

## **Internal Marketing and Its Impact on Service Excellence in Organized Retail and Hotel Industry**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this dynamic and fast changing business environment establishing service excellence is not easy, where the life cycle of products and services is very short. It is a big challenge and a creative process that keeps managers on their toes all the time. There is no single recipe for success that will work every time in building service excellence. This study encourage managers in the rapidly changing information services environment to be unflinching in internal marketing and services. The data was collected from frontline employees working in organized retail and hotel industry. 514 respondents' data was analyses with SPSS v24.0 to prove the formulated hypotheses. The research outlines three aspects of internal marketing and services where it is particularly important to deliver services timely and with high quality. The study reveals indicators to management practice in the three areas which are outlined. The study provides useful information for those in human resource management to manage their internal customers to achieve service excellence.

**KEYWORDS:** Internal Marketing, Service Excellence, Service Quality and Delivery

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### **I. Introduction**

The importance of internal marketing is acknowledged in view of human resources as important means to deliver high quality services. The service firm encounters a strategic challenge about becoming more competitive in the chosen field of service marketing. Internal marketing become relevant to overcome this challenge and moreover people tend to stick to organizations where they are performing well.

The firms that are going for excellence consistently manage to perform at high level and fulfill the expectations of stakeholders. To remain ahead of the competition, it is crucial for the firms to remain creative and innovative. This enables the firms to improve continuously. The systems are developed in such a way that continuous development becomes routine in the organizations.

Management's effort has been directed towards discovering what makes a company excellent. It is recommended that there should be a culture to excel and support employees for their development at organization as well as individual level. Furthermore, to achieve excellence, companies must develop a corporate culture of treating people as their most important asset, and provide a consistent level of high quality products and services in every market in which they operate.

In the literature, internal customer satisfaction is explained based on two perspectives, such as, marketing (internal marketing) and total quality management (TQM i.e., internal service). Marshall et al. (.....) asserted that internal marketing focuses on a firm serving its employees, whereas internal service emphasizes employees serving each other. Both the constructs are integral part of delivery of high quality of services.

Service marketing performance as pointed out in research studies are consumer satisfaction, their loyalty towards company's brand and their positive feedback and reference in their reference circle. An essential ingredient to any service provision is the use of appropriate staff and people. Another aspect is, internal marketing and internal communication, that is open, transparent, to build trust and improve retention. It is notable that above mentioned issues coupled with internal services are considered vital in service performance.

Organizations trying to gain competitive advantage in this competitive market demands a greater effort at customer relationships through efficient and effective customer service. So, to enhance the performance of the customer service employees' needs superior policies and practices for them. This growing need to develop and improve the link between the firm and its external customers highlights the importance of internal marketing - a management philosophy of treating employees as customers. This concept is critical if a higher market share and growth is to be achieved through the use of superior customer service.

There is agreement that for the success of a service organization the satisfaction of internal customers (i.e. employees) is also important. Both customers and employees providing service are part of the offering, if one part becomes dissatisfied, then it will impact another part also.

The purpose of this research study is to build upon previous research in service marketing to identify and device measures to excel in service marketing with internal orientation. The study will explore the internal marketing factors and will analyze which all are more important among them that are enabling service organizations to achieve excellence and competitive advantage. This research is a cross-functional, exploratory study of internal marketing dimensions practices in service corporations for achieving excellence in service marketing.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

## **II. Literature Review**

There are a certain researches that have been conducted in the field. The most researched area in the field is service quality. Many researches relate to employees and internal activities of organizations but there is a gap that may link internal marketing's to overall service marketing effectiveness.

The service sector has been increasing its importance in most economies. The service sector has come to provide the bulk of new employment. Akehurst (2008) observes that there is a lot more to know, understand and practice. The service providers are becoming independent enterprises, the market for service business is expanding not only due to more and more manufacturing firms outsourcing the in-house services, but also due to innovations in the service sector which, subsequently, influence the manufacturing sector to upgrade its business processes. The result is reduction of costs in the whole economy.

Services can be defined as a set of processes or activities which take place in interactions between a customer and people, goods and other physical resources, systems representing the service provider and possibly involving other customers, which aim at solving customers' problems (developed from Grönroos, 2000: 46).

Services marketing literature has been widely accepted the organization's dependence on service employees to deliver quality services to grow and gain competitive advantage (Gronroos, 1990; Boshoff & Tait, 1996; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996), this proposition is fundamental for the proposed research study.

The growing importance of internal marketing as a means of delivering an effective customer service is derived from the fact that a firm's employees are its internal customers among which are the customer service employees (Parasuraman, 1993). What the employee believes is crucial for the success of the service product in the market; mostly customer experience is reflection of employee's beliefs.

