



What makes a brand manager effective? ☆

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 October 2011

Accepted 30 October 2012

Available online 22 November 2012

Keywords:

Brand management

Intangible capital

Capabilities

Brand manager

SEM

ABSTRACT

Brands have become increasingly important as a foundation for competitive strategy. Unfortunately, although brand managers are responsible for brand strategy development and execution, little is known about what makes a brand manager effective. A model is developed to understand what intangible capital embodied by brand managers influences brand management capabilities and resultant brand performance. Measures of brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities are developed through an iterative scale development process. Hypothesis testing, derived from a survey of brand managers, indicates that brand manager human, relational and informational capital influences brand management capabilities and resultant brand performance, and brand manager intangible capital has an indirect effect on brand performance via brand management capabilities. By delineating and operationalizing the intangible capital and capabilities of brand managers, this study provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for future research on brand managers, tools for assessing current brand manager capital and capabilities, and guidance in relation to intangible capital and capabilities needed by brand managers.

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1. Introduction

What makes a brand manager effective? This question has become increasingly important as competition has evolved toward being brand-based. Given the evolving nature of competition, firms today strive to employ brand managers who are able to understand issues such as protecting brand equity against competitive threats and leveraging and capturing brand value. However, little academic study has been engaged to identify what it takes to be an effective brand manager, although much research has been engaged on brands and their importance to the firm (e.g., Buil, de Chernatony, & Hem, 2009; Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010; Keller, 1998; Ozsomer & Altaras, 2008). The lack of research specifically addressing this issue is surprising given the importance of brand managers to a brand's performance.

This study contributes to the literature in two distinct ways. First, this study identifies the specific intangible capital elements (e.g., the types of knowledge and skills that are critical to a brand manager's performance) and capabilities of brand managers. Although prior research has begun to suggest the importance of examining intangible

capital at the individual level (Griffith & Lusch, 2007; Nath & Mahajan, 2011), researchers have not identified marketing specific intangible capital, nor what specific intangible capital is important for brand managers. The authors engage in an iterative process to identify and create measures to effectively assess the elements necessary for understanding brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities. By developing measures of brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities this study not only provides specificity to allow for greater academic research, but also provides tools for assessing the intangible capital and brand management capabilities of brand managers, therefore contributing not only to academic discipline, but also to marketing practice and marketing education.

Second, building upon the literature within marketing focused on understanding marketing professionals as key firm resources (e.g., Dickson, 1992; Griffith & Lusch, 2007; Nath & Mahajan, 2011; Verhoef et al., 2011), this study contributes to the understanding of how a brand manager's intangible capital is leveraged into brand management capabilities to provide for enhanced brand performance. Specifically, although researchers have offered a conceptual extension of resources at the marketing professional level (e.g., Griffith & Lusch, 2007; Nath & Mahajan, 2011), researchers have not empirically demonstrated that the intangible capital embodied in marketing personnel has any effect on firm level outcome variables. This study empirically examines brand manager intangible capital as a key influencer of brand performance. As such, this study answers calls for the quantification of value to the firm of marketing professionals (e.g., Court, Gordon, & Perrey, 2005; de Chernatony & Cottam, 2009).

☆ The authors would like to thank Paula Fitzgerald, James Brown, Andy Wood, Richard McFarland, Barry Babin and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

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2. Background literature

Brand management is a process of building, measuring, and managing brand equity (Keller, 1998). Given the importance of brands to the firm, and their complexity, it is not surprising that the management of the firm's brand(s) is often solidified within the role of the brand manager. Brand managers are charged with the responsibility for developing and/or managing brands. For example, the Nike Golf brand manager maintains ultimate responsibility for the Nike Golf brand's strategy, tactics and performance. While brand managers are accountable for brand performance, little guidance exists within the literature pertaining to what intangible capital and capabilities are necessary for a brand manager to be effective. To gain insights into these issues from a theoretical perspective, a conceptual framework is employed linking resources to capabilities to performance.

