



CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG INTERNAL MARKETING, EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF SERVICE SECTOR ORGANIZATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Rituparna Chattopadhyay and Kaushik Mandal

Department of Management Studies, National Institute of Technology, Durgapur, India

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Internal Marketing Orientation is the emerging notion of present time in service sectors. Employee satisfaction influences service quality and which in turn improves customer satisfaction and profitability of the firm. The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between internal marketing. Employee satisfaction. customer satisfaction and financial performance of the firm.

Design: to identify links between internal marketing. Employee satisfaction. Customer satisfaction and financial performance various literatures have been studied. Based on these research findings a model has been proposed in this paper.

Findings: This is an exploratory work based on existing researches and constructs available. Outcome of the study is suggesting a positive link between internal marketing. employee satisfaction. Customer satisfaction and financial performance in service sectors such as hotels. Hospitals and banks. This helps to propose a model that defines their nature of relation.

But considering the limitations of the study, influence of Internal marketing on employee satisfaction. customer satisfaction and financial performance of the firm has been explored meta analytically. So the model needs to be tested further cross organizationally to assess the practicality. applicability and authenticity of it.

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INTRODUCTION

Internal marketing has become one of the main practices and concern for service sectors since last three decades. The basic concept of Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) is to improve service quality of the employees and create a sense of customer orientation among them. IMO suggest that organization should consider employees as the internal customers. But in meeting different needs of various sectors with any particular IMO approach was not possible thus various industries adopted various tools, techniques and approaches. There is a close relation between service providers and end customers. So the qualities of approach and behaviour of the service providers influence the level of satisfaction of the external customers. Further the satisfied customers are the key to financial performance and profitability of the organization. Therefore the most important question is “how to improve the service quality?” it has been observed that majority of the profitable organizations have actually identified the need of the customers and have rendered

tailor made services. Applying customer oriented marketing approach is significant for organizations to be the successful one (Mohr,2001). Most of the organizations have identified the need of internal marketing (Green *et al.* 1994). Because employees are the contact point with customers and they actually deal with them on behalf of organizations while rendering service (Carr, 1990; Tansuhaj *et al.*, 1988;). Gronroos (1990) have suggested Internal marketing as the measure to improve the level of employee satisfaction. Internal marketing orientation concept considers employees as the internal customer. (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Foreman & Money, 1995). Through proper internal marketing organizations can fulfil the need of the employees, turning them satisfied and motivated. This influences their commitment level towards organization and as a reflection of which they tend to provide better service to the customers, converting them into satisfied customers. Barnes (1989) has suggested customer satisfaction as the main pillar of marketing. Satisfied customers become loyal and influence the profitability and rise of the organization (Heskett *et al.* 1995). Organization should employ all its force towards achieving customer satisfaction (Barnes, 1989). Employees’ behaviour and treatment given to customers, is the result of service orientation and affects the quality of service. Various

*Corresponding author: **Rituparna Chattopadhyay**
Department of Management Studies, National Institute of Technology, Durgapur, India

