



The Effects of Employee Happiness on Brand Image in Hotel Businesses

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pamir DİRİL¹

Isa BAGHIROV²

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Editors Group:

¹ Academician Assistant, St. Clements University Psychology, Clinical Psychology/Turkey-United Kingdom, E-Mail: akademisyen1970@hotmail.com, Orcid ID: 0000-0001-8913-343X

² Doctoral Student in Business Management, St. Clements Institute of Postgraduate Education E-Mail: isabaghirov@hotmail.com, Orcid ID: 0009-0004-7086-9032

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of employee happiness on the hotel's brand image in 5-star luxury hotels. Dec Turkish academic research published in Turkish and international literature between the years 2018-2024 is the main purpose of the study by systematically reviewing the academic research, to reveal the direct and indirect effects of employee happiness in hotels on the brand image of the hotel. In the literature review, it has been found that employee happiness positively affects the hotel's service quality and brand image through guest satisfaction. In cases where employee happiness is high, employees' brand loyalty and brand advocacy behaviors increase, and it has been determined that this situation makes positive contributions to brand image. The findings reveal that the internal marketing and leadership practices of enterprises aimed at ensuring employee happiness play a critical role in strengthening the brand image. As a result, it is emphasized that employee happiness should be made a strategic priority. It is proposed to examine the effects of cultural differences and digital platforms on brand image for future research.

Keywords: *Employee Happiness, Brand Image, 5-Star Hotels, Tourism Management, Internal Marketing, Guest Satisfaction, Brand Loyalty*

Introduction

Brand image and guest satisfaction are of vital importance for 5-star luxury hotels in the tourism sector. In these businesses where service quality is directly reflected in guest perception, the hotel's employees constitute the face of the brand that directly contacts the guest. In the literature, strong links have been established between employee happiness and business success (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2021). For example, a study conducted at Oxford University found that the productivity of happy employees was 13% higher (University of Oxford, 2019). Similarly, it is seen that when employee happiness is high in tourism businesses, service quality increases, which in turn increases guest satisfaction and re-preference rates (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). Therefore, the fact that hotel employees love their jobs and are highly motivated is a critical factor that can contribute positively to the brand image of the hotel.

Today, to gain a competitive advantage, luxury hotel organizations focus not only on marketing activities for external guests but also on the happiness of employees, who are considered internal guests. Research shows that businesses with internally satisfied and

engaged employees can create a stronger brand image with external guests (Zhang et al., 2024; Khairy et al., 2023). Especially in five-star hotels, since guests have high expectations, friendly service, proactive and helpful behavior of employees create positive impressions about the brand (Khairy et al., 2023). Increasing employee happiness because of practices such as servant leadership, intrinsic marketing, and valuing employees improves guests' experiences and strengthens the perception of the brand (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024; Koç & Ertürk, 2023). Otherwise, poor service experiences provided by unhappy or unmotivated employees can lead guests to negatively evaluate the brand image and reduce loyalty.

In recent years, the topic of employee happiness has been addressed in academic writings with increasing interest in the fields of positive organizational behavior and tourism management (Erhan, 2021; Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018). Employee happiness can be defined as the frequency with which employees experience positive emotions at work, satisfaction with work, and a high level of work-related well-being (Singh & Aggarwal, 2018; Thevanes & Jathurika, 2021). On the other hand, brand image is the totality of consumers' perceptions, beliefs and impressions about a business or brand (Tahir et al., 2024). Brand image includes the associations and emotional response formed in the minds of customers about the brand; therefore, it is decisive on customer loyalty and recommendation behavior in the long term (Tahir et al., 2024). In the service sector, the harmony between the image promised by the brand and the reality experienced by the guest is very important. The main element that ensures this harmony is the performance and attitude of frontline employees (Khairy et al., 2023).

This article aims to comprehensively examine the effects of employee happiness on hotel brand image in five-star luxury hotels. In the light of national and international academic studies published in the last 6 years, the direct and indirect effects of employee happiness, job satisfaction and similar concepts on hotel guests' brand perception will be revealed. Throughout the article, first the conceptual framework will be drawn and the concepts of employee happiness and brand image will be defined, then the review method will be explained in the method section, the results obtained from the literature will be presented thematically in the findings section, the findings obtained in the discussion section will be evaluated, and finally, in the conclusion section, a general evaluation and suggestions for future studies will be given.