2.1. Resources, capabilities and performance

Resources are a fundamental aspect of competition (Barney, 1991; Hunt, 2000; Hunt & Morgan, 1995). According to Barney (1991), resources that have the potential to provide sustained competitive advantages should possess the following attributes: 1) valuable, 2) rare among a firm's current and potential competitors, 3) imperfectly imitable, and 4) not be strategically equivalent substitutes. Brand managers' intangible capital is a valuable resource, as it can be translated into efficiency and effectiveness of their work and helps them build strong brands. Brand managers represent a rare resource to the firm, as firms rely on their managerial talent to generate sustained competitive advantage. Moreover, brand managers interact with a large number of parties, both inside and outside of the firm; these relationships constitute a socially complex resource, which cannot be perfectly imitated by others. Finally, while a firm can replace brand managers, the brand management intangible capital embodied in the brand manager cannot be easily replaced, especially the tacit brand management knowledge and skills that he/she has developed to manage the brand. All in all, it can be argued that a brand manager's intangible capital meets the four criteria as a form of resources and provides a foundation for the achievement of superior brand performance (while both tangible and intangible resources are important, researchers argue that firm

competitive positioning is founded on heterogeneous resources (Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu, & Kochhar, 2001; Hughes & Morgan, 2007; Hunt, 2000), which are embodied within intangible capital (Nath & Mahajan, 2011)) (see Fig. 1).

A distinction is made between resources and capabilities, in that, "resources are stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the organization and capabilities are an organization's capacity to deploy resources" (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993, p. 35). Value is maximized when capabilities are deployed to utilize resources to provide a distinctive competency relative to competitors (Kamoche, 1996). This distinction is also discussed in the capability literature which argues that it is through the transformation of resources into capabilities that firms are able to engage in substantive value delivery (Day, 1994). As such, this conceptualization offers the perspective that resources are leveraged into capabilities, which make firms more effective. This is consistent with Morgan, Slotegraaf, and Vorhies (2009) who examined the impact of a firm's brand management capabilities on performance, and Orr, Bush, and Vorhies (2011) who examined the impact of a firm's capabilities to enhance customer satisfaction. This study employs this general structure at the individual brand manager level.

Researchers argue that four types of intangible capital, namely informational, relational, human and organizational capital, conceptualized by Hunt (2000) at the firm level are appropriate at the individual marketer level (Griffith & Lusch, 2007; Nath & Mahajan, 2011). Consistent with this conceptualization, it is proposed that brand managers accumulate and employ these four intangible capital elements to achieve superior brand performance. Specifically, this study theorizes that the four elements of intangible capital embodied in brand managers can be employed to create brand management capabilities. It is argued that when a brand manager possesses greater levels of brand management capabilities he/she is better able to draw upon both intra- and inter-firm resources to effectively structure and manage a brand. Further, brand management capabilities should allow him/her to identify the essence of the brand and its heritage and effectively communicate this brand image to consumers in order to evoke positive brand associations and heighten perceived brand value. Heightened perceived brand value by consumers (i.e., stronger brands) allows the brand to achieve superior performance (Bahadir, Bharadwaj, & Srivastava, 2008).

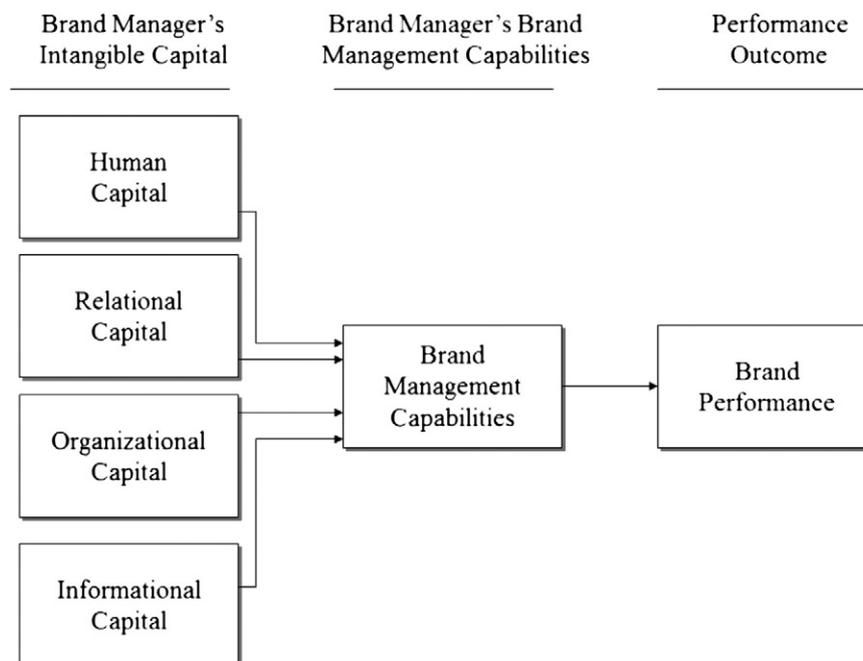


Fig. 1. Brand manager capital, brand management capabilities and performance outcome.

3. Hypotheses development

3.1. The influence of brand manager intangible capital on brand management capabilities

The intangible human, relational, organizational and informational capital of a brand manager is argued to influence brand management capabilities (i.e., the ability of a brand manager to effectively manage the brand). Brand management capabilities encompass broad areas such as: brand development and enhancement (such as creating, maintaining and updating brand image, establishing a unique value proposition, and keeping the brand's offering relevant to its customers); brand communication (such as identification of the appropriate target audience, effectively delivering brand messages, and evaluating brand communication outcomes); and managing brand relationships (such as establishing a brand community among its customers, building and strengthening the connection between the brand and its customers, and enhancing brand loyalty) (Aaker, 1996).

A brand manager's human capital is conceptualized as his/her brand management skills, expertise, etc. This conceptualization is consistent with prior research indicating the importance of skills and job experience (Nath & Mahajan, 2011; Schmidt, Hunter, Outerbridge, & Goff, 1988). A brand manager's skills and expertise pertaining to elements such as decision making, teamwork, communication, and networking, are necessary for the brand manager to effectively create and communicate the brand, manage the brand and structure the brand (i.e., brand management capabilities). For example, the brand manager's communication skills enable him/her to communicate the brand's relevant dimensions to the brand's appropriate publics, and manage firm personnel involved with brand elements, in areas such as product design and packaging. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H₁. A brand manager's human capital positively influences his/her brand management capabilities.

A brand manager's relational capital is conceptualized as his/her business acquaintances, relationships, connections, and networks both internal and external to the firm. Relational capital draws from the concept of social capital. Social capital is any aspect of social structure that creates value and facilitates the actions of individuals within that social structure (Coleman, 1990), which is a critical aspect of marketing management (e.g., Nath & Mahajan, 2011). Brand managers often function as boundary spanners working with advertising agencies, regulators, and supply chain partners; this relational capital is in turn important for brand effectiveness (Nath & Mahajan, 2011). For instance, a brand manager's relational capital with the brand's supply chain partners can be leveraged to enhance the brand's communication, such as obtaining higher levels of channel support to maintain brand positioning (e.g., specialized end-cap displays, co-promotions with channel partners, assistance in maintaining a consistent brand image by not discounting the brand, etc.). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H₂. A brand manager's relational capital positively influences his/her brand management capabilities.

A brand manager's organizational capital is conceptualized as his/her knowledge of the firm's brand management policies, practices, and procedures. This conceptualization is consistent with that of Nath and Mahajan (2011) who speak to the organizational resource of customer linking as an organizational process. Greater knowledge of the firm's brand management policies and practices allows the brand manager to more effectively operate within the structure of the organization, therefore allowing the manager to efficiently work

with others within the firm to develop and maintain brand-related projects. For example, a brand manager aware of the firm's policies and processes regarding decision making would allow him/her to more effectively engage the necessary market research within the firm necessary for the decision making approval process for brand extensions. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H₃. A brand manager's organizational capital positively influences his/her brand management capabilities.

A brand manager's informational capital is conceptualized as his/her brand-related knowledge, including knowledge of the brand's customers, brand image, and performance. This conceptualization is consistent with Nath and Mahajan (2011) who argue that information resources include qualitative and quantitative data as well as insights about customers and customer trends. A brand manager's informational capital is considered a resource when it allows the brand manager to create value in the marketplace for the firm by adjusting branding strategies and tactics to best meet market needs (Aaker, 1996). A brand manager's understanding of the brand's customers, combined with his/her understanding of the brand's positioning (i.e., associations of the brand relative to competitive products serving similar needs) allows the brand manager to create and communicate the brand in a responsive manner. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H₄. A brand manager's informational capital positively influences his/her brand management capabilities.

3.2. The performance outcome of brand management capabilities

Through the development of brand management capabilities, a brand manager is able to enhance the brand's performance. The heterogeneity of both supply and demand is continuously fluctuating and market opportunities arise as a result of changes in the behaviors of targeted segments and the market as a whole (Dickson, 1992). A brand manager able to develop greater brand management capabilities is more effective in developing and managing the brand and therefore is able to deliver greater value in the marketplace resulting in greater brand performance. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H₅. A brand manager's brand management capabilities positively influences brand performance.

3.3. The indirect effect of brand manager intangible capital

Brand management capabilities are an outcome of a brand manager's intangible capital, as capabilities are the action component resultant from the employment of resources (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). Thus, it is argued that brand manager intangible capital has an indirect effect on brand performance via brand management capabilities. This argument is consistent with the perspective that resources are available for deployment (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993) and that value is maximized when capabilities are deployed to utilize resources in a means to provide a distinctive competency and relative sustained advantage (Kamoche, 1996). Thus, we argue that to successfully build a brand, a brand manager must leverage his/her intangible capital (i.e., human, relational, organizational and informational) to choose brand elements (such as brand names, logos, packaging, and slogans) that are memorable, meaningful, transferable, adaptable, and protectable, as well as design and implement marketing programs and activities to support, enhance and reinforce the chosen brand elements. Further, the brand manager must measure brand equity to assess whether the brand elements chosen and marketing programs adopted achieve the brand management objectives. Finally, the manager must manage brand equity such as defining the brand hierarchy and the brand-product matrix, enhancing brand equity over time, and

establishing brand equity over market segments. These capabilities are consistent with brand management literature (cf. Keller, 1998; Macrae & Uncles, 1997). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H₆. A brand manager's intangible capital indirectly influences brand performance via brand management capabilities.

4. Method

4.1. Scale development: operationalizing intangible capital and capabilities

4.1.1. Generate sample of items

Four approaches were used to specify the domain (i.e., elements) of brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities. First, a review of the literature was conducted in relevant fields, including economics, management and marketing on intangible capital, brand and brand management. Second, depth interviews, lasting between 45 min and 1 h and 50 min, with 16 brand managers were conducted. The brand managers represented global, national and regional brands and spanned industries from consumer packaged goods to high technology services. Third, educational programs for brand managers were reviewed. Course offerings, syllabi and texts of 12 MBA programs offering a brand management specialization/concentration (e.g., University of Wisconsin's MBA program in Brand Management) and the content offerings of professional training programs (e.g., AMA's Brand Management Camp) were reviewed and assessed for identified brand manager skills and capabilities. Fourth, 38 job postings for brand manager positions were collected from job search websites (i.e., www.monster.com and www.indeed.com) and were analyzed to identify brand manager skills.

The four approaches generated a large pool of potential scale items (102 items in total, including 72 intangible capital items and 30 capability items) encompassing aspects of brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities. Removing conceptually redundant items resulted in 62 items (46 intangible capital items and 16 capability items). The list of scale items was then assessed by 18 marketing professionals either responsible for brand management or working with brand managers. Items deemed ambiguous, wordy, jargon laden or firm/industry specific were eliminated. A survey instrument was then developed. The survey was presented to three brand managers who were previously interviewed at the stage of qualitative data collection. The brand managers were asked to comment on the clarity of the scale items as well as the flow of logic between sections of the survey instrument, its organization and its appearance. Comments received were evaluated with requisite changes being made to the survey instrument.

4.1.2. Pre-test

The survey was then tested to examine the refined measures in a sub-sample of the population. Testing was conducted on the first day of a marketing professional organization's Brand Management Seminar. Similar to a mall-intercept approach, Seminar participants were approached to determine their appropriateness for the study. The survey listed the specified brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities items and asked each participant to evaluate whether each item was important for brand managers (on a 1 to 7 scale where 1 was "unimportant" and 7 was "very important"). Twenty usable surveys were returned. Assessment of the 62 items was conducted along with a review of the respondent comments, to identify problematic items. After analyzing the means for each item, 50 items with means above the mid-point of the scale were retained for employment within the study (36 intangible capital items and 14 capability items).