researchers have identified and highlighted internal marketing concepts from different angles (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993). Internal Marketing orientation has got increasing importance on service industries along with other business sectors (Cahill, 1995). Application of appropriate means of IMO, are the major problem in various service sectors (Cahill, 1995). Various organizations have adopted different IMO practices but very little have succeeded in this. Day & Wensley (1993) suggested that an organization should consider a market where inter organizational marketing should be applied on different groups of employees with different need (Berry, 1981; Foreman & Money 1995). One of the widely accepted concepts of IMPO is to consider the employees as internal customer of the organization. An organization should provide "job" as the product to the employee in such a manner that would accomplish their needs leading to the target of the organization (Cahill, 1995; Foreman & Money, 1995; Berry, 1981; Barnes, 1989; George, 1990; Greene *et al.* 1990; Varey, 1995b; Gronroos, 1990; Gummesson, 1991; Mitchell, 1992; Piercy & Morgan, 1991). Mission, values, attitude etc should be the part of job offered to them (Barnes, 1989; Piercy & Morgan, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Varey, 1995a,b). The company should be treated as market place where various groups of employees are present with varied views (Berry, 1981; Foreman & money, 1995). The company offers jobs along with several financial and nonfinancial components like salary, incentives, promotion, training, safety etc as part of it to the employee. If these satisfy, then that would percolate in their actions. Highly satisfied employees would render better service to the customers. Cahill (1996) relates employees as the partners of the companies in order to offer service to the needing customers. Varey (1995) suggested internal marketing as the bilateral communication between employees and organization. Day & Wenley (1983) pointed out the company as market place where various groups of employees are present with varied views (Berry, 1981; Foreman & money, 1995). The company offers jobs along with several financial and nonfinancial components like salary, incentives, promotion, training, safety etc as part of it. If these satisfy, then that would percolate in their actions. Highly satisfied employees would render better service to the customers. Cahill (1996) relates employees as the partners of the companies in order to offer service to the needing customers. Varey (1995) suggested internal marketing as the bilateral communication between employees and organization.

In understanding employee satisfaction Keningham, *et al.* (2006) identified various factors such as open communication, compensation, management decision for employees, physical safety at workplace organization's policy and procedure, teamwork, working environment, additional support as the key factors to employee satisfaction Model. Rad and Yarmahammaddin (2006) identified Salaries, promotion, supervision, Fringe Benefits, recognition, working condition, co-workers, nature of job, communication, involvement, discipline are the main factors in building employee satisfaction model.

In this study we would try to explore relationships between internal marketing orientation, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and financial performance of the company based on existing literature on these areas.

Relevance of Internal Marketing orientation in creating employee satisfaction

Importance of employee has been accepted as the major component of marketing (Papasolomou & Doukakis, 2003). Employees are really significant in creating satisfied customer. Thus it can be said that behind a successful organization, a well chosen marketing strategy, backed by appropriate internal marketing must be there. But even after identifying the growing importance of IMO, there is gap of framing a stable IMO practice, to be applicable in all service sectors like Bank, Hospitality Industries and Health care sectors. One of the basic measures accepted by the service industries is that employees should be treated as the partners of organization. They should perform in order to achieve the success of the organization and make it a profitable one. (Papasolomou & Doukakis, 2003). Firms need to consider employees as the most important element and these assets should be treated with utmost care. They should be considered as the internal customer to achieve satisfied external customer. This is the main mission of any organization. The internal customers should be considered specially while identifying their needs and wants. Further in order to improve their service quality they should be properly trained, educated and motivated. To an organization both employees and customers hold the same level of importance. Thus organization should recognize and satisfy the need of both of them. This would lead the firm towards its goal and helps to sustain in competitive business world. The parameters of an uniform IMO approach is never defined (Foreman & Woodruffe, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993). This crisis leads to incongruity in application of IMO approaches in Industries. Woodruffe (1995) has suggested developing a practical plan which would result in achieving the financial success of the firm while treating employees and customers with equal importance. George (1990) has described IMO as an internal Communication between higher authority and employees in order to achieve a fruitful communication with the end customers. A proper IMO practice would help to develop customer focus among employees who are serving them. (Gronroose, 1984; Christopher *et al.* 1991) the importance of employees' development has been considered as the most strategic part of internal marketing (Tansuhaj *et al.*, 1988) the main Challenge faced by IMO practices is to make employees in the motive of higher authority towards satisfying employee needs and wants, considering them as the internal customer of the organization (Albrecht, 1990; Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Gronroose, 1985a; Gummesson, 1987). Different industries follow varied IMO practices (Gilmore & Carson, 1995) due to absence of a single stable explanation (Varey, 1995) of IMO which can form a specific model in execution of the internal marketing (Woodruffe, 1995). As a result very small number of Internal Marketing Model is available. It has been seen that organization having no other way, keep on applying the old practices in the name of Internal marketing (Gilmore & Carson, 1995) to create significance of service role of the employees and customer orientation in them (Gronroose, 1990). Various internal marketing practices such as training, education, development, communication, reward, promotion etc are frequently applied, sometimes even repeated (Woodruffe, 1995; Morgan, 1990; Richardson & Robinson, 1986; Tansuhaj *et al.*, 1991 Gronroose, 1981, b; George, 1990). It is observed that service organization has accepted the role of internal marketing as a driving force to achieve customer orientation among employees (Tansuhaj *et*

al.,1990; Morgan,1990) and several organization as are interested in applying internal marketing. But the need of vigorous expense, time and dedication from the management's end is the major hindrance in adopting IMO (Cahill, 1996). Thus application of internal marketing approach is facing problem due to lack of sufficient IM Models (Gilmore& Carson, 1995). There is an insufficiency of realistic approach to internal marketing leading to poor implementation of IMO programme in organizations (Morgan,1990;Woodruffe, 1995). Researchers have given emphasize on human resource management practices in order to implementation of successful internal marketing (Palmer,1994; Maitland, 1990). Berry (1980) defined IM as the process and drawing attention and appointing skilled people towards the organization. Tansuhaj *et al.* (1988) and Gronroose (1981) indentified recruitment as the major tool in IM. Skilled workers give more emphasize on "job satisfaction" over other approaches to meet both their and organizational needs (Berry & Parasuraman,1991). Researchers have further suggested inclusion of IM practices in human resource activities (Berry,1981; Collins & Payne, 1991; Flipo, 1986; Gronroose, 1985a; Winter,1985). Though some authors have invalidated links between HRM and IM raising question on rationality of this (Richardson & Robinson,1986). Instead of appointing skilled people, motivating the existing employee by adopting various internal marketing practices may have better opportunity for higher service quality. Treating employees as the internal customer may create better customer orientation in them. Richardson & Robinson (1986), Maitland(1990) have suggested to incorporate HRM principles in internal marketing practices to make peripheral marketing a successful one. Many organizations have applied staff development practices as means to improve employee satisfaction highlighting the scope of overall career progression (Papalosomou & Doukakis,2003). Heskett *et al.* (1994) argued that internal features of organizational atmosphere have considerable input to employee satisfaction. Thus the main target of internal marketing is to create and increase employee satisfaction considering them as the internal customer of the organization (Gremier *et al.*,1994). Many researchers such as Albrecht (1990), Berry (1984), Gronroose (1985 b), Rosenbluth(1991) etc. found importance of employee as the internal customer and emphasized upon the improvement of employee satisfaction. This would lead employees towards the job orientation and creates a sense of organizational commitment among them (Heskett *et al.*,1994; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). It has been observed that Imo influences the behaviour and vision of the employee in positive manner and make them oriented towards their service as now they understand the importance of their service role. This would lead to increasing organizational commitment, job satisfaction, motivation and target orientation on the part of employees (Tansuhaj *et al.*,1991). Berry & Parasuraman (1991) have identified "team Play" as one of the major approaches to internal marketing whereas kotler & Armstrong (1996) have suggested to build a sense of team among all the employees by training and motivating them as mean to internal marketing. Advocating this Carny(1989) has suggested to address employees as teammates than calling them as the worker. Though in reality all the organization do not treat employees as teammates. Zeithaml & Bitner (1996) have suggested that organization can build up team spirit among the employees by identifying importance of each and every employees and their significant

contribution to the organization. Various authors have pointed out a close relation between internal marketing and customer awareness among employees (Ballantyne, 1996; Caruana & Calley, 1998; Geaorge, 1990; Geaorge & Gronroose,1989; Gronroose,1990). Thus internal marketing has a positive impact on employee effort in satisfying customer requirements (Gronroose,1981,1985; Berry, 1981; Kotler & Armstrong,1996). Further from various literature it has been identified that scope of achieving satisfied customer by satisfying employees (internal Customer to organization) is much broader in case of service sectors (Berry, 1981; Tansuhaj *et al.*,1991; Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Thus internal customers need to be satisfied, motivated and properly educated to analyze the need of the external customers (Irons,1997; Kotler,1997; Cahill,1996). Thomson (1990,1993) suggested that employees are the base of "total customer focus" and they can be influenced and motivated by the positive behaviour of the organization towards their employee and can encourage customer orientation among them. This would lead to growing employee commitment. Thus various researchers such as Gronroose (1988), George(1990), Berry(1981),Tansuhaj *et al.*(1991); etc have suggested the possibility of improved service quality rendered by employees to the end customers if organization treats them as the internal customers rather than the hired staffs. Internal marketing could have influence on service quality and customer satisfaction (Tansuhaj *et al.*,1987; Morvis 1984; Richardson & Robinson,1986). Zeithaml & Bitner (1996), Kotler & Armstrong (1996) have emphasized on the fact that customer satisfaction is directly influenced by employee satisfaction. Internal marketing has given significant importance on employee service quality rendered to external customers and also on the service provided to the internal customers. Heskett *et al.*(1992) have identified the correlation between the organization's service quality to its employees and service rendered to the external customers. Various researchers have revealed that most of the organizations consider improved service quality as the major criteria to survive in this highly competitive market (Burton,1994; Gwin & Lindgren, 1986; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990,1996; Mentzger & Dey,1986;). Wiley (1991) revealed that most of the organizations consider improved service quality as the criteria for survival. Further the evidence of positive links between better customer service, employee job orientation, customer loyalty and organizational performance has been presented by various authors (Deal & Kennedy,1982; Davis,1985; Bank,1988; Lewis,1988). As suggested by Berry (1981) and Tarver (1987) in service sector IMO is the essential criteria for better service rendering as satisfied employees will serve better and would be able to create satisfied customer.

Relevance of employee satisfaction in improving customer satisfaction and financial performance of the organization

From various literatures we can understand that employee satisfaction is one of the key components to be achieved through IMO. To cope with the price competition, an organization can only survive through offering better service. This proves the importance of employee in service sectors. Various researchers have considered employee satisfaction as the tool to achieve high quality service leading to elevated customer satisfaction and profitability of the firm (Heskett *et al.*,1994; Schneider *et al.*,2003). Numerous authors have identified a positive relationship between improved employee

satisfaction in a firm's working environment and improved customer satisfaction (Heskett *et al.*,1994; Schneider *et al.*,2003). Thus a link between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and financial performance of the organization can be observed. But many IM researchers found it difficult in reality (Kamkaura *et al.*,2002; Silvestro & Cross,2000). This is because various factors used to measure satisfaction may not link with the measures of overall satisfaction and financial performance of the firm. Further Heskett *et al.*, 1994,1997 suggested a link between employees service quality, their level of satisfaction and preservation of employees in organization. This can further be linked with customer satisfaction, improved customer loyalty and improved financial performance of the company (Hallowell & Schlesinger,2000; Loveman,1998; Silvestro & Cross, 2000). Heskett *et al.* (1997) have identified the impact of employee satisfaction on the level of customer satisfaction leading to a better service quality, resulting in improved business performance. Many authors have supported this view (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991; Scheinder & Bowen,1999). Silvestro & Cross (2000) have identified a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and financial performance of the firm. Matzler *et al.* (2004) has pointed out a close relation between employee satisfaction and business performance of the firm. Kano (1997) suggested employee satisfaction's impact on external customer satisfaction. So employee satisfaction features influence the customer satisfaction leading to better performance. Harter *et al.* (2002) found positive effect of employee satisfaction on financial performance of the firm. Schneider *et al.* (2003) also supported the evidence of positive influence of employee satisfaction on firm's business performance. In his study he found a significant correlation between "satisfaction with pay", "satisfaction with security" and overall satisfaction with return on assets and earnings per share. Keiningham *et al.*(2006) also identified the influence of employee satisfaction on profit generation of the firm. Schneider (2000) in his study found positive relation between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and growth of revenue in numerous business firms. Heskett *et al.* (1997) found a well measured link between factors affecting employee satisfaction, service quality, customer satisfaction and profitability of the firm. They have given emphasize on factors like employee satisfaction, job orientation, employee loyalty, organizational commitment, service quality, improved ability of employees. It has also been identified that employee satisfaction has major correlation with their loyalty and organizational commitment resulting in their level of productivity. Heskett *et al.* (1997) further suggested that employee satisfaction and loyalty leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty, finally ending with better financial performance of the firm. Rollins (1998) found a strong relationship among employee satisfaction and its impact on financial performance of the firm. Gallup Report (2002) stated a relation between "customer loyalty", "productivity", "employee retention" and profitability. Pfau & Kay (2002) supported the Watson wyatt worldwide study (2002) which suggested a direct relation between employee satisfaction and profitability of the firm. Kay (2002) identified various factors of employee attitude has substantial impact on financial performance of the firm. PWC (2002) in their report suggested a link between employee satisfaction and shareholders return. Graham (1996), Lucas (2001), Davidhizer & Shearer (1998), Devline (1999) have identified significant relationship between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and improved

financial performance of the firm. Lockhard & Ellis (1998) considered customer satisfaction as the determinant of employee satisfaction and firm's profitability. Bano & Patton (2001) identified a strong relationship between employees job satisfaction and their performance at individual level. Argyris (1964), Likert (1961), McGroger (1960) found a relationship among employees perception about the firm and its financial performance. Emery & Trist *et al.* (1960) have pointed out relationship between firm's profitability and employee satisfaction in terms of emotional and physical wants at workplace.

Finally Schneider (1998), Zohar & Luria (2005) have identified link between individual employee performance and organizational performance. Ostroff (1992) examined the effect of employee attitude and financial outcome of the organization ended with a positive result. Ryan, Schmitt and Johnson (1996) studied the same and identified a significant relationship among employee behaviour, customer satisfaction and financial outcomes of the firm.

Meta-analytical exploration of Relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation, Employee Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction and Financial performance

Various researchers have suggested the links between the behaviour of the employees with customer during the service exchange and perception of the customers about the service quality rendered to them. Malhotra & Mukherjee (2003) identified that highly motivated hospital staffs can provide better service to customers. Thus the importance of various financial and non financial approaches such as training programme, commission, incentives and communication about significance of the quality of the service have been identified and suggested by various authors (Berry & Parasuraman,1991; Gronroose,1990; Reynoso & Moores, 1996; Tansuhaj *et al.*, 1988). Batt (1999) has explored positive influence of service oriented programme to employee on their service quality. It was seen to be improving steadily. Johnson (1996) found a significant relation between service training and level of satisfaction of customers. Hence organization arrange training programme with expectation of better service quality.(Anton,2000; Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2003). Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) found performance reward to be more useful means of rendering better service. Berry & Parasuraman (1991) further stated communicating the mission of the organization and make employee believe in it is an important element to magnify service quality. Because employees here feel themselves as the part of the organization and jobs offered to them appear to be more realistic and identifiable to their own needs and wants. Tsai & Tang (2008) found a positive link between internal marketing approach and service quality rendered by them in hospital in Taiwan. They concluded with the result that "service training programme", "performance incentives" and "Vision about service excellent" have positive impact on service quality rendered by the hospital staffs. In a study conducted by Papalososmou & Doukakis (2003) on UK banking sectors found positive influence of employee behaviour on customers perceived level of satisfaction. Further they identified positive impact of service oriented training programme and scope for career development offered to employees on the quality of service to customers. Incentives and rewards system proved to be significant too. Banking sector have given emphasize on increasing employee satisfaction through training and development as a tool of

