Managing Extension's Internal Brand: Employees' Perceptions of the Functions and Descriptors of Extension

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Key Words
Branding, Employees, Extension, Identity, Survey

Literature Review
Brands and Employees

"A brand is a complex, interrelated system of management decisions and consumer reactions that identifies a product (goods, services, or ideas), builds awareness of it, and creates meaning for it" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 6). A key aspect of this definition of branding is the interrelated components of brands, including internal and external components. The parts of a brand that are seen (e.g., logos, names, advertisements, etc.) receive the most attention, but the success of a brand is anchored by internal components not typically seen by the public (e.g., culture, values, shared identity).

Traditional definitions of branding have focused on external branding, but in recent years, the importance of internal branding aimed at employees has increased (Corley, Cochran, & Comstock, 2000). Internal brand management is important to fulfill the brand promise of an organization or business through enhancing employees' brand performance (Punjaisri, Evanchitzky, & Wilson, 2009). In a service organization, like the Cooperative Extension Service, the employees' performance of the brand is a major contributor to how the brand is interpreted by external audiences (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). As such, it is important for employees to identify with the brand and convey brand meaning in all their interactions.

Employees play a "crucial role in living the brand by delivering on brand promise" (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007, p. 67). The brand promise is what the brand says it will deliver, such as a product, service, or way it treats its customers and other stakeholders. Management should help employees understand how living the brand can translate to daily work activities and model the brand in their own work activities (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). While management plays an important role, internal communication and brand training have a significant impact on whether employees maintain the brand promise (Punjaisri et al., 2009; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Additionally, brand identification has a significant impact on employees' commitment to the brand. This commitment has a positive influence on employees' loyalty to the brand (Punjaisri et al., 2009). Research indicates it is important for employees at all levels to identify with the organizational brand; however, there remains a need to empirically understand how employees at different levels perceive and communicate the brand (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). This study specifically addresses the functions personnel believe are the most important for the organization and what terms personnel believe are the most effective for representing the organization and its brand to members of the public.

Public Organizations

This paper focuses on Extension, which is a public organization. Before discussing Extension, it is important to understand public organizations and how private-sector marketing strategies, such as branding, are impacted by the nature of public organizations. There are three basic complications for public organizations that can inhibit the use of private-sector strategies. First, public organizations need approval from all members of the public, not just those who directly interact with the organization, because the organizations depend on funds contributed from the public as a whole (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995). Second, public organizations often have multiple roles and identities that need to be represented to maintain their integrity (Hoggett, 2006; Wæraas, 2008, 2010). A key component of branding success is representing a consistent identity (de Chernatony, 2001), which is complicated by the need to represent multiple identities and roles. Third, public organizations differ from private organizations in their roles and purposes (Laing, 2003; Walsh, 1994; Wæraas, 2008). Public organizations like Extension that provide services are in a difficult position because services are more difficult to brand than products (Kornberger, 2010).

While public organizations have been increasingly using private-sector marketing techniques over the past three decades, the application is not always well understood (Butler & Collins, 1995; Laing, 2003; Moore, 1995; Walsh, 1994; Wæraas, 2010; Whelan, Davies, Walsh, & Bourke, 2010). Work in this area continues, though, because of the potential for success. More specifically for branding, public organizations have the opportunity to go beyond merely demonstrating public value and instead reach a point of building relationships with the public through effective branding (Whelan et al., 2010).

Literature on public-sector branding exists, particularly in Europe, but it is not extensive. One example is place branding, which involves treating a location such as a city or country as a brand (Kavaratzis, 2004). Place branding requires treating the entire location as one entity,

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requiring a sense of sameness among its members. Primarily, discussions of public-sector marketing and branding have dealt with the unique characteristics of public organizations and how private-sector strategies can be adapted for public organizations, as discussed earlier in this section.

Extension and Branding

Extension stems from the 1914 Smith-Lever Act with the intention of taking research being conducted by land-grant universities and extending those results to those practicing agriculture to improve the industry's success, though the breadth of Extension work has expanded over the past century (Campbell, 1998). As with any organization, time and environment affects what the organization does and how it views itself. The core values and functions of Extension have been discussed over the past 30 years. This discussion has included explicitly referring to branding Extension, but much of the discussion has only been implicitly related to branding of Extension, such as work related to the identity of Extension. Commentary and articles have appeared focusing on leadership (Buchanan, 1986b), engagement of individuals working in Extension (Buchanan, 1986a), reinventing how Extension reaches its audiences (King & Boehlje, 2000), how Extension is perceived (Verma & Burns, 1995; Warner & Christenson, 1983), and promoting a unified identity of Extension through all employees (Bloir & King, 2010; Boldt, 1988).

Specific references to branding are relatively new to Extension, but these branding techniques have been effectively utilized for quite some time in other service/knowledge-based organizations (Abrams, Meyers, Irani, & Baker, 2010). Maddy and Kealy mention branding and Extension together as early as 1998, but this is relatively recent given that Extension began in 1914 and branding has been around since the 19th century (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Maddy and Kealy (1998) discussed how Extension could use private-sector marketing techniques, focusing on branding. Maddy and Kealy stated an integrated approach to communications through branding would be needed for Extension to reach a wider portion of the general population.

Three empirical works have also discussed branding and Extension. Abrams et al. (2010) assessed brand awareness, finding that external stakeholders' perceptions of what Extension did were positive, but the stakeholders were not associating Extension's functions with the brand of the organization, indicating a lack of brand awareness. Irani, Ruth, Telg, and Lundy (2006) conducted focus groups with members of the public to address preferences for communications from Extension. Irani et al. found the public favored two-way symmetrical communications that focused on improving the relationship between the brand and the public, which is in line with prior public organization branding research and Excellence Theory in public relations (Grunig, 1989; Whelan et al., 2010). Telg, Irani, Hurst, and Kistler (2007) surveyed Extension agents for their perceptions of marketing Extension. Telg et al. found Extension agents used word-of-mouth communications the most and found it to be the most useful by far. This result is in line with the notion that employees act as the face of a brand through their interactions with the public (de Chernatony, 2001; Kornberger, 2010; Tybout & Calkins, 2005), and is particularly important for public organizations that cannot utilize external communications in the same manner as private-sector organizations (Whelan et al., 2010).

Branding research specific to Extension indicates a continued need for developing a body of knowledge to help Extension understand how to uniquely market itself through branding strategies (Abrams et al., 2010). While these studies of branding and Extension provided key contributions, they did not address internal perceptions of what Extension is and what it should be doing. Given the relationship between internal and external components of the brand, this prevents a full understanding of Extension's brand (de Chernatony, 2001). For instance, the lack of brand awareness in the Abrams et al. (2010) study could stem from a lack of consistent sense of what Extension's identity is to employees in the organization. To be successful as a public organization with limited opportunities for mass communication, which is due to negative perceptions of public

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organizations spending money to advertise (Settle et al., 2012; Whelan et al., 2010), Extension's external communications will be driven by its employees and their interactions with the public. The organization needs to build a shared identity among its employees (de Chernatony, 2001). To do so, the organization needs to understand employees' perceptions of Extension's brand. Building shared identity becomes particularly important because Extension is a geographically distributed organization, which makes it more susceptible to conflict than organizations where employees are centrally located (Hinds & Mortenson, 2005). Building a shared identity has been shown to mitigate conflicts in geographically distributed organizations (Hinds & Mortenson, 2005). As a public organization, Extension not only depends on its employees to build the value of the brand but also depends on them to build relationships between Extension's brand and the public (Whelan et al., 2010).

Purpose and Objectives

Extension at the University of Florida's (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) went through a rebranding process in 2013 to improve marketing of the organization within the state. This included updating the organization's branding materials, as well as trying to communicate consistently about the organization across the state. As a part of this effort, The UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources conducted research to assess the opinions of UF/IFAS Extension employees related to branding and communication of the organization. The purpose of this study was to understand employees' perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's core identity through their perceptions of the functions the organization performs and descriptors used to explain Extension work to the public. The objectives guiding this study were to:

1. Describe employee perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's functions and descriptors of Extension work, and
2. Compare employee perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's functions and descriptors by employment status.

Methods

This study consisted of a quantitative online survey of individuals working for Extension at the state and county levels. There is not a comprehensive list of Extension personnel in Florida. Different sources were used to determine the population for this survey. From the UF, lists were available for state Extension staff members and Extension faculty, including county agents, county directors, district directors, and state specialists. Every county's Extension page was searched to determine county staff members. The population consisted of 829 Extension faculty and staff. Members of the population were sent successive waves of emails soliciting participation, per Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) recommendations. Participants were sent a pre-notice from the UF/IFAS dean of Extension and the UF/IFAS assistant vice president for communications to help solicit participation. After the initial invitation, three more e-mail reminders were sent. IRB approval was obtained to conduct this study through the university.

