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Edmund O'Callaghan
Technological University Dublin, edmund.ocallaghan@tudublin.ie

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The battle for commercial hearts and minds and the internal brand within a charity shop network in Ireland

Edmund O’Callaghan

School of Retail & Services Management, College of Business, Technological University Dublin, Dublin, Aungier St, Ireland

ABSTRACT
Charities are increasingly adopting commercial branding strategies to capture consumer hearts and minds for competitive gain, with little attention on the internal organisational battle for hearts and minds within a not-for-profit context. This paper explores the internal brand of a charity that currently operates 227 charity shops on the island of Ireland, using Hankinson’s 2004 framework that focuses on functional, symbolic, behavioural and experiential components. An exploratory case study was developed based on a survey of organisational members (n = 138), interviews with six regional shop managers, observation in retail stores and supplemented by organisation documentation. Findings indicate a clarity of perception on mission, purpose and core values for the charity, but more ambiguity around perception of the charity shop brand and identified issues relating to communication of policies and procedures, managerial practice and the workplace environment. The study also reveals a gap between the charity’s organisational identity and the brand identity for the charity store network, a clarity in the perception of core values that does not underwrite the store brand and resistance to the implementation of commercial practice within a volunteer-led charity. Trust may be the key in the internal battle for hearts and minds within the charity and may be crucial for the charity to realise its’ potential and successfully meet its’ mission for maximum societal gain.

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Organisational identity; Brand identity; Internal brand communications; Charity shops; Case study

Introduction
The origins of charity retailing can be traced to the latter part of the nineteenth century when the Salvation Army offered cheap second-hand clothing to people on low incomes. Charity retailing represents the most direct way for not-for-profit organisations to engage in commercial activities (Liu, Eng, and Sekhon 2014). There has been a significant growth in charity shop numbers in Ireland since an economic downturn in 2007 and today, the Charity Retail Association in Ireland estimates that there are about 450 charity shops across the island reflecting more current economic and social pressures. Horne (1998) posits that charity shops provide four important interrelated functions, namely: a social service offering low priced merchandise, a ‘green’ recycling service, increased awareness for the charitable cause and much needed additional funds for the charity. Similarly, Parsons (2002) highlights the
social benefits of charity shops, namely: providing a contact point between the charity and the local community, an affordable retail fashion offering for cash-strapped families, work experience for volunteers and a more sustainable solution for merchandise. Charity retailers face some unique challenges in the management of a pre-dominantly non-paid workforce. Network development decisions are more likely to be bottom-up rather than top-down. They do not adhere to retail location network planning techniques, guided by target customer base and level of competition within each catchment area. The product mix and assortment in each store is dependent on the nature of local area donations and the clustering of charity shops may provide an agglomeration bonus for all operators within a tight catchment area.

An increasing intensity in the battle for consumer hearts and minds has resulted in the adoption of commercial branding techniques by charities, not only as a means of differentiation (Hankinson 2000) but also to support donations (Bennett and Gabriel 2003; Hankinson 2002), improve revenue (Grounds and Harkness 1998; Kennedy 1998) and encourage volunteerism (Cone, Feldman, and DaSilva 2003). There is empirical evidence that the adoption of commercial strategic organisational branding techniques in charities increases the level of donations (Sargeant, Hudson, and West 2008; Bennett and Gabriel 2003; Hankinson 2002), attracts more volunteers (Cone, Feldman, and DaSilva 2003; Lerner 2003) and generates higher income for the charity (Kennedy 1998; Grounds and Harkness 1998). Despite this, concern has been voiced about the appropriateness of commercial branding practice within a charity context (Saxton 1994; Sternberg 1998; Salamon 1999), with some warning of the danger of over-commercialisation of the charity sector (Richie, Swami, and Weinberg 1998; Sternberg 1998; Salamon 1999). Yoganathan et al. (2018) point to the inherent tension between a not-for-profit organisations’ brand competitiveness and societal interests that closely align with the brand’s authenticity. Despite a view expressed on problems with securing internal stakeholder commitment to commercial practice in charities (Grounds and Harkness 1998), it is more than 20 years since it was asserted that professionalism was the norm within the charity sector in the UK (Phelan, Lamont, and Howley 1998) and later validated empirically (Broadbridge and Parsons 2003a, 2003b; Parsons 2004). Professionalism is equated with a greater emphasis on commercial or for profit-like management strategy, the establishment of a head office and often the recruitment of salaried professional personnel (Broadbridge and Parsons 2003a). Parsons and Broadbridge (2004) note the clash of cultures between head office and the shop network as a result of a poor fit between commercially oriented results and the voluntary culture of shops, and warn against disregarding voluntary culture and local knowledge in the implementation of change, while Salipante and Golden-Biddle (1995) argue that the fundraising rationale for charity shops is rarely contested, but that volunteers tend to question the focus of practice rather than its’ purpose. By contrast, it has been argued that a more brand-oriented charity allows stakeholder trust to be nurtured (Tapp 1996).

Therefore, this case study explores this battle for internal hearts and minds within a charity shop network of 227 outlets in Ireland, and explores the internal brand by using Hankinson’s (2004) conceptualisation of a charity brand in terms of four interrelated components, namely functional, symbolic, behavioural and experiential, one of the few conceptual frameworks proposed for an examination of an internal charity brand. More specifically, the study seeks to explore an internal organisational view on:
1. Mission and purpose of the charity and the charity shop brand.
2. Core values and beliefs underpinning the charity and the charity shop brand.
3. Managerial practice and expected behaviours within the charity.
4. The work ethic and ‘experienced’ workplace environment.

The paper begins with a description of the research context, following by a brief overview of the academic literature on organisational identity, brand identity and internal branding. Methodology for the study will thereafter be explained followed by findings, discussion, conclusions, managerial implications and future research possibilities.

Research context

The charity is a Christian voluntary charity that was founded in the mid-nineteenth century. During its history, it has helped people in need through famine, civil war, a war of independence, two world wars and several economic recessions. Its mission is to ‘eliminate the causes of poverty’ with emphasis also on support, friendship and self-sufficiency for people in need in local communities. The basic unit within the charity is called a conference for which there are over 1250. These conferences are in eight designated geographic regions in Ireland, supported by eight area presidents, 116 regional presidents and over 1000 conference presidents. Over the years, charity shops were opened by local conferences in order to raise funds for local needs. As the number of outlets grew, the national board of the charity saw the need to put formal systems in place to better control and realise the revenue potential of the shops, and gradually started to employ professional-salaried personnel centrally to better manage the retail network. This led to salaried personnel being employed in finance, retail operations, human resources and corporate governance, all reporting to a national board. A national retail manager was appointed in 2015, and he commenced a process of employing paid managers for new shops that were opening under the charity’s retail brand, as well as commencing recruitment of regional managers for each of the eight regions. Seven had been appointed by year end 2018, by which time 160 of the 230 plus outlets had paid shop managers. The charity continues to be a volunteer-dominated organisation with over 4000 volunteers accounting for over 90% of organisational members.

Literature overview

Organisational identity in charities

There is universal agreement that organisational identity is seminal for corporate brand building (Keller 2008; Hulberg 2006; Aaker 2002), despite the dominance of the classic brand management external customer-based interpretation of brand building (Aaker 2002). This internal focus assumes a greater level of importance for service sector organisations (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, and Wilson 2009; Sartain and Schuman 2006; Jacobs 2003; Tosti and Stotz 2001), where brand building is often contingent on organisational desire (Balmer and Gray 2003) and internal organisational self-awareness (Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Urde 1999; Balmer 1995; Balmer and Wilkinson 1991). It is this internal battle for organisational hearts and minds that provides the greater challenge for the professional management of charity shop networks. The rationale for this inside–out identity-based perspective rests with
the general acceptance that the brand building process starts with identity (Hulberg 2006). An internal organisational focus dominates both organisational studies and marketing literature sets that interprets identity as an actual rather than a contrived construct. Within a charity context, Jenkinson, Sain, and Bishop (2005, 83) suggest that a charity’s identity, rooted in the charitable purpose or mission, must be transformed into management tools and processes when they suggest that ‘Identity first needs to be determined-as a truth-and then maintained through tools and processes that operationalise its care and nurture’.

Organisational identity and/or corporate identity are often conceptualised in terms of mission and purpose allied to the core values of the organisation that underpin brand delivery. Mindful that values can never be undermined within a charity context (Stride 2006), Blume (1995) suggests a degree of awkwardness or tension between commercial practice and social goals. Similarly, Goodall (2000) infers that this ambiguity is the result of sub-cultures existing within the charity organisation that inevitably lead to differences between the professionally staffed head office function and the volunteer-led charity shop network. Gregson, Crewe, and Brooks (2002) argue that this tension results in difficulties in the implementation of strategic (branding) decisions into practice at charity shop level. This tension is acknowledged in the sensitivity within a senior management function in implementing commercial branding techniques, fearing an absence of internal stakeholder ‘buy in’ (Thomson et al. 1999; Grounds and Harkness 1998), and mindful that branding is not only perceived as too commercial, but even immoral (Richie, Swami, and Weinberg 1998; Sargeant, Hudson, and West 2008). Charities often possess non-negotiable core values, which means that charity branding involves the systematic and focused projection of these values to various stakeholders (Stride 2006). For charities, as value-based organisations, core values are non-negotiable (Hudson 1995), and it is this non-negotiability of values that differentiates these non-profit entities from commercial corporate organisations (Ibid). For charities, core values offer the rationale to exist (Stride 2007; Sargeant and Lee 2004) and also offer legitimacy for its’ activities. Kent and Stone (2007) argue that articulation of core values, which can be viewed as the DNA of the retail store brand, are crucial for internal brand building and consequently the development of the corporate brand. The organisation ‘lives its core values’ and thus its brand (Balmer and Wilkinson 1991; Balmer 1995; Urde 1999; Harris and de Chernatony 2001). Bruce (1998) argues that charities are obligated to ensure that those with whom they work are treated with dignity and respect, particularly when they are references to the empowerment of people within a mission statement. Urde (2003) attaches significant importance to organisational core values to the brand building requirements of continuity, consistency and credibility. As the metaphor glue in the brand building process (O’Callaghan and Murray 2017), they cannot be changed quickly or easily, and can potentially inhibit the process of brand building (Ind 1997, 45). Bernstein (2003) argues that all organisations possess an identity, planned or unplanned, and that identity reflects reality rather than invention (Urde 2003; Lambert 1989; Kennedy 1977). This has particular resonance within a charity context, where the rationale for existence is rooted in this charitable mission. While brand equity is largely conceptualised as an external customer-based construct (Burmann, Jost-Benz, and Riley 2009), it is the internal organisational identity that allows external retail brand identity to emerge, with a widely accepted view that brand identity allows for sustainable differentiation of the brand, enhances consumer identification (Keller 2008; Aaker 2002), and posited as a key driver of brand equity (Burmann, Jost-Benz, and Riley 2009). The strategic significance of the organisational brand equity is well recognized and vital to the achievement of lasting competitive advantage (Balmer 1995, 1998,
Internal branding refers to the activities employed by a company to ensure internal intellectual and emotional commitment to the brand (Thomson and Hecker 2000; Thomson et al. 1999). The benefits of an internal identity-focused brand building activity is highlighted from a view of the internal brand as a process of ensuring that employees know and support brand identity (Aaker 2002) or seeing the objective of internal branding as the attainment of sustainable competitive advantage through people in the organisation (Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley 2009; Jacobs 2003). It has also been viewed as a means of creating powerful brands (Punjaisri and Wilson 2007) or as a strategy that allows organisations to stand out from the crowd’ (King 2010, 531). Several outcomes are envisaged to emanate from successful internal brand management; the development of internal brand commitment; the successful communication of brand values to consumers by committed organisational members, and the internalisation of the brand promise through effective and balanced communications.

Mahnert and Torres (2007, 56) offer a definition of internal branding, which contains many of the elements that are commonly cited within the internal branding literature. Firstly, the creation and maintenance of a strong brand for competitive advantage through the attainment of a unique and non-imitable market position (Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley 2009). Secondly, an emphasis on the importance of internal brand communications for the internalisation of brand values, seen as a critical success factor for corporate brand management (Vallaster and De Chernatony 2005, 2006). Effective internal brand communications may be more challenging within a charity context, given the view that non-profit employees distrust branding efforts that are imposed on them from higher level management (Kylander and Stone 2012). Finally, the definition acknowledges the necessity of internal branding for the alignment of behaviour and attitudes at all organisational levels. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007, 60) emphasise the importance of brand-supporting behaviour as a successful outcome of the internalisation of brand values, so that ‘employees transform espoused brand messages into brand reality’. Similarly, King and Grace (2010) view the ultimate goal of internal branding programmes as influencing employee attitudes and behaviours through the effective communication of brand-related information to the customer. Undoubtedly, the increased reliance on staff to deliver this brand reality and brand essence means a greater dependency on internal branding activities for brand success within a services context (Lomax and Mador 2006; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; De Chernatony and Segal-Horn 2003; Bergstrom, Blumenthal, and Crothers 2002; De Chernatony and Segal-Horn 2001; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Hatch and Schultz 2001; Ind 1997).