Conceptual Framework

In this section, the concept of employee happiness and related sub-dimensions are discussed first, followed by the concept of brand image and its importance in the context of hospitality. The main approaches that reveal the theoretical links between employee happiness and brand image will also be discussed.

- Employee Happiness (Happiness at Work): Employee happiness is the state in which employees in organizations enjoy their jobs and work environments, experience positive emotions and have a high sense of satisfaction with work in general. This concept is a broader structure that goes beyond the classical phenomenon of job satisfaction and includes the emotional well-being of the employee (Thevanes & Jathurika, 2021). A happy employee can be defined as an individual who rarely experiences negative emotions and frequently experiences positive emotions and feels high intrinsic motivation towards their job (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008, as cited in Erhan, 2021). There are various studies on the antecedents and consequences of employee happiness in literature. Antecedents include organizational support, justice, strong leadership, meaningful work, appreciation, career development opportunities and work-life balance (Singh & Aggarwal, 2018; cited in Erhan, 2021). In recent years, especially with the development of the field of Positive Psychology, interventions to increase happiness in the workplace (e.g. flexible working hours, recognition programs, positive feedback culture) have started to be implemented frequently. When looking at the outcomes of employee happiness, many positive outcomes such as increased productivity, creativity and innovation, intention to stay at work (low turnover), improved customer service quality, and improved overall business performance have been identified (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2021). Indeed, it has been demonstrated in different sectors that "happy employees" are more productive, more customer-oriented and creative, and thus provide higher added value to their organizations (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2021; Khairy et al., 2023). In the tourism sector, employees' positive feelings towards their work and identification with their job is a critical intrinsic factor that improves service quality and guest experience (Erhan, 2021).

There are some concepts closely related to employee happiness: Job satisfaction is the employee's cognitive evaluation of his/her job and is an important component of employee happiness (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). Job engagement is a strong state of motivation resulting from the employee's energetic participation and attaching meaning to work, which is positively related to employee happiness (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024). Subjective well-being and psychological health are also more general indicators of employee happiness and can affect the level of work-related happiness (Butt et al., 2019, as cited in Erhan, 2021). Employee happiness is not a one-

dimensional concept, but a comprehensive phenomenon that includes multidimensional elements such as job satisfaction, emotional well-being and job engagement. In this review, the term "employee happiness" is used to refer to the totality of positive mood, satisfaction and motivation that employees experience at work.

Brand Image: Brand images are all the ideas, impressions and associations that consumers form in their minds about a brand. In Keller's classic definition, brand image is the set of perceptions and meanings stored in consumer memory about a brand (Keller, 1993, cited in Tahir et al., 2024). In more recent terms, brand image is a set of beliefs and emotional evaluations formed in the minds of customers about a business or product (Tahir et al., 2024). A good brand image enables customers to establish a positive emotional connection with the brand and creates a distinctive positioning against competitors. Since brand image is based on intangible elements, especially in the service sector, customer experiences play a critical role in the formation of brand image (Tahir et al., 2024). The brand image of a hotel business includes guest perceptions that it has characteristics such as luxury, quality, reliability, innovative, guest-oriented, etc. Guests of hotels with a positive brand image are more satisfied with the services and show higher loyalty to these brands (Tahir et al., 2024). A brand image is based on high quality service, consistent experience and emotional connection with the customer. At this point, the value proposition promised by the brand needs to resonate in the customer's perception. Elements such as service quality, corporate image and communication shape brand image (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). For example, the sum of tangible and intangible experiences such as the cleanliness of a hotel, the courtesy of the staff, fast service, making you feel special, etc. form the image of the brand. If a hotel brand is consistently associated with superior service and a sense of trust in the eyes of guests, it can be said to have a strong brand image (Tahir et al., 2024). On the contrary, fluctuating service quality or negative guest reviews are factors that undermine brand image.

