolio(2003), to achieve sustainable growth and performance of human resources, it is required both improving the employees’ psychological capital and creating a positive and supportive environment by the organization. According to organizational support theory and social exchange theory, after perceived support from the organization and having a better understanding of organizational change, employees will be more optimistic about the company's prospects, more confident about the future, more positive in the face of the negative impact of change, more resilient, and more self-efficacy, which will encourage employees to do more to support the organization and the brand.

In other words, this study confirmed that perceived organizational support and psychological capital played a role of chain mediation in the relationship between organizational rebranding activities and employee buy-in.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study aims to explore the effect mechanism of relationship of organizational rebranding and employee buy-in, especially the chain mediating role of perceived organizational support and psychological capital in this process, as well as the moderating role of organizational cultural identification. Most of the hypotheses have been verified through empirical studies. The theoretical significance is as follows: First, it enriches the research on the relationship between rebranding activities within organizations and their outcome variables and the mechanism of action. From the perspective of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, this study reveals the important effect mechanism of organizational rebranding on employee buy-in through social exchange theory and organizational support theory, and further examines the important chain-mediating role of perceived organizational support and psychological capital. It provides important inspiration for employees to enhance their support for the organization. Compared with previous studies [7], based on psychological variables such as perceived organizational support, psychological capital, this paper provides a new theoretical perspective for the mechanism of internal rebranding research, and explores the influence mechanism of rebranding activities on employee buy-in through the chain mediation of the two. It is an important supplement and extension to the existing research results.

Secondly, this study was conducted under the background of internal organization groupization, to study the influence of rebranding activities, carried out by subsidiaries of aviation maintenance Group, on employee buy-in during the group's internal organization rebranding. It tested two psychological variables, namely, the chain mediating role of perceived organizational support and psychological capital. It add on to the related literature research.

5.3 Empirically implications

The results of this study have important guiding significance to the practice of organization management. First of all, rebranding activities have a direct impact on employee buy-in. Whether communication and training related to rebranding are in place directly affects the level of employee buy-in and may also affect the success or failure of rebranding [10]. In the process of internal rebranding, the organization should pay attention to the internal communication and training of relevant rebranding, to let employees better acknowledge and understand the practices of the organization, and reduce the risk of rebranding failure.

Secondly, perceived organizational support and psychological capital play a chain mediating role in the relationship of rebranding activities and employee buy-in. In addition to the communication and training in the internal rebranding process, the organization should provide more support and care for employees in the daily operation and

management process, ensure fairness and justice, care for subordinates, create a comfortable working environment, improve employees' welfare benefits, and focus on improving employees' perceived organizational support and psychological capital for internal rebranding, because a higher perceived organizational support and psychological capital are conducive to promoting the influence of internal rebranding activities on employee buy-in and contributing to the success of corporate rebranding.

5.4 Limitations and further research direction

The limitations of this study are mainly in two aspects: First, the data collection of rebranding activities, employee buy-in, perceived organizational support, psychological capital and organizational cultural identification occurred at the same time. Although most of the research results were consistent with the theoretical hypothesis, the cross-sectional study design could not test causality. Therefore, in order to further demonstrate the relationship between the variables revealed in this study, the longitudinal design method can be adopted in future research. Secondly, the internal rebranding in this study took place in 2021. Although various companies organized relevant training one after another, the data collected by questionnaire may not be accurate due to perception bias and other reasons as time difference, and didn't do a pre-test before the rebranding took place to make a comparative study on the employees' feelings and state feedback before and after rebranding, and study the effectiveness of rebranding activities.

Future researches can conduct pre and post test studies according to the rebranding process, and compare the differences of various variables and their relationships before and after rebranding. Thirdly, in order to facilitate sampling, this study selected three domestic branches of an aviation maintenance group for sample collection, which improved the internal validity of the research conclusions to a certain extent. However, whether it can be extended to other industries or cultural backgrounds needs further testing. Finally, in this study, we selected the two variables that have great effect on employee individuals - perceived organizational support and psychological capital, as chain mediators. Although the results also verified the hypothesis, other psychological variables may also affect the process of rebranding. For example, Joseph (2021) chose corporate brand identification and employee engagement as the mediating variables to study the impact of rebranding activities on employee buy-in post rebranding, subsequent studies can continue to explore the impact of other psychological variables.

6 Conclusions

From the perspective of two psychological variables, perceived organizational support and psychological capital as chain mediators, this study studied the process of the effect of internal organizational rebranding activities on employee buy-in, and the mediating effect on this process. The results show that rebranding activities have a direct effect on employee buy-in, perceived organizational support and psychological capital play a

partial mediating role in the relationship between rebranding activities and employee buy-in, and form a chain mediating effect.

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