The theory of internal marketing works to integrate multiple functions of the firm through a system. It makes sure that employees at all levels in the firm understand and experience the business and its various activities, and processes in the context of an environment that supports customer orientation. The preparedness of employees in ways of service-orientation acting is made sure by internal marketing (Gronroos, 2007).

The principle of internal marketing is that internal relationships between the organization and its employee groups must function effectively to make the firm successful in achieving its goals regarding its external markets. Internal marketing facilitate employees to be more customer oriented and service centered. The researchers considered internal marketing as quasi human resource management (Joseph, 1996; George and Grönroos, 1989) that aims to manage human resource in the perspective of marketing (Bansal et al., 2001).

There are many factors of quality of internal services that have an impact on satisfaction of internal customer. Firstly, the firms are trying to deliver superior services and to make the service processes efficient and effective. Secondly, the quality of services is crucial for the delivery of superior services. Finally, communication across the organization is required to transparent and complete so that there is no gap in the information available to the service employee. Communication is an aspect which remains crucial with most of the literature concerned with systems that rely on human performances.

Highlighting the role of internal services, employees must focused on delivering timely, effective, quality products and services to employees in other departments, otherwise, service to external customers can suffer (Wech, Kennedy, & Deeter-Schmelz, 2009). Communication, internal as well as external, in service is important to avoid discrepancies between service delivery and its communication.

Internal marketing can reduce employee turnover (Taylor & Cosenza, 1997) signifies that it can build trust and loyalty which is a must for effective service marketing and customer satisfaction. In competitive

business superior service quality delivery is a prerequisite for success and survival. Companies that deliver high service quality to external customers still fail to strategically handle internal services. This is mainly due to missing concepts and a lack of appropriate tools within the area of internal marketing (GrOnroos, 1991; Frost & Kumar, 2001; Lings, 2002).

Snell and Lan (.....) and White and Lesley (.....) studied the performance of internal marketing and found that it is an organization wide clear communication regarding perception on internal marketing. The role of internal marketing and employees in the attainment of organizations' outcomes. Internal marketing is an instrument that polishes the service employee power and creates an environment that creates responsibility among them.

### **III. Need For The Study**

Internal marketing dimensions in service firms for achieving excellence in service marketing needs to be identified and utilized. This study will pave a path of companies, to utilize the set of internal marketing dimensions that impacts service marketing.

### **IV. Hypotheses Development**

In accordance with the literature review and the underlying relationships in the proposed model, the following research hypotheses are developed.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Internal marketing would significantly predict the service marketing excellence.

### **V. Research Methodology**

A detailed discussion on the rationality of the study, research design and the methodology are presented here.

#### **Methodology for Sample Selection**

This study aimed to obtain more sample of respondents. For this purpose, different cities in Madhya Pradesh in India are identified as there is high retail concentration in these cities. Data for the study is collected from retail outlets and hotels who had given permission for data collection. After getting permission from them, a structured questionnaire was prepared. Finally, the respondents were contacted for data collection and after collecting the data from 597 respondents, 83 questionnaires were found defective. So, the study confined to 514 sample respondents.

#### **Respondent Selection**

The participants for this study were frontline employees who usually deals with the customers. The interviewer approached these employees and introduced himself, explained the purpose of the study and administered the questionnaire after getting their responses.

#### **Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The **first section** of the questionnaire includes questions related to the demographic details of the respondents such as sex, age, marital status, experience, industry/sector and income. The **second section** of the questionnaire is composed of the constructs measuring the internal marketing and service marketing performance. Measurement scales are based on five-point "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" Likert scale.

### **VI. Tools Of Analysis**

The following statistical tools are used for analyzing the data collected.

**Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, standard deviation, correlation, test for normality and validity of each factor of questionnaire is tested before further analysis.

**Inferential Statistics:** SPSS v24.0 software package was used for estimating descriptive and inferential statistics such as: Cronbach Reliability ( $\alpha$ ), Correlation, Regression, and ANOVA.

**Table 1: Sample Statistics**

		Gender	Age	Income	Experience
N	Valid	514	514	514	514
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.0798	2.0992	2.3755	2.5370
Std. Deviation		.27120	.88516	.60300	.99492

**Table 2: Reliability Statistics**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Service Marketing Excellence	.882	7
Internal Marketing and Services	.888	3

**Source: Computed from Primary Data**

The most widely used measure to assess the internal consistency of constructs is Cronbach's alpha. The generally agreed upon value Cronbach's alpha value is 0.70, although it may decrease to 0.60 in case of exploratory research (Hair et al. 2006; p. 137). In this study, the reliability values for the constructs is greater than 0.8, which is acceptable. Hence, construct reliability in this research is satisfactory. The result of Cronbach's alpha draws a significant amount of correlation between the variables tested.