After removal of incomplete surveys, 435 respondents were included in the study (52.5%). There were 224 county-level faculty respondents, 41 county-level non-faculty respondents, 151 state-level faculty respondents, 18 state-level non-faculty respondents, and one respondent who declined to answer the question. To check for non-response error, results for early respondents were compared to late respondents' results (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001). There were no statistically significant differences for any of the descriptors of Extension work. For the functions Extension performs, there were statistically significant differences for the functions of youth education,

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community development, and leadership development. As such, the results of those three functions cannot be considered representative of the opinions of nonrespondents.

The questions in this survey addressed employee perceptions of the core functions of Extension and their perceptions of words to describe the work they do in Extension. A panel of experts including Extension agents, Extension administration, and survey experts reviewed the instrument to help ensure its validity. For core functions, respondents evaluated 19 different functions for their importance for UF/IFAS Extension. For the descriptors, respondents evaluated 12 terms for their effectiveness for describing Extension work. To develop the bank of functions and descriptors to be evaluated, the expert panel provided input to ensure the list was reflective of UF/IFAS Extension. The two sets of questions were evaluated for reliability, with the descriptors having a Cronbach's alpha of .85, while the functions of Extension was at .88. A score of at least .80 is considered ideal (Norcini, 1999). The results in this study were part of a larger questionnaire that addressed communications of UF/IFAS Extension. The questions for this instrument were researcher-developed to address the needs of UF/IFAS Extension.

To meet the aims of this study, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to address the first objective of the study. To address the second objective of the study, respondents were split based on their employment status (i.e., county faculty, county non-faculty, state faculty, & state non-faculty) and the means of their responses were compared using a one-way ANOVA. For items where the one-way ANOVA was statistically significant, follow-up comparisons were made between each employment status group using Hochberg's GT2. This follow-up procedure was chosen because of differences in response size between the different employment status groups (Field, 2005).

Results

Objective 1: Describe employee perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's functions and descriptors of Extension work.

Respondents rated the majority of Extension functions as important (Table 1). The functions rated as the most important were providing research-based information (M = 4.9), helping to solve problems (M = 4.9), providing training for clientele (M = 4.9), and providing expertise (M = 4.8). All of the functions were rated as at least slightly important by the majority of respondents, though the lowest-rated functions were staff management (M = 4.1), leadership development (M = 4.3), community development (M = 4.3), and serving as community leaders (M = 4.3).

Table 1

Personnel Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension Functions

Function	Percent response per label					*M*	*SD*
	1	2	3	4	5		
Research-based Information	0.0	0.0	1.2	7.6	91.2	4.9	0.3
Helping to Solve Problems	0.0	0.0	1.9	9.3	88.9	4.9	0.4
Providing Training for Clientele	0.0	0.0	1.6	10.0	88.4	4.9	0.4
Expertise	0.0	0.0	1.8	12.0	86.1	4.8	0.4
Creating Informational Materials	0.2	0.2	2.6	16.5	80.5	4.8	0.5
Connection to University	0.0	1.2	2.1	15.0	81.8	4.8	0.5
Adult Education	0.2	0.9	3.9	16.6	78.3	4.7	0.6
Showing Value of Extension Programs	0.0	1.4	3.7	17.0	77.9	4.7	0.6
Youth Education[a]	0.0	1.4	4.6	17.8	76.2	4.7	0.6
Marketing Extension Programs	0.2	1.4	5.1	18.0	75.3	4.7	0.7
Providing Technical Assistance	0.2	0.5	5.1	21.8	72.5	4.7	0.6
Planning of Extension Programs	0.7	0.7	3.9	22.0	72.6	4.7	0.7
Management of Extension Activities	0.5	2.3	8.4	29.5	59.3	4.5	0.8
Initiative for Change	0.9	2.1	9.0	28.1	59.9	4.4	0.8
Conducting Research	1.2	5.3	8.3	25.9	59.3	4.4	1.0
Serving as Community Leaders	0.2	3.7	12.6	32.3	51.2	4.3	0.8
Community Development[a]	0.9	4.0	10.7	33.7	50.7	4.3	0.9
Leadership Development[a]	0.5	4.2	12.3	33.6	49.4	4.3	0.9
Staff Management	1.6	3.3	17.8	34.3	43.0	4.1	0.9

Note. Labels coded as 1 = *Unimportant*, 2 = *Slightly Unimportant*, 3 = *Neither*, 4 = *Slightly Important*, 5 = *Important*.

[a]Results of comparison between late and early respondents indicates responses for this item cannot be extended beyond respondents.

Employees' beliefs of the effectiveness of descriptors for describing Extension work are displayed in Table 2. Only education (77.9%, *M* = 4.7), training (64.1%, *M* = 4.5), and providing solutions (64.6%, *M* = 4.5) were terms considered by the majority of respondents as effective for explaining Extension work. Only 43.1% (*M* = 3.9) of respondents considered the term Extension to be effective for describing Extension work. The lowest-rated descriptors were civic engagement (*M* = 3.1), capacity building (*M* = 2.9), and intervention (*M* = 2.7).

Table 2

Employee Perceptions of the Effectiveness Terms Used to Describe Extension Work to the Public

Descriptor	Percent response per label					*M*	*SD*
	1	2	3	4	5		
Education	0.2	0.5	4.9	16.6	77.9	4.7	0.6
Training	0.2	3.3	7.2	25.2	64.1	4.5	0.8
Providing Solutions	2.8	1.6	6.6	24.4	64.6	4.5	0.9
Outreach	2.8	4.9	13.5	31.0	47.8	4.2	1.0
Assistance	3.3	5.4	12.9	28.7	49.8	4.2	1.0
Communication	2.3	6.3	14.7	34.1	42.5	4.1	1.0
Extension	6.3	8.4	16.8	25.4	43.1	3.9	1.2
Leadership Development	5.9	10.4	25.0	35.4	23.3	3.6	1.1
Engagement	9.5	11.4	28.2	26.8	24.2	3.5	1.2
Civic Engagement	13.2	16.2	33.9	22.1	14.6	3.1	1.2
Capacity Building	18.8	15.3	34.4	18.6	12.9	2.9	1.3
Intervention	24.2	16.8	32.7	19.2	7.1	2.7	1.2

Note. Labels coded as 1 = *Ineffective*, 2 = *Slightly Ineffective*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Slightly Effective*, 5 = *Effective*.

Objective 2: Compare employee perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's functions and potential descriptors by employment status

Table 3 shows the results of perceptions of Extension functions split by employment status. The differences in employment status affect the scope and location of employees. County faculty and staff are distributed throughout the state and deal directly with local-level issues. State-level faculty and staff are located centrally in the state and deal directly with state-level issues.

These split results were compared using one-way ANOVA, followed by post-hoc tests for any statistically significant differences between each personnel group. There were statistically significant differences for 12 of the 17 functions. Only statistically significant ANOVAs and post-hoc assessments are shown in-text, but all mean scores are shown in the Table 3. In general, state faculty respondents tended to attribute less importance to the functions than the other respondent groups.

For providing training for clientele [$F(3, 427) = 12.8, p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state faculty ($M = 4.8$), county faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state non-faculty ($M = 4.5$), county non-faculty ($M = 5.0$) and state faculty($M = 4.8$), and county non-faculty ($M = 5.0$) and state non-faculty ($M = 4.5$). For expertise [$F(3, 426) = 6.1, p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state faculty ($M = 4.8$), county faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state non-faculty ($M = 4.6$), county non-faculty ($M = 5.0$) and state faculty ($M = 4.8$), and county non-faculty ($M = 5.0$) and state non-faculty ($M = 4.6$).

For adult education [$F(3, 428) = 17.5, p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between state faculty ($M = 4.5$) and county faculty ($M = 4.9$), and county non-faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state faculty ($M = 4.5$). For youth education [$F(3, 427) = 10.5, p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty ($M = 4.8$) and state faculty ($M = 4.5$), and county non-faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state faculty ($M = 4.5$). For showing the vale

of Extension programming, $[F(3, 428) = 6.5, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty (M = 4.8) and state faculty (M = 4.6), and county non-faculty (M = 4.9) and state faculty (M = 4.6). For planning Extension programs $[F(3, 426) = 7.8, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty (M = 4.8) and state faculty (M = 4.5), and county non-faculty (M = 4.8) and state faculty (M = 4.5).