The Relationship between Employee Happiness and Brand Image: Theoretically, there are several basic approaches that explain the effect of employee happiness on brand image. One of these is the Service-Profit Chain model (Heskett et al., 1994). According to this model, as employee satisfaction and intrinsic service quality increase, employee productivity and service delivery quality increase, which in turn increases customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is reflected in company profitability and brand value. Especially in the hotel industry, this chain, which can be summarized as "happy employee - happy guest", has been supported (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). In a study conducted by Koç and Ertürk (2023) on hotels in Northern Cyprus, a

positive and significant relationship was found between employee job satisfaction and guest satisfaction. The authors emphasized that employee satisfaction plays a key role for the sustainability of guest satisfaction and stated that the main factor that businesses should focus on is employee happiness (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). Since guest satisfaction is an important component of brand image, a link between employee happiness and brand image can be indirectly established: A superior guest experience created by happy employees reinforces positive perceptions of the brand.

Another approach is the concept of internal branding. Internal branding encompasses management practices that aim to ensure that employees embrace the brand and participate wholeheartedly in realizing its promises. When employees are seen as ambassadors who communicate the brand promise directly to the customer, their commitment and happiness are reflected in the external customer experience (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). Indeed, employees' brand commitment and brand citizenship behaviors help to consistently deliver the promised brand experience to customers (Khairy et al., 2023). For example, Khairy et al. (2023) argue that in the hospitality industry, employees' extra role behaviors (Organizational Citizenship Behavior - OCB) are critical in fulfilling the brand promise and that employees' consistent fulfillment of the brand promise contributes to the sustainability of the hotel's brand image. This is possible when employees not only fulfill their job descriptions but also voluntarily exhibit brand-enhancing behaviors. When employee happiness is high, employees are more likely to engage in such positive extra role behaviors (Organ et al., 2005; Khairy et al., 2023).

Emotional contagion theory also explains the impact of employee-customer interaction on brand image. According to this theory, employees' emotions can be transmitted to customers; for example, a smiling and energetic employee can create a positive mood in the customer (Hatfield et al., 1993). On the other hand, a sullen or disinterested employee can have negative repercussions on the brand's image. Micro-interactions between employees and customers at service touchpoints are a way of conveying the brand's personality and values to the customer. In luxury hotels, the professional and friendly demeanor of employees reinforces the perception in the guest's mind that the hotel has a prestigious and hospitable image. In short, the emotional state and attitude of employees can shape the image attributed to the brand by influencing customer emotions. In the light of the above theoretical frameworks, it is understood that creating a working environment where employees are happy and satisfied is a strategic necessity not only in terms of human resources but also in terms of brand value and image of the organization.

Methodology

This study is a review article that systematically reviews the current literature on the relationship between employee happiness and brand image in five-star hotel organizations. Within the scope of the review, Turkish and English academic studies published between 2018 and 2024 were reviewed. For the literature review, relevant keywords were used in national and international databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, EbscoHost, TR Index and Dergipark. During the search process, keyword combinations such as "employee happiness", "employee satisfaction", "job satisfaction", "hotel employee well-being", "brand image", "hotel brand image" in Turkish and "employee happiness", "employee satisfaction", "employee well-being", "brand image", "hotel/hospitality brand image" in English were used. The results obtained were analyzed at the level of title, abstract and keywords and studies directly related to the subject were selected. Care was taken to ensure that the included studies were not older than six years (2018 and later); however, older studies were also utilized as primary sources when necessary to support the conceptual framework.

Data Collection and Analysis: The studies included in the review include academic articles, review articles, doctoral dissertations and conference proceedings. The sources were subjected to content analysis and the findings, models and trends regarding the relationship between employee happiness and brand image were compiled. First, the main findings of each study are summarized, and then the similarities and differences are examined comparatively. In this way, points such as whether there is a consistency between the results of different studies, and under which conditions the findings vary were analyzed. In addition, the findings in the Turkish literature and the international literature are discussed together to reveal the universal trends and the situation in Turkey.

In the review process, PRISMA guidelines, exclusion and inclusion criteria were clearly defined, and the source selection process was kept transparent. The literature findings were classified into themes (e.g. "the impact of employee happiness on customer satisfaction", "brand advocacy behaviors of employees", "internal brand management practices", etc.). Under each theme, sample findings from many studies are given and the scientific accumulation on the relevant subject is presented comprehensively.