There is strong support for the view that successful corporate brands emanate from organisations that educate staff about their brand values and support staff in enacting those brand values (Harris and Ogbonna 2000). Aaker (2002) argues that the translation of the corporate brand internally to employees must be supported by the mission, goals, values and culture of the organization where employees ‘buy in’ (Vallaster and De Chernatony 2006) to organizational values and programs. Similarly, De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) argue that staff can better understand their role as brand builder if there is effective communication about the service vision, the brand promise and consumer expectations,
while Hankinson and Lomax (2006) contend that the internalisation of the corporate brand by staff is manifested through three dimensions from the branding literature, namely knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. It is argued that these dimensions need to be addressed on a continual basis to ensure staff retain new knowledge, remain positively motivated and maintain behaviours over time (Hankinson, Lomax, and Hand 2007). Knowledge relates to an understanding of the organisation’s brand proposition, its values and vision, its logo and slogan. Therefore, the behaviour of staff, ‘living the brand’ (Hankinson 2004) is seen as critical and fundamental to staff commitment and attitudes to an organisation (Hankinson 2004; Thomson et al. 1999). Similarly, Kent and Stone (2007) propose that core values relate to the internal brand building process by linking the brand to the company’s mission, vision and fundamental organisational values which in turn affect the brand architecture, product attributes, brand positioning and communications strategy. Identity emerges from these organisational core values to underpin what the organisation stands for (Saxton 1994; Dixon 1996).

Methodology

This exploratory case study reveals an internal view of a charity brand from a survey of 138 charity workers, both paid and volunteers and depth interviews with six salaried regional managers, based on the four pillars of Hankinson’s (2004) charity brand framework, one of the few frameworks developed inductively for internal branding in charities. The case study methodology was adopted primarily on the basis that it is recommended as an appropriate methodology when limited academic research exists (Hutchinson, Quinn, and Alexander 2006). It also has the potential for a more complete understanding of organisational phenomena (Eisenhardt 1989) and allows the researcher to collect ‘rich’, detailed information across a wide range of dimensions (Daymon and Holloway 2002). This case was developed on the basis of data collection from a number of sources. The first phase of data generation was a survey of organisational members (volunteer front-line retail staff and managers, paid shop managers, and conference case workers) representing all groups within the charity to establish baseline data for the subsequent interviews. Observation at various shop locations and organizational documentation made available by the charity augmented the baseline and interview data, in line with the recommended range of data collection methods for case development (Yin 2003).

The first phase of the research was developed to establish baseline data on the ‘internal voice’ of the organization and was administered in September 2017 at an annual national convention attended by 220 staff working in the charity. There were 136 fully completed usable surveys collected and was representative in terms of gender, salaried/non-salaried and length of tenure and regional representation. Sample respondents represented all eight regions. Seventy-one percent were female and 29% male. Sixty per cent of respondents were paid managers and 40% non-salaried volunteers. Sixty-one per cent of the sample had been an organization member for over 3 years, 26% 1–3-year tenure, and 13% in the organization for less than 1 year as shown in Figure 1.

The survey was divided into three sections. The first section sought classification information on the respondents, gender, volunteered or paid member and length of tenure. In section two, 5-point Likert scales were used to capture both positive and negative sentiment to statements relating to four internal branding constructs, functional, symbolic,
behavioural and experienced (Hankinson 2002). Five statements were used for each internal branding component. Likert scales are one of the most widely used itemised scales used in business research (Malhotra, 2002), where respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements pertaining to a specific issue. The end points of a Likert scale ‘are typically strongly agree to strongly disagree’ (Ibid: p.284) and are commonly used to measure attitudes (Diamantopoulos and Schegelmilch 2000). Each internal branding construct was subjected to a Cronbach alpha reliability test which ranged from 0.824 to 0.925, respectively, indicating good internal consistency. The four constructs were further assessed by reference to the item-to-item correlation, which gives an indication of the degree to which each item correlates with the total score. In terms of item-to-item correlation, low positive values under 0.3 were recorded on one item on both the functional and behavioural constructs, with one negative value of −0.231 on the symbolic component indicating a degree of internal inconsistency on these respective constructs as a whole (Churchill 1979). However, it was decided not to remove these items given the high alpha values of greater than 0.7. The final section asked open-ended questions about the core values of the organization and the role of the store network.