Internal marketing. This resulted in improved financial outcomes of the organization. Sergeant & Frenkel (1998) pointed out due to pressure of high competition banking sectors in UK opted retrenchment as the tool to cost control which affected the employee performance. This signifies the importance of job security as the integral part of Internal Marketing. Tansuhaj *et al.* (1991) found importance of training in service sector as the means of internal marketing. Papalosomou and Doukakis (2003) also highlighted that working environment influences the service quality of the employees. Hence various factors of working environment is also considered in IMO approaches. The study revealed the importance of service quality in achieving customer satisfaction and significance of internal customer satisfaction on service quality & customer satisfaction. Thus in order to improve the internal customer satisfaction level, banking sector in UK has adopted various internal marketing approaches such as treatment towards employee as internal customer, training employees in order to build customer orientation in them, making employee believe in organizational mission, rewarding them for their performance etc. Authors have identified internal marketing as the major tool to satisfy employee in order to serve the need of the end customers (Berry, 1981; Gronroose, 1981, 1985). Kumar, Bhargava, and Khare (2015) in their study also have identified the impact of IMO on employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction in hotel Industries. Schneider *et al.* (2003) explored the impact of employee satisfaction on organizational performance. Further Cowell (2009) explored direct relation between employee satisfaction and improved financial performance of the firm. Jaramillo *et al.* (2007) in their analysis have identified positive relation between employee performance and customer orientation. Ranaweera & Prabhu (2003) have identified relation between customer satisfaction and recurring purchase pattern of the customers leading to improved financial performance of the organization.

Based on the above findings from various researches, a meta analytical correlation between IMO, Employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and financial performance of the firm can be drawn (table 1).

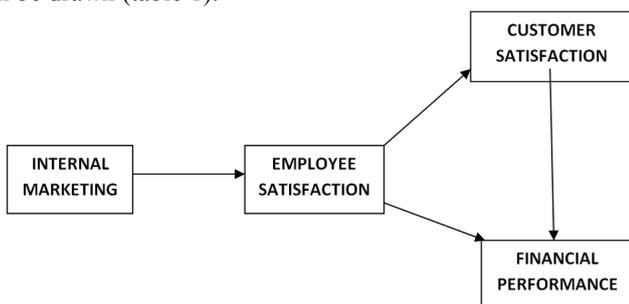


Table 1 Relation between IMO ES CS and FP

CONCLUSION

A number of literatures have identified the importance of IMO. But a little is explored in connection with the implementation of it. Many researchers have developed theoretical models of IMO but practical application of those factors on service sectors in an uniformed manner is yet to be tested. Thus available constructs of IMO are either differentiating from sector to sector or having only a conceptual background. Further organizations follow different formal and informal practices in the name of IMO. IMO approaches in different

organization have dealt with hindrance and advantage which have exposed the need of internal marketing to the business world. Thus these models are not examined across different organizations of service sectors. This leads to a gap for further research to develop a stable IMO model commendable in every service sectors.

Various researchers have successfully identified the link between IMO, ES, CS and financial performance. But some others such as (Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Keiningham *et al.*, 2003; Mittal & Kamakure, 2001) found no significant relation between employee satisfaction and financial performance of the firm. Silvestro & Cross (2000) failed to prove relation between Employee satisfaction with customer satisfaction and financial performance. Similarly Pitchard & Silvestro (2005) could not find any relation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Keiningham *et al.* (2006) could not establish the relation between employee satisfaction and financial performance of the company. Again grant (1998) in his study found that organizations with poor financial performance may have employees with high level of satisfaction. This indicating that employee satisfaction is not always contributes to financial performance. This leads to further research on the concept of employee satisfaction influencing customer satisfaction in order to improve profitability of the organization.

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