For marketing Extension programs $[F(3, 428) = 6.8, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty (M = 4.7) and state faculty (M = 4.5), and county non-faculty (M = 4.9) and state faculty (M = 4.5). For management of Extension activities $[F(3, 525) = 8.3, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed a significant difference between state faculty (M = 4.2) and county faculty (M = 4.6). For conducting research $[F(3, 423) = 7.3, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty (M = 4.5) and state faculty (M = 4.1), and county non-faculty (M = 4.8) and state faculty (M = 4.1).

For leadership development $[F(3, 426) = 3.0, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed a significant difference between county non-faculty (M = 4.5) and state faculty (M = 4.1). For community development $[F(3, 425) = 3.6, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed a significant difference between county non-faculty (M = 4.7) and state faculty (M = 4.2). For staff management $[F(3, 423) = 13.8, p < .05]$, the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty (M = 4.3) and state faculty (M = 3.8), county non-faculty (M = 4.5) and state faculty (M = 3.8), and state faculty (M = 3.8) and state non-faculty (M = 4.5).

Table 3

Comparison of Employee Perceptions of UF/IFAS Extension's Functions

Function	Mean response by employment status			
	County Faculty (*SD*)	County Non-Faculty (*SD*)	State Faculty (*SD*)	State Non-Faculty (*SD*)
Providing Training for Clientele*	4.9 (0.3)	5.0 (0.2)	4.8 (0.5)	4.5 (0.6)
Research-Based Information	4.9 (0.3)	4.9 (0.3)	4.9 (0.4)	4.9 (0.5)
Expertise*	4.9 (0.3)	5.0 (0.2)	4.8 (0.5)	4.6 (0.7)
Helping to Solve Problems	4.9 (0.3)	4.9 (0.4)	4.9 (0.4)	4.7 (0.6)
Adult Education*	4.9 (0.4)	4.9 (0.3)	4.5 (0.8)	4.8 (0.5)
Youth Education[a]*	4.8 (0.5)	4.9 (0.4)	4.5 (0.8)	4.7 (0.6)
Creating Informational Materials	4.8 (0.5)	4.9 (0.3)	4.7 (0.6)	4.7 (0.6)
Connection to University	4.8 (0.5)	4.7 (0.6)	4.8 (0.5)	4.5 (0.7)
Showing Value of Extension Programming*	4.8 (0.5)	4.9 (0.3)	4.6 (0.8)	4.8 (0.5)
Planning of Extension Programs*	4.8 (0.5)	4.8 (0.6)	4.5 (0.8)	4.5 (0.7)
Marketing Extension Programs*	4.7 (0.6)	4.9 (0.4)	4.5 (0.8)	4.7 (0.6)
Providing Technical Assistance	4.7 (0.6)	4.7 (0.76)	4.6 (0.7)	4.4 (0.7)
Management of Extension Activities*	4.6 (0.6)	4.5 (0.8)	4.2 (0.9)	4.3 (0.7)
Initiative for Change	4.5 (0.8)	4.6 (0.7)	4.4 (0.9)	4.2 (1.0)
Conducting Research*	4.5 (0.9)	4.8 (0.4)	4.1 (1.1)	4.4 (0.8)
Serving as Community Leaders	4.4 (0.8)	4.5 (0.8)	4.2 (0.9)	4.3 (0.7)
Leadership Development[a]*	4.3 (0.8)	4.5 (0.8)	4.1 (0.9)	4.1 (0.8)
Community Development[a]*	4.3 (0.9)	4.7 (0.7)	4.2 (0.9)	4.5 (0.7)
Staff Management*	4.3 (0.9)	4.5 (0.8)	3.8 (1.0)	4.5 (0.7)

Note. Labels coded as 1 = *Unimportant*, 2 = *Slightly Unimportant*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Slightly Important*, 5 = *Important*.
[a]Results of comparison between late and early respondents indicates responses for this item cannot be extended beyond the respondents.
*$p < .05$ for ANOVA