**VII. Limitations Of The Study**

- i. The findings and conclusions are based on knowledge and experience of the respondents and researcher which might sometime subject to bias.
- ii. The study is limited to sample of 514 respondents from two cities and moreover from two sectors i.e., organized retail outlets and hotels of Madhya Pradesh which may not be the representative of all the employees working in retail and hotel sectors in country. Thus, the study may not be 100 % reliable.

**VIII. Data Analysis And Interpretation**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION**

The demographic descriptions of the variables included in the study are shown in tables as under:

**Table 3: Gender of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	473	92.0	92.0	92.0
	Female	41	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	514	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows that the composition of the respondents from gender perspective. Out of the total respondents, the maximum respondents selected were male (92 percent) while only 8 percent were female.

**Table 4: Age of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 30	129	25.1	25.1	25.1
	30-40	254	49.4	49.4	74.5
	40-50	82	16.0	16.0	90.5
	50-60	49	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	514	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows that the maximum respondents selected for the study are of the age group of 30-40 (49.4 Percent) followed by the age group of below 30 (25.1 Percent).

**Table 5: Marital Status of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unmarried	125	24.3	24.3	24.3
	Married	389	75.7	75.7	100.0
	Total	514	100.0	100.0	

As per the classification of the respondents in Table 5, according to their marital status it was found that the 75.7 percent respondents were married while 24.3 percent were unmarried.

**Table 6: Experience of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 5	59	11.5	11.5	11.5

5-10	251	48.8	48.8	60.3
10-15	73	14.2	14.2	74.5
Above 15	131	25.5	25.5	100.0
Total	514	100.0	100.0	

As per the classification of the respondents in Table 6, the total experience of respondents revealed that the 48.8 percent of the respondents were having 5-10 years of experience followed by >15 years (25.5 Percent).

**Table 7: Distribution of Respondents based on Per Month Income**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10000-20000	354	68.9	68.9	68.9
	20000-30000	127	24.7	24.7	93.6
	Above 30000	33	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Total	514	100.0	100.0	

As per the classification of the respondents income wise in Table 7, the income of respondents revealed that the 68.9 percent of the workers were having their income between 10000-20000 followed by 24.7 percent between the scale of 20000-30000 and very few having their income above 30000 per month.

**Table 8: Industry Wise Analysis**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hotel	239	46.5	46.5	46.5
	Retail	275	53.5	53.5	100.0
	Total	514	100.0	100.0	

As per the classification of the respondents in Table 8, the 53.5 percent respondents surveyed were from Retail and the remaining respondents i.e., 46.5 percent were from Hotel industry.

In order to identify the role of the internal marketing variable in predicting the service marketing excellence the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant impact of service quality on service marketing excellence.

H3<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant impact of service delivery on service marketing excellence.

H3<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant impact of information on service marketing excellence.

To identify key variables of internal marketing having positive impact on service marketing excellence, multivariate regression analysis has been done with SPSS v24.0 software and results were shown as under:

**Table 9: Multiple Regression analysis for Internal Marketing Issues**

**Table 9.1: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Service marketing excellence	25.2724	5.44042	514
Service Quality	3.2257	1.11679	514
Information	3.0428	1.19539	514
Service Delivery	3.4669	1.12731	514

**Table 9.2: Correlations**

	Service marketing excellence	Service Quality	Information	Service Delivery
Pearson Correlation	Service marketing excellence	1.000	.408	.372
	Service Quality	.408	1.000	.927
	Information	.372	.927	1.000
	Service Delivery			.601

	Service Delivery	.439	.650	.601	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Service marketing excellence		.000	.000	.000
	Service Quality	.000	.	.000	.000
	Information	.000	.000	.	.000
N	Service Delivery	.000	.000	.000	.
	Service marketing excellence	514	514	514	514
	Service Quality	514	514	514	514
	Information	514	514	514	514
	Service Delivery	514	514	514	514

**Table 9.3: Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Service Quality <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter
2	Information <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter
3	Service Delivery <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter

- a. Dependent Variable: Service marketing excellence
- b. All requested variables entered.

**Table 9.4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Sig. Change	F
					R Change	F Change	df1		
1	.408 <sup>a</sup>	.166	.164	4.97286	.166	102.003	1	512	.000
2	.408 <sup>b</sup>	.166	.163	4.97704	.000	.140	1	511	.708
3	.468 <sup>c</sup>	.219	.214	4.82306	.052	34.149	1	510	.000

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality, Information
- c. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality, Information, Service Delivery

**Table 9.5: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2522.468	1	2522.468	102.003	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	12661.400	512	24.729		
	Total	15183.868	513			
2	Regression	2525.941	2	1262.971	50.986	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	12657.926	511	24.771		
	Total	15183.868	513			
3	Regression	3320.314	3	1106.771	47.579	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Residual	11863.553	510	23.262		
	Total	15183.868	513			