The second phase of the research involved depth-interviews with six regional managers in April 2018, with each interview lasting about 20 min. The rationale for this group selection is that, firstly, regional managers are the key intermediaries between corporate decision-making and store management. Secondly, regional managers were also deemed an appropriate informant group given their participation in brand development decision-making. Similar to phase one, and based on Hankinson’s (2004) framework, the seven respondent regional managers were asked about the mission and purpose, core values and beliefs, managerial practice and experienced workplace environment. Although each interview covered the same broad topics, each interviewee was allowed to expand on issues of specific personal importance. It was also important to be conscious that the role of the researcher is to listen and attempt to make sense (Weick 1995), rather than influence the responses though question phrasing or suggesting the desired responses. All interviews were recorded with the respondent’s permission, transcribed manually, and inputted into a word document, and subsequently analysed for theme extraction guided by the principles
of Template analysis (King 1998). Respondent managers had considerable commercial experience and ranged in age and experience in both retail and other commercial sectors (profiles are not supplied to protect the anonymity of the respondent managers).

Findings

**Internal perception of the internal brand**

Overall, there is generally a positive perception of the charity brand among organisational members, with positive internal perception scores recorded on all four internal branding components (Hankinson 2004) explored within the survey. The functional (purpose & mission) and symbolic (core values) components of the charity scored more highly than the behavioural (organisational practice/expected behaviours) and experiential components (organisational ethos and ‘feel’) as illustrated in Figure 2.

**Purpose and mission**

There was a degree of perceptual ambiguity about the charity’s retail proposition, despite clarity of perception on the purpose and mission of the charity. The purpose of the charity scored highest in the reporting that organisational members ‘fully understood the nature of the charity’ and ‘the nature and role of the shops for the charity as a whole’. When describing the role of the store network, organisational members expressed the common view that the role of the shops was to ‘raise funds for the local community’ and ‘be the public face of the charity’. Manager one differentiated the charity’s mission from that of the charity shop network, ‘we do not have a mission or mission statement for the shops’. There was a common interpretation among all six regional managers that the purpose of the shops was to generate greater income for the overall charity, in order to provide the maximum amount of resources for the activities of the charity. Others themes that emerged from the interviews included: ‘fund raising for the conferences’ (Manager 4), ‘subsidiary social impact by the mere presence of the charity shops on the high street’ (Manager 2), ‘environmental benefits through reduction of goods to landfill’ (Manager 5) to shops being seen as ‘the public interface with the wider charity’ (Manager 6).

![Figure 2: Perception of Internal Brand Components.](image-url)
The theme of social justice was expressed by manager two who stated that ‘The xxxxxxxx charity is about social justice for all’. Also, the twin themes of localness and connectivity were emphasized by manager six who stated that:

‘I think there is a lot of nostalgia about the xxxxxxxx charity . . . . and people are very loyal to it because they may have received help in the past or know someone who has received help. It is run locally and the money goes locally. It’s all about localness and connectivity’

Interestingly, the lowest score within the functional component was recorded for a perceived understanding of the ‘shop brand promise’, indicating some ambiguity about the charity’s retail proposition, despite declaring a clarity of perception on the purpose and rationale for the store network.

Core values

There was a consistency of perception on the core values of the charity among organisational members. Three hundred and fifty different descriptors of core values were recorded that subsequently were re-categorised under the following six core values:- 1. Social justice, 2. Community improvement, 3. Assistance and respect with dignity, 4. Self-sufficiency, 5. Care for all and 6. Empathy, kindness, friendship and understanding.

The highest positive affirmation within the symbolic component was on the stated ‘understanding of the values, beliefs and fundamental principles of the charity’. By contrast, the lowest score within the symbolic component was recorded on the organisational members’ understanding of the ‘values, beliefs and fundamental principles of the charity shop network’. Certainly, there was little uniformity in the regional manager’s responses on the communication of values. For example, manager one stated ‘we don’t articulate our values well to our volunteers, and somehow expect them to pick these up by osmosis’. Two dominant themes emerged from both grouping’s views of the role of the store network, one financial and one social. The first and most important perceived role was ‘to raise funds in local areas’ (Managers 2,5,6) and ‘provide assistance for local communities’ (Managers 1,3,5). All managers emphasised social engagement through the shop network to ‘welcome people’ and ‘be the face of the charity’. The tension between the implementation of commercial techniques and the perceived core values of the charity, or a perceived conflict of interest between economic and social objectives was found as the following illustrates:

‘If you are working for a commercial high street retailer, it’s all about making money, whereas in (Charity Shop Brand), somebody might be coming into the shop to have a chat, and that might be their only social contact for the day, and this is ok because these are our values’. (Manager 5)

The tension between the use of commercial techniques within this charity is further illustrated by the follow views expressed:

‘so I need to be careful talking about profits . . . because the committees and the volunteers who set up a shop 15–20 years ago, and set up a service for the local community, often say . . . hang on a minute: we don’t like talking about profit and loss’ (Manager 6)

Or

‘there is a huge rejection of the commercial part of the organisation, because you see … … these managers were never managed . . . and even though they may have been seven of eight years in the organisation . . . they never managed the simplest things . . . for example,
none of the managers knew the turnover of their shop because the previous conference kept that from them … and even to get people to take ownership of the space … was just so frustrating’ (Manager 4)

**Behavioural**

The reporting of ‘having received clear communications about policies and procedures’ scored lowest in the behavioural component among organisational members, indicating a clear challenge for shop managers and their regional heads. They also indicated a lack of awareness of expected behaviours within the shop network. This contrasts sharply with the expressed views of the regional managers who stated that clear policies on expected staff behaviour had been developed and communicated to the retail network as illustrated by the following statements:

‘there is an expected code of behaviour and we are currently working on it … it’s about reminding everybody that we expect our staff to be friendly, courteous and respectful to customers and their fellow workers’ (Manager 6)

or

‘I would expect my managers to be innovative, arrange training at least once a week, and emphasise service and sales will follow exceptional service’ (Manager 4)

or

‘I think we had no processes when I joined three years ago … no agreements, no job specs … no health and safety procedures, no cash handling systems, but this has all changed’ (Manager 1)

**Experiential**

While clarity of purpose, mission and values was evident, this does not appear to being fully realised internally by organisational members in the lived working experience within the charity. In fact, the experiential component scored lowest among the four explored components. The lowest score on the experiential component was for the statement ‘I love my working environment’ with second lowest score on ‘The core values of the charity reflect my own personal experience working with the charity’, indicating that the stated values of the charity are not living up to the experienced working reality for organisational members. However, it is the reported lived experience of the regional managers within the interviews that better illustrates the issue. For example, the comments in Table 1 illustrate the negative lived experience of the regional managers, which are in complete contrast to the espoused internal perception on core values of the organisation, friendliness, dignity and respect or deeply rooted within Christian values. As can be seen in Table 1, the lived experienced working environment is described in negative terms such as frustrating, unprofessional, highly political, abusive, tension filled and confrontational and disrespectful.

**Discussion**

It could be argued that the corporate brand assumes a greater strategic significance for charity shop networks where charitable donations determine the product offer. The perceived clarity of mission for the charity among organisational members is very
encouraging, given the importance attributed to it in the branding literature (De Chernatony and Segal-Horn 2003; Wong and Merrilees 2005; Vallaster and De Chernatony 2006). There is less internal clarity on the mission of the shop network, as a social nexus for the community or as the key revenue-generating mechanism for the charity. This suggests a degree of ambiguity on the shop’s mission and an awkwardness between social and economic objectives, in line with previous research (Blume 1995). Findings also indicate a clear perception among regional managers on the purpose and rationale for the shop network, in offering low-priced merchandise, a green recycling service, additional funds and increased awareness for the charity (Horne 1998). This clarity of interpretation on the function of the shop network to generate greater income for the overall charity, for maximum benefit to the most vulnerable members of society effectively equates commercial success with a greater capability to successfully meet the mission of the charity. Similarly, the role of the charity shop in interfacing with the public and being the contact point for the local community (Parsons 2002) is recognised by both organisational members and the regional manager group. A partial explanation for this ‘gap’ might also be found within previously reported tension between the application of commercial techniques and the social objectives of the charity (Saxton 1994; Sternberg 1998; Salamon 1999), and the fear that professional business practice will ultimately corrupt the social DNA of the charity and over-commercialise it (Sargeant, Hudson, and West 2008; Richie, Swami, and Weinberg 1998), offering credence to a view of the uneasy relationship or awkwardness between commercial practice and charitable work (Blume 1995). While all regional managers were clear on the necessity for professional commercial practice within the charity, they are acutely aware of the sensitivity within the organisation on an over-emphasis on commercial targets and sales techniques at the expense of the social remit of the shop network and clearly articulate the need for an internal stakeholder ‘buy in’ (Thomson et al. 1999; Grounds and Harkness 1998).

The perceived clarity of core values is extremely encouraging, given the view that the articulation of core values, seen as the DNA of the store brand (Kent and Stone 2007) is viewed as crucial for corporate brand building (Balmer and Wilkinson 1991; Balmer 1995; Urde 1999, 2003; Harris and de Chernatony 2001; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006a; 2006b). This perceived understanding of core values will undoubtedly facilitate the development of the retail brand in the future and should address the fundamental brand building requirements of continuity, consistency and credibility (Urde 2003). Organisational members clearly articulated the core values of the charity. The categorisation of over 350 core values into six categories, namely 1. Social justice, 2. Community improvement, 3. Assistance and respect with dignity, 4. Self-sufficiency, 5. Care for all and 6. Empathy, kindness, friendship and understanding is in total harmony with the charity’s mission and should in theory allow the charity to attain a unique and non-imitable market position (Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley 2009). It could be argued that these espoused values underpin the brand and are evidence of the internalisation of brand values for competitive advantage (Mahnert and Torres 2007; Vallaster and De Chernatony 2005, 2006). However, the core values of the organisational brand do not appear to be evident in the internal view of the retail store brand. The weaker perceived comprehension of retail store brand values is a cause for concern and identifies a clear communications challenge for the charity. While there is evidence of organisational self-awareness (Harris...
& De Chernatony 2001; Urde 1999; Balmer 1995), this was not found to translate into clarity about the identity of the retail brand, and ‘what it stands for’ (Dowling 2004). This might be explained by a lack of organisational desire (Balmer and Gray 2003) among some organisational members, who may be fearful of professional and salaried head office staff dictating terms and conditions to the regional conferences who are more accustomed to total control of their own shops in local areas.

The commonality of perceptions and meeting of minds on mission, purpose and core values is not reflected in the lived experience of the working environment. The expressed ethos of the charity as caring, respectful and Christian contrasts sharply with the experienced reality reported from organisational members. The low scores on ‘loving my working environment’ effectively testifies to a strongly expressed view that working for the charity is not an enjoyable and fulfilling experience, despite the fact that it is a volunteer-led organization with over 4000 volunteers. There are clearly issues between paid professional managers at all levels of the organisation and the volunteer cohort of organisational members who have a long tradition of working for local conferences within the charity, and who in many cases have been instrumental in establishing shops in their local areas. This is further re-enforced by the low score for ‘the core values of the society reflect my own personal experience working with the charity’, and indicate that a serious issue in the experienced working environment for the charity. Professional managers are operating in a historical and hierarchical system that was multi-layered, amateur by nature, volunteer led, with absolutely no commercial focus and totally dependent on church gate collections and individual charitable donations for funding. The conferences had total responsibility for the local shops and answered to their local president alone. All has changed. The change is

| Table 1. Experienced working environment. |
|------------------------------------------|
| Manager 1 | It can make for a frustrating environment and separateness … there is also the lack of resourcing and a reluctance to professionalise and that runs through the organisation from health and safety to branding |
| Manager 2 | In places it’s a great place to work, in places it’s a desperate and frustrating place to work … its like rowing a boat and somebody keeps hitting you on the head from behind and you don’t know who they are … or who is hurting you … and its highly political |
| Manager 3 | The conferences have used volunteers over the years, put them into shops, gave them no training, abused the community employment scheme for years … and we have a statutory responsibility to train them and give them new skills for the workplace There is massive tension between the conferences and the retail … the conference run shops have no experience of managing staff … and staff being employed by their parents … … I have opened two shops in the past two months from scratch … … and the difference is amazing … its night and day |
| Manager 4 | It’s not a good place to work … I am still dealing with visitation conferences that are still running shops which is a big problem … and causes all kinds of confrontations |
| Manager 5 | It can be a very difficult place to work and I soften think I am in the wrong organisation. For example the other day I stopped at one of our shops. The manager told me that all the other managers were on to her about the e-mail I had sent on Monday … looking for ways to recoup the sales that had been lost due to the shops being closed over three days … I mean I did not state this at all … but she said that it was implied … but I told her that I was actually offering advice on what might be considered to do the best for the shop until the end of the month’ ‘ I mean there are 20 shops run by one conference with majority of them run by dual managers … huge conflict … no one taking responsibility … two sets of audit … its just off the wall’ |
| Manager 6 | ‘Its very difficult … and you just don’t have control … like you would in a normal commercial organisation’ |
gradual, incremental and not without serious challenges. As with other charities in recent years, the store network has become the principal source of revenue (Liu, Eng, and Sekhon 2014), and hence the adoption of commercial practice and branding techniques. Within this context, there is clear evidence that the regional managers are frustrated about an inability to fulfil their role and implement change. Historical structures and legacy practices within the charity appear to be thwarting their best efforts to commercialise and professionalise the retail network, because such change is perceived as a threat to the status quo, and perhaps the level of control and power held within these historical structures. The regional managers are effectively the fault line between change and the status quo within this charity and representative of previously reported tensions between economic and social pillars within charities, and resistance to commercial and professional practice (Yoganathan et al. 2018; Salamon 1999; Richie, Swami, and Weinberg 1998; Sternberg 1998).