Table 4 shows perceptions of different terms' effectiveness for describing Extension work split by employment status. These split results were compared using one-way ANOVA, followed by post-hoc tests for any statistically significant differences between employment groups. There were statistically significant differences for five of the 12 descriptors. Only statistically significant ANOVAs and post-hoc assessments will be shown in-text, but all mean scores will be shown in Table 4. State faculty respondents tended to view all of the terms as less effective for explaining Extension work than the other respondent groups did. For education [$F(3, 424) = 9.4$, $p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty ($M = 4.8$) and state faculty ($M = 4.5$), and county non-faculty ($M = 4.9$) and state faculty ($M = 4.5$). For outreach [$F(3, 424) = 3.2$, $p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed a significant difference between county non-faculty ($M = 4.6$) and state faculty ($M = 4.1$). For assistance [$F(3,423) = 3.6$, $p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed a significant difference between county non-faculty ($M = 4.5$) and state faculty ($M = 4.0$). For communications [$F(3,423) = 4.3$, $p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed a significant difference between county non-faculty ($M = 4.5$) and state faculty ($M = 3.9$). For leadership development [$F(3,423) = 5.4$, $p < .05$], the post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between county faculty ($M = 3.7$) and state faculty ($M = 3.3$), and county non-faculty ($M = 3.9$) and state faculty ($M = 3.3$).

Table 4

Comparison of Employee Perceptions of Descriptors of UF/IFAS Extension

Descriptor	Mean responses by employment status			
	County Faculty (*SD*)	County Non-Faculty (*SD*)	State Faculty (*SD*)	State Non-Faculty (*SD*)
Education*	4.8 (0.5)	4.9 (0.4)	4.5 (0.7)	4.9 (0.3)
Training	4.5 (0.8)	4.7 (0.6)	4.4 (0.8)	4.4 (0.8)
Providing Solutions	4.5 (0.9)	4.8 (0.5)	4.4 (1.0)	4.7 (0.5)
Outreach*	4.1 (1.0)	4.6 (0.7)	4.1 (1.1)	4.3 (0.7)
Assistance*	4.2 (1.0)	4.5 (0.8)	4.0 (1.1)	4.3 (0.8)
Communication*	4.1 (1.0)	4.5 (0.7)	3.9 (1.1)	4.4 (0.6)
Extension	3.9 (1.3)	4.2 (1.0)	3.8 (1.2)	4.2 (0.9)
Leadership Development*	3.7 (1.1)	3.9 (1.1)	3.3 (1.2)	3.8 (0.8)
Engagement	3.5 (1.2)	3.7 (1.2)	3.3 (1.3)	3.4 (1.0)
Civic Engagement	3.1 (1.2)	3.4 (1.0)	2.9 (1.3)	3.2 (1.0)
Capacity Building	2.8 (1.2)	3.0 (1.1)	3.0 (1.3)	3.2 (1.3)
Intervention	2.6 (1.3)	3.1 (0.9)	2.6 (1.3)	2.8 (1.0)

Note. Labels coded as 1 = *Ineffective*, 2 = *Slightly Ineffective*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Slightly Effective*, 5 = *Effective*.
*$p < .05$ for ANOVA

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study contributes to the literature base of branding public organizations, where research in branding is limited and where the application of private-sector communications strategies is not well understood (Butler & Collins, 1995; Laing, 2003; Moore, 1995; Walsh, 1994; Wæraas, 2010; Whelan et al., 2010). This study also contributes to the literature of applying

branding concepts to Extension, which includes literature explicitly addressing branding (Abrams et al., 2010; Irani et al., 2006; Maddy & Kealy, 1998; Telg et al., 2007) and literature that addresses related concepts that do not explicitly mention branding (Bloir & King, 2010; Boldt, 1988; Buchanan, 1986a, 1986b; King & Boehlje, 2000; Verma & Burns, 1995; Warner & Christenson, 1983). More specifically, this research addresses what internal audiences view as the brand's core identity, as assessed by their perceptions of functions and descriptors of the organization.

Based on the perceptions of the respondents, UF/IFAS Extension's brand managers (i.e., all employees of the organization) are representing the following as the core functions of the organization: providing research-based information, helping to solve problems, providing training for clientele, and providing expertise. Provided these are the actual core functions the brand wants to represent, the organization should ensure that its external communications materials match the functions being represented by the internal brand. If these are not the core functions the organization wants represented, the organization needs to work on building the shared brand identity it wants represented among its internal stakeholders (de Chernatony, 2001; Kornberger, 2010; Tybout & Calkins, 2005).

Another finding that emerged from respondents' opinions of the brand's functions was the general focus of the organization providing information (e.g., research-based information, expertise, etc.), while respondents had lesser opinions of functions related to leadership, development, and management. Paired with the indication of what the employees believe to be the organization's core functions, the employees' perception of the brand of UF/IFAS Extension is that of an organization that acts as an information source to help enact change. This understanding is important because it provides a picture of what employees believe the organization's brand identity should be. As the Extension navigates its future brand, Extension should focus its activities and communications on being a purveyor of information in order to elicit positive perceptions from employees. It is particularly important for employees to be on board with activities represented by the brand given that the majority of a brand's success relies on internal structures of the brand, including employees (de Chernatony, 2001).