4.1.3. Scale purification

To assess the quality of the survey instrument, a total number of 148 brand managers who attended the Brand Management Seminar

were contacted. Seventy-three usable surveys were returned for a response rate of 49.3%. Respondents averaged 11.3 years of brand management experience, with the longest being 25 years and shortest being 2 years. Fifty-one out of 70 represented product brands (38 consumer products, 13 industrial products), 19 represented service brands, and 3 did not report their specific brand.

An exploratory factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis with oblimin rotation) was conducted, and then the corrected item-to-total correlations and inter-item correlations for each factor were assessed. Following the procedure of Briggs and Cheek (1986), items that did not have corrected item-to-total subscale correlations above .50, factor loadings below .40 and inter-item correlation below .30 were deleted. In addition, items that had a higher correlation with other dimensions compared to their hypothesized dimensions were also deleted following the procedure of Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001). This procedure further reduced the scale items to 14 for intangible capital and 5 for capability. The remaining items represented a structure of five factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.

4.2. Scale validation and hypotheses testing

4.2.1. Data collection

To further validate the scales and test the hypotheses, data were collected from brand managers. Two sources were employed. First, a registration list of a marketing professional organization's members was acquired from its website. Members who listed their job title as brand manager were selected from this list ($n = 115$). Second, members of the organization's Brand Management Special Interest Group were queried via its online community ($n = 399$). In total, 514 brand managers were contacted electronically and asked to complete the online survey. A series of follow-up contacts (both via e-mail and posting to the online community) were made. In all, 108 responses were collected for a total response rate of 21%. Ninety-six responses were complete on the central constructs and were used for analysis.

Respondents had an average of 12.5 years of brand management experience and had been working with their current brand for an average of 6.6 years. Respondent educational level varied, with 45.8% (44 respondents) holding a bachelor's degree, 47.9% (46 respondents) holding a master's degree/MBA, 3 having a Ph.D. degree, and the remaining having 2 years of college education. Fifty three respondents were female (55%).

Ninety-three unique brands were identified (three respondents did not disclose the name of the brand they managed). Of these, 56 were product brands and 37 were service brands. Fifty-five brands served global markets with the remaining brands being domestic (both national and regional). On average, the brands identified were in existence for 51.6 years. Descriptive statistics are provided for all measures in Table 1.

4.2.2. Independent measures

4.2.2.1. Brand manager intangible capital. Four types of brand manager intangible capital were measured (see Appendix 1). Human capital was captured by a 4-item scale. Relational capital was captured by a 3-item scale. Organizational capital was captured by a 3-item scale. Informational capital was captured by a 4-item scale. Cronbach's alphas for the intangible capital scales are above .70 and in the acceptable range (Nunnally, 1978) (human capital $\alpha = .78$; relational capital $\alpha = .77$; organizational capital $\alpha = .91$; informational capital $\alpha = .82$). In addition, inter-item correlations were calculated for each variable. The average inter-item correlation levels below .30 indicate poor internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006) and levels above .90 indicate redundancy (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991; Thelen, Yoo, & Magnini, 2011). The inter-item correlations of all independent measures are within acceptable

Table 1
Means, AVEs, standard deviations and correlations.

	Mean	AVE	Standard deviation	Brand performance	Brand manager capabilities	Human capital	Organizational capital	Social capital
Brand performance	4.89		1.26					
Brand manager capabilities	5.51	.60	0.88	0.50*				
Human capital	5.88	.51	0.77	0.21*	0.59*			
Organizational capital	5.39	.84	1.32	0.22*	0.48*	0.49*		
Social capital	5.10	.61	1.22	0.23*	0.59*	0.51*	0.49*	
Informational capital	5.84	.56	0.87	0.33*	0.54*	0.42*	0.51*	0.42*

* $p < .05$.

range (human capital mean inter-item correlation = .49; relational capital mean inter-item correlation = .53; organizational capital mean inter-item correlation = .78; informational capital mean inter-item correlation = .53). Measures for human, informational, and organizational capital were anchored by 1 = very low and 7 = very high, and measures for relational capital were anchored by 1 = very weak and 7 = very strong.

4.2.2.2. Brand management capabilities. The brand management capabilities scale measured the brand manager's ability to create a desirable brand image, the ability to communicate the brand's value to external and internal parties, the ability to deliver the brand's promise to customers, and the ability to integrate and reconfigure available resources in brand management (anchored by 1 = very low and 7 = very high, see Appendix 1). Cronbach alpha for the brand management capability scale was .88, and mean inter-item correlation was .61.

4.2.3. Dependent measure: brand performance

Brand performance consists both of financial indicators such as profit and market share (e.g., Jain, 1989) and brand equity elements, such as positive brand image and a high level of brand awareness among its target market (e.g., Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Keller, 1990; Keller, 1993, 2003). This approach is consistent with the current brand performance literature (e.g., O'Cass & Ngo, 2006; Weerawardena, O'Cass, & Julian, 2006). This study follows O'Cass and Ngo's (2006) hybrid approach and uses 4 items ($\alpha = .92$) to measure brand performance (i.e., brand image, brand awareness, market share and profit). For each item, respondents were asked to evaluate the brands they manage based on statements such as "the brand I manage has a higher market share than most of our competitors" on 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = "Completely Disagree" and 7 = "Completely Agree").

4.2.4. Assessment of the latent structure

To evaluate the latent structure of the 4-factor intangible capital scale and the brand management capability scale items, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Satisfactory model fit indices (CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = 0.5, $\chi^2(134) = 167.2$) provided support for the latent structure of the scales, as the CFI and TLI exceed the recommended value of .90 (Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 2006) and the RMSEA is within the range of acceptable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Overall, these results suggest that the proposed measurement model is representative of the data.

4.2.5. Convergent validity and discriminant validity

All items loaded significantly ($p < .001$) on their respective constructs, supporting convergent validity for each construct. Discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) method. The AVEs exceeded the squared correlations of each pairwise relationship, with the exception of social-human capital, and human capital-brand management capability. Hence, a chi-square difference tests (Bagozzi & Phillips, 1982) were used to further assess the discriminant validity of these pairwise relationships: social-human capital ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 14$, $p < .05$) and human capital-brand management capability ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 20.9$, $p < .05$). The significant chi-square difference tests for these pairwise relationships indicate that the traits are not perfectly

correlated, supporting discriminant validity. Jointly, these results indicate satisfactory reliability and validity for the scales.

4.3. Analysis and results: hypotheses tests

The hypothesized relationships were tested using a SEM model via AMOS 20. Satisfactory fit indices were found (CFI = .93, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .06, $\chi^2(211) = 300.9$) (Hair et al., 2006). Hypotheses 1–4 argued that a brand manager's intangible capital would positively influence a brand manager's brand management capabilities. Supportive of H₁, the path coefficient indicates that human capital positively influenced brand management capabilities ($b = .52$, $p < .05$). Supportive of H₂, relational capital positively influenced brand management capabilities ($b = .30$, $p < .05$). The results indicate that a brand manager's organizational capital did not influence a brand manager's brand management capabilities ($b = .03$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H₃ was not supported. The results, supportive of H₄, indicate that informational capital positively influenced brand management capabilities ($b = .25$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 5 argued that a brand manager's brand management capabilities would positively influence brand performance. The results, supportive of H₅, indicate that brand management capabilities positively influenced brand performance ($b = .58$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 6 argued that brand manager intangible capital had an indirect effect on brand performance. The hypothesized model was tested in comparison to a full model. The direct paths from the brand manager intangible capital elements to brand performance, except informational capital ($b = .49$, $p = .051$), were not significant ($p > .05$), thus providing partial support for H₆ (Table 2).