Validity and Reliability: To ensure the reliability of the literature review, multiple databases were used and only studies published in peer-reviewed journals were focused. To increase the validity of the findings, studies conducted in different geographies and with different methods were evaluated together. In addition, studies that do not directly examine the focus of the review but contribute indirectly (e.g., studies examining the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction) were also included to gain a holistic perspective. All references are organized according to APA 7 format and presented collectively as References at the end of the study. The findings of the comprehensive literature review conducted within the framework of this methodology are presented systematically in the following section.

Findings

As a result of the literature review, important findings were obtained regarding the effects of employee happiness on the brand image of hotel businesses. The findings are generally organized around three main themes: (1) The effects of employee happiness on brand image through guest experience and satisfaction, (2) The effects of employee happiness on brand image through employees' brand behaviors (brand loyalty, advocacy, etc.), (3) Changes in the relationship between employee happiness and brand image according to conditions and mediating mechanisms. The findings compiled from the literature under these themes are detailed below.

1. **Employee Happiness - Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction - Brand Image:** Many studies show that happy and satisfied employees provide better quality service to customers, and this increases customer satisfaction (Koç & Ertürk, 2023; Baquero, 2022). In a study conducted by Koç and Ertürk (2023) by matching hotel employees and guests, a significant positive relationship was found between employees' job satisfaction levels and guests' satisfaction levels. In other words, it was found that in hotels with high employee satisfaction, guests are more satisfied with their experience. This result confirms that the Service-Profit Chain model is valid in the hospitality context. In the same study, it was emphasized that managers should focus primarily on employee satisfaction to increase guest satisfaction (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). Increased guest satisfaction is directly reflected in the brand image of the hotel, as satisfied guests spread positive word-of-mouth about the brand and give higher evaluations about the brand.

However, some studies are more cautious about the employee-guest satisfaction relationship. A study conducted in Spain during the COVID-19 period revealed that the impact of employee satisfaction on guest satisfaction may differ on a departmental basis (Baquero, 2022). Baquero (2022) examined employee satisfaction in different departments such as front office, food and beverage, housekeeping and guest satisfaction of related departments in Spanish resorts under pandemic conditions. Although a positive relationship was found between employee satisfaction and guest satisfaction in general, it was reported that this relationship was weak or insignificant in outsourced departments (Baquero, 2022). For example, in departments such as cleaning or animation, which are not within the hotel and are carried out by outsourced staff, there is no link to guest satisfaction as the employees' loyalty to the organization is low.

On the contrary, in departments such as reception and kitchen, which are directly employed by the hotel management, employee satisfaction was reflected in the guest and affected satisfaction (Baquero, 2022). This finding shows that the effect of employee happiness on brand image may vary according to organizational belonging and employment conditions. Therefore, while creating happiness in employee groups under the control of management is critical for brand image, outsourced staff need to be integrated into a similar culture.

Overall, the current literature supports the idea that employee happiness has a strong impact on brand image by improving the guest experience. Warm, attentive and fast service provided by happy employees leads guests to perceive the brand as reliable, sincere and high quality (Tahir et al., 2024). Especially in the luxury segment, guest happiness achieved through exceeding expectations is defined as an element that increases the prestige of the brand. It is a recurring theme across multiple studies that the image guests perceive of a hotel brand can be largely shaped by the behavior of the staff (Khairy et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). In sum, employee happiness and motivation are a key input that feeds the external image of the brand through guest satisfaction.

2. Employee Happiness - Employee Brand Behavior - Brand Image: Another important impact of employee happiness on brand image is through employees' behaviors towards the business brand. Happy and engaged employees generally have more positive attitudes towards the employer brand and are more willing to take on the role of brand ambassador (Zhang et al., 2024). In literature, concepts such as employee advocacy and brand citizenship stand out in this context. Employee advocacy means that employees voluntarily recommend the organization

and brand they work for to others, share positive posts on social media, or act in a way that protects the brand image in front of customers.

Research shows that employees who are satisfied and happy with their jobs are more likely to exhibit such advocacy behaviors (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024). In a study conducted by Aksu and Bilgiç (2024) on café and restaurant employees in Isparta province, the mediating role of workplace happiness in the effect of job satisfaction on employee advocacy was examined. The findings revealed that there was a positive relationship between employees' job satisfaction and advocacy behaviors, and that employee happiness played a partial mediating role in this relationship (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024). In other words, if an employee who is satisfied with his/her job also feels happy at work, he/she is more inclined to defend the brand to the outside and explain it positively. This result supports the idea that happy employees voluntarily take on extra roles for the brand. When employees approach their friends or customers with statements such as "it is great to work here, our brand really cares about quality service", it is extremely valuable for the brand's reputation.

Intrinsic branding literature has also emphasized employee commitment to the brand and brand attitudes. Especially in high-touch service sectors such as luxury hotels, employees' internalization of the brand and seeing the brand promise in line with their own values enables them to represent the brand consistently when interacting with guests (King & Grace, 2010). Zhang et al. (2024) measured employee-based brand equity in an international hotel chain and found that employees' appreciation and valuing of the brand improves their job performance and guest experience. Guests perceive the brand's value more highly because of the positive energy that employees who embrace and take pride in the brand's values transmit to guests (Zhang et al., 2024). Managers are advised to view employees as brand ambassadors and enhance their ability to represent the brand (Zhang et al., 2024). This study shows that the stronger the emotional connection that employees have with the brand (perception of employer brand image), the higher the employee satisfaction and extra effort towards the brand, which positively reflects on the guest experience.

One indicator of employee loyalty to the brand is the level of brand loyalty or identification with the brand identity. In a study conducted by Davras (2019) on hotel employees, the effects of employer brand image perceived by employees on employee satisfaction and brand loyalty were examined. According to the results, the brand image component that employees perceive about the employer brand significantly increases both job satisfaction and brand loyalty

(Davras, 2019). This finding reveals that businesses with a strong and attractive brand image create a sense of pride and satisfaction in their employees. As a hotel's reputation and reputation in the industry grows, the employees of that business are pleased to be a part of it and become more loyal to the brand. This creates an employee-oriented feedback mechanism: Good brand image feeds into employee happiness, which in turn feeds back into external brand image. The positive image of the brand in the eyes of the employee keeps the employee happy and, in the business, while the happy employee contributes to the brand through quality service, positive communication and loyalty. This cycle creates a mutually reinforcing interaction between brand image and employee happiness (Davras, 2019; Priyadarshi, 2011).

Research findings show that the happier and more motivated employees are, the higher their level of internalization and positive representation of the brand. Happy employees exhibit an attitude towards the guest that embraces the brand's promises and are willing to solve problems and go the extra mile (Khairy et al., 2023). This creates consistent guest experiences that strengthen the brand image. Happy employees are also more likely to praise and advocate for their employer outside the organization, which creates an important advertising effect for the brand's reputation and attractiveness (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024). In today's world of social media, positive posts or comments made by employees about their companies add value to the brand in the eyes of potential customers and prospective employees. Therefore, employee happiness is a factor that positively affects not only the experience of existing customers, but also the overall corporate image and brand value of the company.

3. Conditions and Mediating Mechanisms Affecting the Relationship: In literature, it is emphasized that the relationship between employee happiness and brand image is not at the same level in all cases; it is shaped by various mediating variables and contextual factors. The first of these is the intermediate outcome variables such as guest satisfaction and service quality. Many studies indicate that employee satisfaction primarily increases service quality and guest satisfaction, and the brand image effect is realized indirectly through this (Koç & Ertürk, 2023; Tahir et al., 2024).

High engagement enables employees to work to protect brand reputation even in challenging situations and to make sacrifices to provide a positive experience for the customer. Especially in the hospitality industry, it is possible to remain friendly even under intense work tempo and stress with the dedication of employees. Employee happiness is one of the key elements that nurture this dedication (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2021). Therefore, although employee happiness

directly affects brand image, employees need to have a strong emotional connection with the brand and the organization for this effect to occur. Communicating brand values to employees through internal communication and training enables them to embrace and take pride in the brand mission, which maximizes the contribution of happy employees to the brand (Zhang et al., 2024).

Another contextual factor is the organizational culture and leadership style of the business. Research shows that a supportive and employee-oriented culture increases employee happiness, which in turn creates a service climate that is reflected in the customer (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018). Organizational culture also influences employees' willingness to engage in brand citizenship behaviors. For example, in a culture where employees' efforts are appreciated and their opinions are valued, employee happiness and belonging will be high, and these employees are more likely to adopt the brand and create a positive image.

Conversely, under oppressive and profit-oriented management, employees feel unhappy, and this feeling can spill over to customers and damage the brand's image. Therefore, it is recommended that managers align human resource practices with brand strategies (Khairy et al., 2023).

There is also a bidirectional interaction in the effect of employee happiness on brand image. Hotels with a strong brand image, which are considered reputable in the sector, usually give pride to their employees and increase their job satisfaction (Davras, 2019). For example, working for a world-renowned luxury hotel chain can give the employee status in their social circle, which positively affects their motivation. In this case, the employees will make extra efforts to protect and maintain the already strong brand image. This creates a positive feedback loop of already good brand image-> employee happiness-> better brand image. What businesses should be aware of at this point is that this feedback loop can also work negatively. If a brand image is damaged (e.g. due to negative press or guest complaints), employee morale and happiness may also suffer, and demotivated employees may give guests bad experiences, further deteriorating the brand's image. Managers should therefore monitor brand image and employee morale simultaneously and take measures to protect one when the other deteriorates. For example, offering support to employees during periods of intense complaint, improving the situation through training or rewarding successes can prevent morale and brand image from entering a downward spiral.

The findings show that there is an overall positive relationship between employee happiness and brand image, but the strength and direction of this relationship may depend on various moderating variables and conditions. Happy employees contribute greatly to brand image through high service quality and brand advocacy. However, businesses need to support their efforts to ensure employee happiness with parallel internal branding and appropriate organizational culture so that this effect is sustainable and consistent. This review provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between employee happiness and brand image in five-star hotel organizations by analyzing research published between 2018 and 2024. The findings show that the generally accepted understanding in the literature that "happy employees create happy customers" is largely valid in the luxury hospitality context. When employees are satisfied with their jobs and experience positive emotions at work, this is reflected in their interactions with customers; as a result, guests evaluate the hotel brand more positively (Koç & Ertürk, 2023; Khairy et al., 2023). This finding is in line with classical service marketing theories and sends a strong message to managers in tourism management: Hotels that want to successfully fulfill their brand promise and enhance their reputation should first invest in their employees.

The findings in the review also draw attention to some inconsistencies and gaps. For example, the weak employee-guest satisfaction relationship in some departments during the pandemic in Baquero (2022) reminds us that the effect of employee happiness on brand image is not automatic under all circumstances. This may occur when factors such as the uncertainty of the working environment, lack of job security, or employees not feeling a sense of belonging to the organization are at play. Therefore, beyond creating employee happiness, there is a need for practices that will transform this happiness into loyalty and behavior towards the organization. The role of leadership gains importance here: The presence of leaders with high emotional intelligence, who value and develop their employees, makes it easier for employees to transform their happiness into behaviors in favor of the brand. Indeed, the literature suggests that supportive leadership and a happy workplace culture increase employees' guest-oriented behaviors and service performance (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018). Theoretically, this can also be explained by social exchange theory: Employees feel gratitude towards an organization that values and treats them well and repay it with good performance and brand-enhancing behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Establishing this positive exchange relationship between employees and the organization in luxury hotel businesses will provide long-term contributions to brand image.

Another point noticed in the literature is that geographical and cultural differences may have an impact on the results. Most of the reviewed studies were conducted in the context of a specific country or region (e.g. Turkey, Spain, Middle East). Cultural values may influence attitudes towards working life and happiness expectations. For example, in collectivist cultures, employees may derive happiness from good relations with coworkers and team cohesion, whereas in individualistic cultures, personal achievement and recognition may be more important. This means that employee happiness can be achieved through different elements in different cultures. The mechanisms of influence on brand image may also vary culturally; for example, in some societies, smiling faces and friendliness may strengthen brand image, while in others, excessive friendliness may be perceived as a lack of professionalism. Although cultural differences were not explored in depth in this review, it would be useful for future research to comparatively examine the interaction between employee happiness and brand image in different cultures. In this way, international chain hotels may find the opportunity to adapt to their employee happiness strategies in different countries in a culture-specific manner.