As it relates to terms being used to describe Extension work, employees viewed education, training, and providing solutions as the most effective. In Extension's external communications, it would be advantageous to use these terms so that the verbiage being used to represent the brand externally matches what internal members of the brand are likely to be using when describing Extension given the results of this study. Consistent representation is necessary for brand success (Thorson & Moore, 1996). The actual term "extension," though, was not viewed as particularly effective for describing Extension. While the name of the organization is highly unlikely to change, using "extension" as a term describing the work being done by the organization could cause confusion, further muddling the brand's identity. More work should be done to educate the public on the term "extension" if it is to be used in external branding.

On a broader level, there were differences between the different respondents based on their employment status (i.e., county faculty, county non-faculty, state faculty, and state non-faculty). There were consistent differences between the responses of county-level and state-level respondents, especially state-level faculty. This indicates there is a lack of shared identity amongst the different internal members of the Extension brand, which could hurt the brand's success (de Chernatony, 2001). This is not surprising given that Extension is a geographically distributed organization (Hinds & Mortenson, 2005). However, this is detrimental to the organization's ability to succeed. Public organizations rely on employees to represent the brand due to limitations on the amount of external communications public organizations can use compared to private-sector organizations (Settle et al., 2012; Whelan et al., 2010). The organization needs to work to build a stronger shared identity (i.e., members across the organization have the same vision for what the

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organization is and what it should be doing) across its different components. One way to do this is to increase interactions between different components of the organization (Hinds & Mortenson, 2005), specifically between state-level and county-level employees given the disparities found in this study.

Application to Extension in Other States

This research only assessed the perceptions of Extension personnel in one state, which limits the generalizability of the results. While it would be unwise to assume that results apply perfectly to Extension in all states, there are commonalities across Extension systems that are worth noting. The diversity of employees in terms of their scope of work (i.e., their role in Extension) and location within the state is likely to occur in other states. Given the disparities in perceptions between the different types of personnel based on their roles and geographic location, this could be an issue in other states as well. The other area to note is the multitude of roles and functions that Extension can serve, which is typical of public organizations (Hoggett, 2006; Wæraas, 2008, 2010). Public organizations need to represent their multiple roles, such as the functions addressed in this study, to avoid losing credibility (Wæraas, 2010), so this is a potential issue that Extension systems in other states should also be aware of. Both of these issues complicate the ability of a public organization like Extension to foster a shared identity among its employees, which can hurt the brand's success (de Chernatony, 2001; Hinds & Mortenson, 2005; Hoggett, 2006; Wæraas, 2008, 2010). Extension systems in all states should be mindful of fostering shared identity to mitigate problems of geographic distribution, differences in personnel roles within the organization, and performing multiple functions within a single organization.

Future Research

Future research should assess external stakeholders' views of the functions Extension performs and the best ways to describe UF/IFAS Extension work. This would allow for an accurate understanding of the public's viewpoints, thus providing an opportunity to improve the relationship between the public and the brand of Extension (Whelan et al., 2010). Fostering this relationship is particularly important for Extension as a public organization that is subject to scrutiny by all members of the public, even those not interacting directly with the organization (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995).

As follow-up to the current study, research could also address more in-depth aspects of branding in the organization. One such route would be qualitative research addressing how leadership in the organizations makes decisions impacting the internal brand of the organization, including any efforts to foster shared identity.

Another research opportunity that should be pursued is replicating this study in other states. There exists the potential for the Extension system in different states to learn from each other. Future studies can address the perceptions of different functions and descriptors of Extension work within the different states' Extension systems to determine commonalities nationally. If there is a stronger sense of shared identity in other states Extension systems, then researchers would need address what is different between the state Extension systems that fosters or inhibits shared identity.

A limitation of this research is that demographics were not measured for respondents beyond role in the organization and if they were county- or state-level employees. Future research should also assess if there are differences between other demographic characteristics. Characteristics that could be addressed include but are not limited to length of employment with Extension, region in respective states, and program area. These other demographic characteristics could provide more explanation of the differences in employee perceptions of Extension.

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