5. Discussion

This study makes a number of contributions. First, there has been a growing interest in understanding how marketing professionals contribute to the value of the firm (Court et al., 2005; Verhoef et al., 2011). This issue is of importance in relation to brand managers as it is through the development of brands that firms compete (Keller, 1998). This study contributes to the marketing literature by identifying the specific brand manager intangible capital elements (i.e., human, relational, informational and organizational capital) necessary for an effective brand manager, thereby delineating the scope of this important construct (for a complete list of the intangible capital elements, refer to Appendix 1). Through the specific identification and measurement of the intangible capital and brand management capabilities of brand managers, this study extends the literature on marketing professional intangible capital (e.g., Griffith & Lusch, 2007; Nath & Mahajan, 2011), providing conceptual clarity to these constructs.

Further, the present study proposed and empirically tested a model of individual-level brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities on resultant brand performance, hence answering the question of "what makes an effective brand manager?" The empirical results indicate strong support for the proposed model, demonstrating the specific brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities that positively influence brand performance. The findings demonstrate that human, relational

Table 2
Results of model testing.

	Model (H ₁ , H ₂ , H ₃ , H ₄ and H ₅)		Indirect Effect (H ₆)	
	β (SE)	t-Value	β (SE)	t-Value
Human capital → Capabilities	0.52* (.25)	2.10	0.53* (.25)	2.11
Relational capital → Capabilities	0.30* (.13)	2.41	0.30* (.12)	2.39
Organizational capital → Capabilities	0.03 (.06)	0.40	0.03 (.06)	0.46
Informational capital → Capabilities	0.25* (.11)	2.27	0.24* (.11)	2.17
Capabilities → Brand performance	0.58* (.19)	3.03	0.30* (.14)	2.14
Human capital → Brand performance	–	–	–0.11 (.51)	–.21
Relational capital → Brand performance	–	–	0.08 (.25)	0.33
Organizational capital → Brand performance	–	–	–0.06 (.14)	–.44
Informational capital → Brand performance	–	–	0.49 (.25)	1.95

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed t -test).

and informational capital positively influences a brand manager's brand management capabilities. Interestingly, organizational capital was not found to influence brand management capabilities. This finding is important as it suggests that a brand manager's understanding of the organization's processes, under which the brand manager functions, has little influence (either positive or negative) on the brand manager's brand management capabilities. A possible explanation for this finding is that although organizational policies set the guidelines for operating within the firm, brand managers are not reliant upon such policies to engage in brand management as they neither facilitate or hinder his/her actions. These findings suggest that it is not the brand manager's understanding (or lack of understanding) of organizational policies that allows a brand manager to marshal necessary firm resources, but rather the brand managers other intangible capital elements. This is not to suggest that brand managers should not be held accountable for understanding organizational policies, but rather to suggest that firm management understand the lack of influence of policies on effectiveness of brand management.

For marketing practice, this study identifies specific elements related to both brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities that are critical to a brand's performance. A firm employing a brand manager can use the scales developed in this study as benchmarks to identify specific intangible capital and brand management capability areas for development. For example, the brand manager intangible capital scales can be used as assessment tools to identify areas within the brand manager's current portfolio of intangible capital in which development is necessary. External professional development programs and/or internal job training seminars could then be prescribed to enhance the brand manager's intangible capital and capabilities. Further, firms could employ the scales developed to assess the task responsibilities of their current brand managers, adapting either job tasks or development programs to the unique aspects of brand management at their firm.

Similarly, the findings of this research can also benefit professional training programs and universities working toward developing curriculum aimed at brand manager development. As stated previously, there is little consistency pertaining to topics addressed in these programs. Brand management education programs can utilize the items in the measurement scales as guidance toward a focused and well-structured program developing the specified intangible capital as well as the brand management capabilities identified. For example, courses could be offered in developing the human intangible capital brand managers need, such as teamwork, decision-making, verbal and written communication, alongside courses addressing brand management capabilities such as the ability to deliver the brand's promise to customers or the ability to identify potential problems with a brand. Courses designed specifically to develop key intangible capital and brand management

capabilities could enhance the competitive positioning and effectiveness of such graduates. Additionally, educational institutions can employ the measurement scales developed to assess incoming students, thereby allowing the institution to create personalized education programs to enhance student value as brand managers upon graduation. For example, students weaker in one type of intangible capital (e.g., human) could be provided a course of study to develop that specific intangible capital element. As such, these measures could serve as an educational assessment component for universities offering brand management programs, thus providing assurance of learning metrics for goals established in relation to accreditation by *The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International*.

