

From Giving to Belonging: Examining the Role of Corporate Philanthropy in Strengthening Employee-Based Brand Equity

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Abstract

Corporate philanthropy (CP) is a cornerstone of responsible business, increasingly expected by both employees and customers. However, with declining corporate cash donations and rising employee-driven engagement, CP and internal branding are deeply interconnected. Employees now lead giving initiatives and value social impact, making philanthropy a lived expression of brand values. This study shifts focus from external outcomes to employees' internal perspectives, revealing CP's overlooked potential to strengthen employee-based brand equity (EBBE). Drawing on 21 interviews, a survey of 263 employees, and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, it illustrates the CP-embedded EBBE development process (from the perception of brand-building efforts through corporate philanthropic initiatives to deeper cognitive and affective engagement, culminating in actions that embody the brand). This research offers an insightful in-depth discussion of the complex and dynamic nature of EBBE development, where CP plays a key role in internal brand-building mechanisms and drives meaningful changes for businesses.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics