

The relationship between internal marketing and marketing performance in service institutions

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Abstract:

This study aims to know the relationship between internal marketing practices and marketing performance in service institutions, by studying two models that highlight the relationship between them and are considered models that support the importance and role of internal marketing as a service-profit chain, as well as the success cycle in the service institution, which emphasize the sequence of results that can result from the application of internal marketing; By focusing on employees by generating their desire to work by providing material and moral incentives, spreading the culture of empowerment and expanding the delegation of powers and training and developing them with everything that serves the interest of the institution, internal marketing contributes to the success of the institution and the growth of its profits through employees first by achieving their satisfaction, which in turn will be reflected in the satisfaction of their customers, and thus these customers, through their highest levels of satisfaction, will represent a good advertising position for the institution, which leads to improving its marketing performance by improving its market share, growing its sales and increasing its profitability, thus achieving its goals.

Keywords: Internal marketing, marketing performance, service institutions.

1. Introduction

1.1 Preface:

Economic institutions operate in a dynamic environment characterized by rapid and continuous developments. As a result, these institutions dedicate their efforts to keeping pace with successive changes, addressing challenges, and adapting to constant transformations within their operational environment. This is particularly important in the context of competition, where achieving outstanding performance, competitive advantages, expanding market share, increasing sales, and ensuring customer satisfaction are key objectives. To achieve these goals, institutions continuously

search for tools, methods, and strategies to apply, alongside making appropriate decisions that enable them to meet their objectives. Consequently, they are compelled to confront the significant challenges posed by these changes, technological advancements, and intense competition, emphasizing the necessity of resilience and sustained success.

On another front, institutions are also focused on preserving and developing their human resources, particularly in light of the growing competition across sectors, especially the service sector. This focus arises from the fact that human resources are the cornerstone of service institutions. This reality has necessitated the adoption of modern strategies and policies to manage and develop human competencies. The future of institutions is strongly tied to the efficiency and capability of their human resources in creating differentiation and making a notable impact on customers by satisfying their needs, providing services that attract and retain new customers, and striving to build customer loyalty. These efforts ultimately aim to foster the growth and development of the service institution.

The success of all these efforts requires prioritizing a critical factor: the employee. Institutions must address their employees' needs and requirements by offering training, motivation, empowerment, and implementing efforts aimed at achieving their satisfaction. This approach facilitates the delivery of high-quality outcomes and the achievement of organizational objectives.

Since the service sector is one of the most significant industries in most countries, it strives to achieve high performance within its strategic framework to develop this sector. Service institutions, in turn, aim to leverage their resources and competencies to expand their market share, increase sales, and ensure customer satisfaction. Within this context, the practice and application of internal marketing emerge as a fundamental requirement for enhancing and advancing employee performance. Developing employees' skills and capabilities contributes to enhancing their potential, ultimately enabling the provision of products and services that meet customer needs and preferences. This, in turn, improves the institution's overall performance, particularly its marketing performance.

1.2 Study Objectives:

The primary objective of the study is to diagnose the relationship between internal marketing practices and marketing performance. From this main objective, the study aims to identify the nature of the relationship between internal marketing and marketing performance.

1.3 Study Methodology:

To comprehensively address the subject, the study relied on the descriptive-analytical methodology, which, according to scientific research literature, is considered an appropriate approach to clarify the conceptual aspects of the topic, particularly those related to internal marketing, marketing performance, and other concepts that the study necessitated exploring.

1. Internal Marketing:

1.1 Definition of Internal Marketing:

Berry defined internal marketing in 1984 as: "Presenting employees as internal customers and viewing jobs as internal products that meet the needs and desires of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organization." (Pervais k & Mohamed, 1995, p. 32)

Kotler defined internal marketing as: "The efforts undertaken by the organization to train and motivate its internal customers, particularly those employees who directly interact with customers." (kotler, 2015, p. 453)

Internal marketing refers to the planned efforts used within the marketing approach to motivate employees to implement and integrate the organization's strategies towards customer orientation. Successful service organizations must first sell the job to employees before they can sell their services to customers.

2.2 Characteristics of Internal Marketing:

Internal marketing is characterized by several features, including the following: (Nsoor & Al-Saghir, 2014, p. 414)

- **Internal Marketing as a Social Process:**

Internal marketing is applied within the organization to manage the exchange and interaction process between the organization and its employees. Employee satisfaction is not limited to material needs but also includes social needs such as security, belonging, and friendship, which can be fulfilled through internal marketing.

- **Internal Marketing as a Managerial Process:**

It works to integrate various functions within the organization by:

- Ensuring that all employees have sufficient knowledge and experience about the activities they perform and that these activities meet the needs of external customers;
- Ensuring that all employees are prepared and motivated to perform their work efficiently.

2.3 Importance of Internal Marketing:

Internal marketing is of significant importance. Many researchers have highlighted that implementing internal marketing will positively impact the quality of services provided and the performance of the organization, provided it is applied through strategies directed towards the external customer.

Improving the performance of an organization's employees is considered the key advantage of any successful organization. This represents one of the major challenges faced by the organization in this field, as it seeks to create a work environment where employees feel a sense of satisfaction and motivation. Thus, the importance of internal marketing arises in creating such an environment, where employees are treated as internal customers, receiving benefits and services. From this perspective, internal marketing becomes a fundamental requirement for the success of all external marketing efforts. (Ziani, Ghnani, & Sidi Sahal, p. 251)

The growing focus on internal marketing in service organizations is highlighted by the fact that every individual and department within the organization has roles as both internal customers and suppliers.

To ensure the quality of external marketing processes, each individual and department must provide and receive the best services. Employees must work together in a way that aligns with the organization's mission, strategy, and objectives. This is a critical element in service organizations, where there is interaction between the service provider and the recipient. (Al-Rousan, 2011, p. 345)

2.4 Dimensions of Internal Marketing:

In order to achieve the organization's goals and ensure its outstanding performance, attention must be given to those who handle customer affairs, focusing on them and striving to ensure their successful management. From this perspective, internal marketing is viewed as a strategy to implement procedures and activities that contribute to enhancing the organization's performance and improving its competitive ability by influencing the employees within the organization.

2.4.1 Recruitment and Hiring

Recruitment is defined as: "A process consisting of a series of activities, operations, and procedures that must be carried out to provide the organization with the necessary personnel to fill technical and non-technical positions and provide the required services." (Weshnan, p. 228)

Recruitment is also defined as: "The activity that involves announcing vacant positions, attracting qualified individuals to work in the organization or center, and then selecting the best applicants and hiring them with the aim of achieving the set goals. (Weshnan, p. 229)

The selection process involves comparing applicants for a specific position based on their suitability for that role. The goal of the selection process is to place the right person in the right job by aligning the job requirements and duties with the qualifications and characteristics of the applicant, given the differences in skills and abilities between individuals. (Chreitt & Atoui, 2022, p. 260)

2.4.2 Training

Many organizations strive to become market-oriented but fail because their employees are not developed, skilled, and well-trained. Most researchers believe that managers should think like marketers by training and developing their employees.

Training is a planned activity aimed at providing individuals with a set of information and skills that lead to increased performance rates. (Zaid El-Kheir & Ben Bartal, 2011, p. 02)

Training is also defined as: "The process of developing and enhancing an individual's behavior through one or more training methods or experience transfer techniques in the areas of knowledge, skills, or attitudes to achieve a desired performance standard.(Abu Al-Nasr, 2009, p. 16)

2.4.3 Motivation

To retain employees in organizations and encourage them to perform well, organizations strive to provide a suitable work environment and atmosphere to fulfill their desires and needs in order to achieve organizational goals through motivation.

Baraa Rajab defines incentives as: "A set of external factors provided by management to its employees to satisfy their desires, needs, and ambitions to improve their performance, aiming at achieving both organizational and individual goals simultaneously. (Turki, 2018, p. 14)

Motivation is defined as: "The process by which individuals become enthusiastic, proactive, and satisfied in their work, instilling confidence in themselves, which drives them to perform their tasks to the best of their ability without complaints or dissatisfaction." (Abu Al-Nasr M. M., 2012, p. 151)

From the above, incentives can be defined as all the factors, means, and procedures that encourage employees to perform their duties and tasks with effort and skill, motivating them to give their best effort and attention in their work, and rewarding them for their excellent performance and extra effort. These incentives aim to satisfy employees' needs and desires while achieving the organization's goals, taking into account the ongoing changes in the surrounding environment.

2.4.4 Internal Communication

Communication is considered a type of process through which information or instructions are transferred from one party to another to ensure the continuity of work within the organization. Internal communication is defined as: "A network through which information is collected and transferred within the organization. It is an essential and necessary process for making effective decisions and contributing to high-quality customer service. It provides employees with necessary information and facilitates its transfer between levels without complications, while enhancing the relationship between the connected parties. (Mabarez & Al-Shaarawi, 2019, p. 10)

Internal communication includes all formal and informal communication processes that occur within the organization across various horizontal and vertical levels of the organizational structure. The organization provides specific communication channels or systems to disseminate and exchange information among employees at the appropriate time and place, ensuring they are informed of changes and developments while strengthening relationships among them. (Belbakhari, p. 99)

From the above, internal communication is the dissemination and exchange of information within the organization, enabling it to form employees with a strong sense of belonging and responsibility. Internal communication among employees creates understanding and awareness, helping to properly apply various roles. Communication processes are of significant importance as they affect performance effectiveness and relationships within the organization.

2.4.5 Empowering Employees

Empowerment is a management approach in which managers and other organizational members influence the decision-making process by granting individuals broader authority to exercise control and take responsibility while utilizing their abilities.. (Yahiaoui, Mouloudi, & Belbali, 2020, p. 88)

Delegating authority to certain employees within an organization that adopts internal marketing enhances the effectiveness of its activities. This is considered one of the best methods aimed at providing good services to customers. However, the freedom of action granted to individuals must be linked to greater effort in human resources activities, particularly when selecting individuals and retaining the most competent ones, increasing focus on training programs, and disseminating internal

information among employees. These individuals must be properly prepared and well-trained to make correct decisions based on competence, experience, and the availability of accurate information. There is a strong connection between employee development, training, and the provision of necessary responsibilities to accomplish their tasks. (Belbali & Tigaoui, 2018, pp. 53-54)

For an organization to succeed in achieving its goals, it must focus on its employees as the cornerstone, utilizing their knowledge and skills, motivating and empowering them by granting authority, improving their internal communication, encouraging their participation in decision-making, and retaining their experience within the organization. This contributes to excellence in providing high-quality services compared to competitors, as well as integrating and preparing them for important future positions.

Internal marketing has become a means of creating an advanced workforce within the organization. Its application leads to building a stable organizational environment by fostering a spirit of cooperation, coordination, and integration, as well as striving to improve the overall performance of the organization in general and marketing performance in particular.

2. Marketing Performance

3.1 Definition of Marketing Performance

Marketing performance is defined as "a term used by marketing specialists to describe and analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of the marketing process. This is done by focusing on the alignment between the outputs of marketing activities and strategies and the required objectives for those activities and strategies, as well as measuring marketing performance." (Khalfelawi, 2019, p. 87)

Marketing performance is also defined as: "The evaluation of the relationship between marketing activities and business performance." (Faraj & Al-Hindawi, 2019, p. 262)

According to Raouf Raad Adnan, based on these concepts, marketing performance can be represented in three stages, as illustrated in Figure (01-01):

Figure 01: Concept of Marketing Performance



Source: (Adnan, 2010, p. 326)

3.2 The Importance of Marketing Performance

(Abu Nab'a, 2002) indicated that several authors consider an organization with good performance to be one that is capable of creating value for its customers first, then for its shareholders and employees, as they are both the source of value and a means of creating it. This represents one of the key

objectives that most organizations strive to achieve. In other words, when we talk about the objectives of organizations, most of them have two main goals: (Al-Tawil & Al-Abadi, 2013, p. 118)

The first is to satisfy the needs of their customers; the second is to achieve the highest return on investment.

The importance of understanding marketing performance in general lies in several areas, the most important of which are: (Al-Tawil & Al-Abadi, 2013, p. 119)

- Helping to understand and solve problems in marketing management;
- Assisting individuals in understanding and perceiving the marketing process;
- How to accomplish tasks and improve marketing performance;
- Knowing the individual's rights and duties toward the organization;
- Helping to identify opportunities for promotion in management.

From the above, marketing performance helps individuals to understand the marketing process as well as their rights and duties toward the organization. On the other hand, it helps in how to accomplish tasks and improve performance, in addition to understanding and solving problems.

(Kotler, 2004) added that marketing performance is of great importance for the following reasons: (Al-Tawil & Al-Abadi, 2013, p. 119)

- It represents a central factor for the success or failure of organizations in implementing their strategies and decisions;
- There are no agreed-upon standards by authors that can be used to interpret all aspects related to organizational performance

3.3. Marketing Performance Dimensions

Many researchers in the field of marketing have addressed marketing performance indicators, and there is a general agreement on a specific set of indicators that represent the intersection points across most studies that tackled the topic of marketing performance. Some of these indicators, which were also covered in our current study, include market share, sales growth, profitability, customer satisfaction, and marketing innovation.

3.3.1 Market Share

Clark views market share as: "The best measure of an organization's marketing performance, through which its profitability and ability to achieve its objectives can be recognized, and it is considered a strong indicator of cash flow and profitability." (Clark, 1999, p. 715)

Kotler (2000) added that market share is an important measure of good marketing performance, through which organizations can distinguish between successful and unsuccessful ones in their activities. The sales volume does not reflect an organization's performance in relation to its competitors, which is why organizations need to closely monitor their market share. (Abdul Amir, 2020, p. 109)

From the above, it can be concluded that market share is the best measure for assessing the marketing performance of organizations, through which their profitability and ability to achieve their objectives can be understood.

3.3.2 Sales Growth

The most focused and accepted goal for all organizations is growth, and sales are considered one of the key principles in marketing activities, with the ultimate goal being to increase sales volume. This increase in sales volume is the primary indicator of successful marketing performance. Sales are viewed as the best barometer for measuring marketing performance. Marketing managers feel optimistic when sales are increasing, and the opposite is true when sales decline. However, attention to sales should not outweigh other factors related to performance. (Al-Zoubi, 2011, p. 315)

It is well known that sales growth measures the number of units produced by the organization and sold within the current year compared to previous years. As for sales volume, it refers to the number of units sold over a specific period, usually one year. Sales growth indicates increased demand for products and services desired by customers, and it also means that products can be produced at a lower cost per unit, which improves the organization's net profit. Understanding the change in sales growth between the past and the present helps determine the current and future stages of the organization and allows it to benefit from periods of prosperity and its ability to cope with periods of recession. (Al-Naji, 2012, p. 48)

3.3.3 Profitability

Profitability is defined as: "Profitability is the core of organizations, which includes the organization's revenues compared to its costs." (Attoui & Charef, 2021, p. 464)

Profitability is also defined as: "The effectiveness of management performance in running various activities, and the organization's ability to generate profits. Profits are a measure of the efficiency of the organization's investment, operational, and financial management policies." (Al-Hajj, 2019, p. 77)

From an accounting perspective, profitability refers to the difference between the income generated by the economic unit over a specific period and the expenses incurred by this unit during that period to generate the income. Within the accounting concept, there are two sub-concepts of profit:

- **Net Operating Profit:** Refers to the difference between the sales/services achieved during the period from the organization's core activities and the costs of these sales/services, including administrative and general expenses, and selling and distribution expenses, excluding interest payments, other revenues and expenses, and taxes.
- **Net Profit After Tax (Comprehensive Profit):** This profit results from the difference between the organization's income from all sources (sales and other revenues) and the costs (sales/service costs) and any other costs unrelated to operations (such as losses from selling assets), after subtracting taxes. (Ma'ash & Ben Terbah, 2021, p. 92)

From the above, profitability represents a measure of the effectiveness of the organization's management policy or the evaluation of its management's efficiency. Achieving high-profit levels is the goal that organizations strive for, as well as increasing their value in the environment they operate

in, compared to competitors. This helps them continue to grow and develop through the improvement of their products, services, or technologies, which are among the reasons for high profitability.

3.3.4 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is essential for achieving long-term success in organizations and is one of the most important research topics in marketing. The customer, as a stakeholder in the organization, provides money in exchange for what is offered to meet their needs and achieve satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is a key success factor that heavily depends on the behaviors of service providers at the front lines. Customers should be managed as assets, and they differ in their needs, preferences, and buying behavior. (Lee, 2016, p. 01)

Kotler et al. (Nurnatacha & Syafiqah) define satisfaction as: “Customer satisfaction refers to how pleased customers are with their dealings with the organization. In other words, it reflects the level of happiness customers feel about their interactions and overall experience with the company.” (Nurnatacha & Syafiqah, 2020, p. 01)

From this, we can conclude that customer satisfaction is one of the most important criteria that allow an organization to ensure the quality of its products and services. It is when the perceived services match the customer’s expectations or the level of satisfaction resulting from comparing perceived performance to their expectations. Additionally, building a relationship with the customer is not the final goal of marketing management in its quest to gain customers; it must exceed their expectations and impress them with high performance of its products to achieve their satisfaction for the longest possible period, thus strengthening its position in a competitive environment.

3.3.5 Marketing Innovation

Marketing innovation is defined as: “The design and implementation of a set of creative and unconventional ideas and transforming them into practical applications in one of the marketing mix areas.” (Al-Khair, 2005, p. 459)

Marketing innovation involves introducing new and unconventional ideas into marketing practices and implementing them.

Thus, creativity and innovation in marketing are characterized by several key features, including: (Kendouz, pp. 275-276)

- Generating and studying ideas, assessing their feasibility, and working to apply them in reality.
- Attempting to utilize new ideas efficiently and effectively to maximize the expected benefit from them.
- Innovation and creativity encompass all elements of the marketing mix.

Organizations with outstanding marketing performance are those that focus on offering new and advanced products, innovating modern marketing methods, or meeting increasing needs, enabling them to achieve their objectives and adapt to the environment and changing circumstances. Therefore,

any distinctive feature in marketing that differentiates an organization from others in the market falls under the scope of marketing innovation.

3. The Relationship Between Internal Marketing and Marketing Performance in Service Organizations

Employees play a key role in achieving superior performance for organizations, enabling them to remain and sustain themselves in the market. Therefore, organizations focus on their employees and how to engage with them. This led to the emergence of the concept of internal marketing, which considers employees as internal customers of the organization. Organizations now implement policies aimed at attracting, developing, and retaining employees with high skills and abilities, by providing a supportive and motivating environment where individuals can access opportunities for education, training, and growth, as well as perform tasks that match their competencies and orientations. This, in turn, allows them to give their best. All of this works to increase employee satisfaction, which leads to increased satisfaction of external customers, ultimately enhancing the organization's chances of success and ensuring its long-term sustainability. (Mohammed, 2021, p. 269)

The importance of internal marketing has been recognized by many researchers as a fundamental element for creating trust and high employee commitment, and as a key factor in improving productivity, quality, and profitability for the organization. (Kurtel & Hlouz, 2017, pp. 397-398)

It is considered a methodology for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Internal marketing is seen as a method to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. The success of the organization mainly depends on the ability and effectiveness of its employees in carrying out their tasks and duties, achieved through the activation of internal marketing to ensure employee satisfaction and retain both employees and customers.

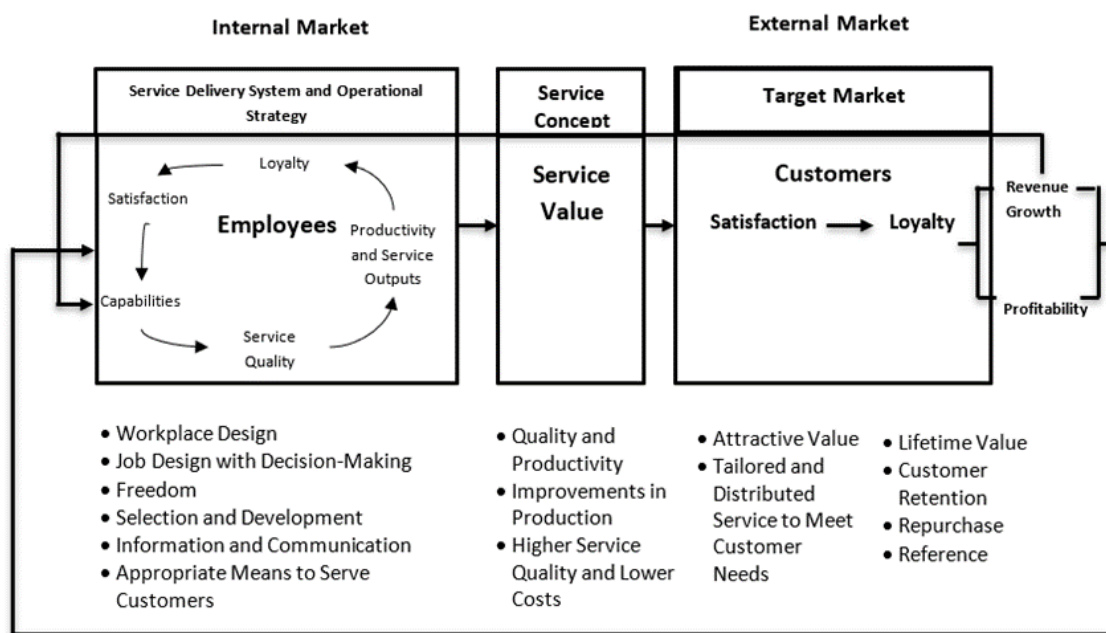
Internal marketing contributes to the organization's success and growth in profits first through achieving employee satisfaction, which in turn reflects on customer satisfaction. Highly satisfied customers represent a good promotional position for the organization, which leads to improved market share, increased sales, and higher profitability, thus achieving the organization's objectives.

In addition, there are several models supporting the importance and role of internal marketing, such as the Service-Profit Chain and the Success Cycle in service organizations, which emphasize the sequence of results that can emerge from the application of internal marketing.

4.1 The Service-Profit Chain

The relationship between internal marketing and organizational performance is demonstrated by the Service-Profit Chain, introduced by Heskett et al. in 1994. Their study revealed a positive relationship between internal service quality and increased profits. The service-profit chain defines a series of processes and events that extend from within the organization (employees) to the outside (customers) and the achievement of organizational goals. This chain begins with internal service quality, meaning that if employees provide high levels of internal service quality through their relationships with colleagues, this will lead to improved employee satisfaction, which in turn has a positive impact on employee loyalty, and so on, through the chain, to improve profitability. (Michael, 2002, p. 11)

Figure 02: The Service-Profit Chain



source: (Lovelock & Wirtz, Services marketing people technology, Strategy, seventh edition, 2011, p. 418)

Heskett and his colleagues, along with Christopher Lovelock and Jochen Wirtz, emphasized that employee satisfaction through internal service quality and loyalty leads to external service quality through services designed and delivered to meet customer needs, which results in customer satisfaction and loyalty. This, in turn, leads to revenue growth and profitability. They argued that when service organizations prioritize their employees and customers, a radical change occurs in the way success is managed and achieved. Customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the profitability of the organization become linked to the value created by the productivity, satisfaction, and loyalty of employees.

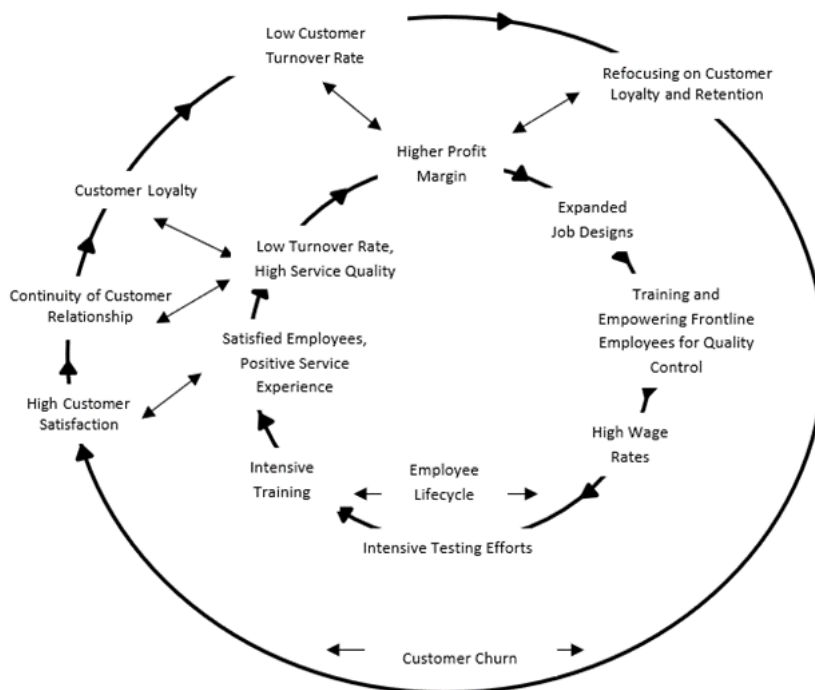
Khidir Kazem also affirmed the chain connecting organizational profits, service, and employees on one hand, and customer satisfaction on the other. There are five links as follows: the quality of internal services leads to satisfied employees who deliver high-quality services, resulting in satisfied and loyal customers, which in turn generates profits and growth for the organization. To achieve this high level of service performance, the organization must focus its attention on the individuals providing services to customers, motivating, training, and encouraging them to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction with the services provided. This is necessary to ensure the continuous delivery of high-quality services. (Kazem, 2002, pp. 215-216).

4.2 The Success Cycle in the Organization

Through internal marketing, many researchers explain that by satisfying the needs of employees, organizations will improve their ability to satisfy the needs of their customers. However, both customers and employees should be seen as part of a strong cycle, where attention given to one

enhances the attention to the other. The exchange and relationships among employees within the organization are a prerequisite for successful exchanges with external markets.

Figure 03: The Success Cycle in a Service Organization



source: (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011, p. 290)

Most organizations aim to thrive by investing in their employees to create a success cycle, as shown in the figure above, by applying the philosophy, programs, and policies of internal marketing. Success benefits both employees and customers. By adopting internal marketing programs and policies, the organization uses a set of attractive benefits, such as training and incentives to attract highly skilled employees. This is accompanied by expanded job designs, and empowerment practices that allow frontline employees to work with more freedom and autonomy. With more freedom, intensive training, and better wages, employees are happier in their jobs and will provide high-quality, satisfactory services to customers. Loyal customers will maintain continuity in service relationships resulting from high customer satisfaction, and therefore, remain loyal to the organization. As a result, profit is likely to be higher. (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011, p. 291)

Sunardi Sembiring Brahmana and Veronica Christina also conducted research on the success of internal marketing within the organization. Senior management needs to focus on implementing its internal marketing program. A successful internal marketing strategy will lead to commitment from everyone in the organization, increase morale, and drive more work performance, including marketing performance. (Brahmana & Christina, 2020)

4. Conclusion

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From the above, the role of the organization in selecting, hiring, training, motivating, and empowering employees and its impact on their commitment to the organization becomes clear. It is well known that every organization has objectives it seeks to achieve, such as expanding its market share, increasing sales, improving profitability, and ensuring customer satisfaction, through a set of functions carried out by employees who possess qualifications and capabilities.

Thus, the relationship between employees and the organization is a complementary one. The organization's interest lies in retaining skilled employees with expertise in their work, and in investing time and resources to ensure their commitment, retention, and loyalty to the organization. On the other hand, employees benefit from staying in an organization that has trained and developed them, providing them with a suitable work environment and contributing to the fulfillment of their various needs and desires.

Focusing on employees through internal marketing programs is the path that provides a comfortable work environment, leading to outstanding marketing performance.

Since marketing performance is a fundamental entry point for generating revenue that contributes to the sustainability of the organization, it reflects the level at which the organization achieves its goals set in the marketing plan. Organizations strive to achieve continuous growth in their target market, which drives managers to focus on marketing performance as the main artery that nourishes the organization.

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