Findings finally indicate a clear difference between organisational members and regional managers in their view on clarity of practice and procedures within the retail store network. There is certainly an issue around the effectiveness of communication of policies and procedures. All regional managers had a clear understanding of expected managerial practice, but there is blockage in the system if organisational members testify to a lack of clear communication of policies and procedures and expected behaviours. This may be further evidence of an inherent resistance to the professionalisation and commercialisation of the charity, and/or resistance to change which is common to all organisations, despite the fact that there is a universal understanding of the importance of the shops as the principal revenue-generating source for the charity.

**Conclusion**

There is a general acceptance that the brand building process starts with identity (Hulberg 2006), and this charity has a strong sense of itself that has been developed through its’ history, but not its’ strategy. There is a need to clearly articulate and in a systematic way the core values of the charity’s retail brand and ‘what it stands for” (Kent and Stone 2007) to allow a retail brand identity to emerge based on the core values that currently underpin the charity (Saxton 1994; Dixon 1996). The strong organisation identity of the charity is not transferring to the retail network, whose members do not have a strong sense of what the retail brand represents, indicating a gap between the charity’s organisational identity and the brand identity of the retail network. This case also illustrates the challenges and issues that arise from the ongoing professionalisation of a hitherto amateur and fully volunteer-led organisation to an increasingly professional management led and commercially focused charity, effectively the collision of legacy locally managed units towards professionally centrally led retail operations. The resistance to change is clearly evident among volunteered organisational members who have not ‘bought into’ this professional management approach, and are certainly not ‘living the brand’, in their interactions with salaried staff. This may partially explain the reported lack of clear communications of policies and procedures and management practice, and the experienced poor working environment. It is encouraging that there is perceived clarity of perception on functional and symbolic components (mission, purpose and core values) which should provide a solid foundation for brand management in the future. However, the lack of perceived understanding of
the retail shop brand is a cause for concern where mission and core values are unclear, although the purpose is clearly understood. There are also trust or mistrust issues between the professionally focused and salaried management and the volunteer managers, frontline staff and other volunteers on the operation and control of retail operations, with regional managers as the fault line between the legacy and emergent systems. Trust may be the key in the battle for hearts and minds within the charity shop network and may be crucial for the charity to realise its' potential and successfully meet its' mission for maximum societal gain.

Managerial implications

There are significant implications for management within the charity, and there is a current need to re-design the reporting structures within the charity, with specific emphasis on the control and operation of the store network. The need to win hearts and minds through the national organisation is clearly evident, and existing management should address how to convert a clearly stated understanding of the core values of the charity to the corporate retail brand, allow for the internalisation of brand values, and deliver on the brand promise both internally and externally. There needs to be a recognition that charities are different from commercial organisations, and that a 'cut and paste' is not necessarily the best approach. The trust issues between the salaried management and the volunteer members on the operation and control of retail operations is a significant barrier to the retail store network's strategy potential and requires immediate attention. Moreover, senior management and head office should recognise the strong voluntary nature of the charity where the replication of a standard business model may not be the most effective means to success and recognise that nurturing of the voluntary culture will be vital for the continued existence of the shop network.

Future research

Many non-profit organisations are increasingly adopting professional practice and branding techniques for competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive marketplace, but little is documented about this transition within organisations. Further research is required on how such change can be successfully managed. It would also be useful to better understand the branding for charity brands from a shop manager and frontline staff perspective as well as exploring retail consumption of charity brands from a consumer perspective. Finally, an exploration of the twin concepts of trust and commitment within a non-profit context would be a welcome addition to the existing state of knowledge.

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Notes on contributor

Edmund O’Callaghan is Head of Retail Management Studies at Technological University Dublin. His research focus is on Internal Brand Management within retail organisational networks.
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