6. Limitations, future directions and conclusion

While this study contributes to the understanding of what makes a brand managers effective, greater research efforts are needed given its limitations. First, this study is limited due to its cross-sectional design. Although the results of this study suggest that brand manager's intangible capital influences brand management capabilities and resultant brand performance, inferences to causality are limited. As such, the brand manager intangible capital and brand management capabilities identified in this study should be examined longitudinally. A longitudinal assessment of new brand introductions could provide substantial insights into brand manager intangible capital, brand management capabilities and their effects on brand performance.

Second, although the model addresses important aspects of brand management, the model is not comprehensive. For example, individual level tangible capital elements could be incorporated (e.g., firm resources that are made available to brand managers). Furthermore, it could be argued that intangible and tangible capital elements interact to influence brand management capabilities or brand performance. As such, future research should examine a broader scope of brand manager capital, as well as the role of firm level tangible and intangible capital.

Third, there are a number of moderating constructs that could potentially provide a more comprehensive understanding of what makes a brand manager effective. For example, a brand manager's self-efficacy may have a significant impact on the relationship between brand manager capabilities and brand performance. Research on emotional intelligence suggests that people with a high level of emotional intelligence could be more capable of identifying potential problems and solving problems in a creative way than people with lower emotional intelligence (Kidwell, Hardesty, & Childers, 2008). Incorporating constructs into the model could help better understand brand manager effectiveness.

Fourth, examination of how the measures developed in this study relate to managing global brands or across culturally distinct market should be investigated. In a global context, branding becomes more complicated. For example, Eisingerich and Rubera (2010) identify differential drivers of consumer brand commitment across national markets, Dimofte, Johansson, and Bagozzi (2010) demonstrate how ethnically diverse domestic consumer relates differently to global brands, and Ozsomer (2012) denotes brand effect differences (i.e., global versus local) across categories in emerging markets. Future research could examine whether the items identified in this study allow researchers to capture these unique effects related to global brands.

Given that three of the four intangible capital elements of brand managers were found to influence brand management capabilities, future research could explore the specific roles these intangible capital elements play in the structuring, organization and communication of brands. For example, which intangible capital elements are more important when examining new brands versus established brands? Which intangible capital elements are most effective when brand managers reposition brands? Which intangible capital elements are most effective when brand managers adjust for consumer culture positioning

(Westjohn, Singh, & Magnusson, 2012)? Are these brand manager intangible capital elements equally effective for European, Asian and North American brand managers? These and other questions would provide greater insight into the challenges of brand management. Given the increased importance of brands in the competitive landscape, greater research on brand managers and brand management capabilities is needed.

Appendix 1. Description of measures

The following items were rated on a 7-point scale, anchored by 1 = very low and 7 = very high for human, informational, and organizational capital and brand management capabilities; and 1 = very weak and 7 = very strong for relational capital.

Brand manager intangible capital: informational capital

In relation to brand management, my:

1. knowledge of the brand's value among the customers is
2. knowledge of the brand's image among the customers is
3. knowledge of the brand's positioning is
4. knowledge of the brand's customers is

Brand manager intangible capital: human capital

In relation to brand management, my:

1. networking skills are
2. verbal communication skills are
3. marketing research skills are
4. decision-making skills are

Brand manager intangible capital: organizational capital

In relation to brand management, my:

1. knowledge of the brand management process in my firm is
2. knowledge of how brand performance is evaluated in my firm is
3. knowledge of how brand management decisions are made in my firm is

Brand manager intangible capital: relational capital

In relation to brand management, my:

1. relationships with customers are
2. relationships with distribution channels are
3. relationships with key accounts are

Brand manager brand management capabilities

In relation to brand management, my:

1. ability to create a desirable brand image is
2. ability to integrate and reconfigure available resources in brand management is
3. ability to deliver the brand's promise to the customers is
4. ability to create desirable brand value is
5. ability to communicate the brand's image and value efficiently to external parties (customers, promotion agencies, distribution channels) is

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