- a. Dependent Variable: Service marketing excellence
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality
- c. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality, Information
- d. Predictors: (Constant), Service Quality, Information, Service Delivery

**Table 9.6: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.868	.671		28.118	.000
	Service Quality	1.986	.197	.408	10.100	.000
2	(Constant)	18.838	.676		27.864	.000
	Service Quality	2.168	.525	.445	4.126	.000

3	Information	-.184	.491	-.040	-.374	.708
	(Constant)	16.879	.736		22.934	.000
	Service Quality	1.201	.535	.247	2.243	.025
	Information	-.170	.476	-.037	-.358	.721
	Service	1.453	.249	.301	5.844	.000
	Delivery					

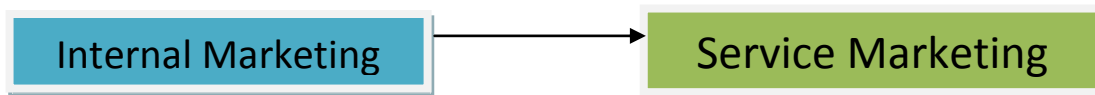
**IX. Result: Assessing Overall Model Fit**

The final Regression model with three independent factors of internal marketing variable (Service Quality, Information, and Service Delivery) entered because it has explained almost 21.4% of the variance of service marketing excellence factors. Also, the standard errors of the estimate has been reduced to 4.82306, which means that at 99% level, the margin of errors for any predicted value of service marketing excellence can be calculated as  $\pm 9.4531976$  ( $1.96 \times 4.82306$ ). The three regression coefficients, plus the constraints are significant at 0.001 levels. The impact of multi-collinearity in the factor is substantial. The Eigen value more than zero point one was the reason for including the factor in the equation while the other factor has it below zero point one thus it has been excluded.

**X. Anova Analysis**

The ANOVA analysis provides the statistical test for overall model fit in terms of F Ratio. The total sum of squares (15183.868) is the squared error that would accrue if the mean of internal marketing and services has been used to predict the service marketing excellence (dependent variable). Using the values of Service Quality, Information, and Service Delivery, these errors can be reduced by 21.87% ( $3320.314/15183.868$ ). This reduction is deemed statistically significant with the F ratio of 47.579 and significance at level of 0.000<sup>d</sup>. With the above analysis it can be conclude that three factors i.e., Service Quality, Information, and Service Delivery explains the impact of internal marketing on service marketing excellence.

It is clear that the correlation between factors of internal marketing and service marketing excellence is positive and significant, that reveal service marketing excellence and internal marketing moves together and contributes for the growth of the organisation.



0.219

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model for Service marketing excellence**

**XI. Findings, Conclusions And Recommendations**

Top and middle managers, including frontline supervisors, need to continuously reinforce a strong culture that emphasizes service excellence which includes: focusing the entire organization on supporting the frontline, and having a strong communications effort to shape the culture and get the message to everyone in the company.

Furthermore, frontline employees play a significant role in anticipating customers’ needs, customizing the service delivery, and building personalized relationships with customers (Liliana & Lester, 2008). Along these lines, the service provided by the frontline, regardless of whether it is face-to-face, “ear to ear,” or through email, Twitter, or visit, is very noticeable and vital to clients, and is a basic part of a service organization’s marketing strategy.

Based upon Hypotheses testing three factors i.e., Service Quality, Service Delivery, and Information explain the impact of internal marketing on service marketing excellence. Internal marketing explains the 22% of variance in predicting the service marketing excellence. Correlation between the internal marketing factors and service marketing excellence is positive and significant, that revealed the all variable moves together and contributes for the growth of the organization and drive service excellence.

**XII. Managerial Implications**

Business environment is dynamic and fast changing at all times. Establishing service excellence is not easy, especially in the fast changing world where the life cycle of products and services tends to be very short. Service delivery is a big challenge as well as a creative process that keeps business managers on their toes all the time. There is no single recipe for success that will work every time in building service excellence. Business Managers are always faced with the twin task of increasing sales revenue as well as ensuring that the brand is

growing in terms of value. To understand service excellence, companies must complete a thorough job analysis of all of people's roles for better understanding of what everyone does.

### **XIII. Suggestions For Future Research**

The theoretical construct and findings of the study highlight several directions for future research. Sometimes it is hard to see your own service excellence, except through other people's eyes thus right people are required with qualities to gather everyone's feedback. In conclusion, this research shows the complex nature of a frontline employee behavior and their attitudes and how they are affecting service excellence. Developing a better understanding of the elements of internal marketing and individual frontline employees' who can be managed in order to improve the overall service delivery process is essential in order to improve organization-wide service excellence.

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