Another controversial issue is related to measurement and methodology. In the reviewed studies, employee happiness was generally measured with job satisfaction scales or psychological well-being scales (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024; Koç & Ertürk, 2023). However, employee happiness is a dynamic concept that includes more momentary emotional states. In the future, momentary mood tracking (e.g., experimental sampling method) or longitudinal studies can be used to examine the ups and downs of employee happiness and their real-time effects on customer experience. Similarly, brand image has often been measured through customer surveys or perception scales. In the era of big data, online customer reviews and ratings can be used as indirect indicators of brand image.

The findings of this review also have managerial implications for businesses. Luxury hotel managers should keep in mind that their most valuable brand ambassadors are their own employees, while allocating large budgets for marketing communications to strengthen brand image. At this point, the following suggestions can be made to managers: (1) Invest in employee happiness: Making work meaningful, creating a culture of appreciation and a good work environment will increase employee happiness as much as wages, benefits and working hours. A happy employee provides quality service to the guests and represents your brand well. (2) Embrace brand values through internal training and communication: Ensure that employees internalize your brand's vision and mission. For example, explaining the importance of the brand to employees through regular training and listening to their suggestions will foster a sense

of belonging. (3) Use employee feedback to improve the brand: Front-line employees have their finger on the pulse of customers; their suggestions not only improve internal processes and increase their happiness but also improve the customer experience and reflect positively on the brand. (4) Celebrate and reward success: Recognizing an employee who receives praise from customers motivates other employees. Rewarding teams with achieving high customer satisfaction scores helps keep employees locked in brand goals. Such practices are part of the intrinsic marketing approach supported in the literature and create satisfaction on both the employee and customer side (Berry, 1981).

To summarize, the overall conclusion of the discussion section is that the relationship between employee happiness and brand image is strong but manageable. Businesses can turn this relationship in their favor with the right strategies. A management approach that prioritizes the happiness of employees will create a foundation that strengthens the brand's position in the industry and its value in the eyes of customers in the long run.

Conclusion

This comprehensive review article analyzes the effects of employee happiness on brand image in five-star luxury hotel businesses in the light of academic studies published in the last five years. The findings and discussions support the scientific reality of the "happy employee, successful business" principle that has long been intuitively known in the tourism management discipline.

Particularly in the luxury hotel context, employees' job satisfaction and well-being determine the quality and consistency of the service provided to customers, which in turn shapes customers' perception of the hotel brand. Superior guest experiences provided by happy employees reinforce the positive image of the hotel brand and create a loyal customer base. In addition, employees with high levels of happiness at work embrace the brand wholeheartedly and act as brand ambassadors of the business, a critical factor that builds brand image from the inside out.

Based on the findings of the study, several important conclusions can be drawn: First, there is a chain relationship between employee happiness and customer satisfaction, which is a key determinant of brand image. Every step towards increasing employee satisfaction indirectly

improves customer perception and brand reputation (Koç & Ertürk, 2023). Second, employees' commitment and advocacy behaviors towards the brand are closely related to their happiness and should be considered as an intrinsic force in building a strong brand image (Aksu & Bilgiç, 2024). Third, this relationship is not static; organizational culture, leadership, employment styles and similar conditions can increase or decrease the intensity of this interaction. Therefore, organizations should consider employee happiness as part of a holistic strategy and develop policies integrated with internal brand management (Khairy et al., 2023). While this study synthesizes important contributions to literature, it also points to new areas of research on the subject. Future studies can comparatively examine the relationship between employee happiness and brand image in different cultural and country contexts. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative methods, such as in-depth insights from employee and customer interviews, can provide a better understanding of the dynamics of this relationship. Longitudinal studies can shed light on the causal relationship by observing the impact of changes in employee happiness on brand image over time. It is also worth examining how changing working conditions and increasing flexible working practices, especially in the post-pandemic period, affect this equation.

For businesses that want to create a sustainable brand image and strong brand loyalty in the hospitality sector, the harmony of human resources practices and marketing strategies seems to be a must. As in the proverb "If the inside is not happy, the outside is not smiling", the brand promises a business that does not give the necessary importance and value to its employees sooner or later not find their fulfillment in the eyes of customers. Therefore, it is recommended that five-star luxury hotel managers should consider employee happiness as a strategic priority and make it an indispensable part of the corporate culture. In this way, a strong brand image supported by the wholehearted contribution of employees can be built and sustainable success can be achieved in the highly competitive tourism sector.

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