

## OPTIMIZING THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH INTERNAL MARKETING

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### ABSTRACT

*Ethical organizations consider employees as the profitable capital and try to optimize the level of employees' engagement at work through their ethical management. The under discussion study aimed at to investigate the relation between internal marketing as an ethical management tool and employee engagement through social exchange process. The analysis of study was made on SEM with M-Plus. The convenience sampling survey data was obtained from 541 respondents of banking industry of twin city Rawalpindi & Islamabad. The results of study indicated the full mediation of trust as an attitude of social exchange process between internal marketing and employee engagement. Therefore, like other instruments for employees' welfare the management should focus on internal marketing to enhance the level of employees' engagement at work.*

**Keywords:** Internal Marketing, Organizational Identity, Trust, Employee Engagement.

### INTRODUCTION

Employees are the face value of any service based organization (Kaur, & Sharma, 2015). The achievement of organizational goals results from employees' behavior (Cania, 2016). Therefore, employee engagement has become a great challenge for the organizations globally and has made them to treat employees like customers not merely workers (Deloitte, 2015). The organizations that look for employee engagement are more interested in employee welfare through the practices and policies that treat the employees as internal customers like other customers. Measuring the satisfaction of employees and customers with same yard need to motivate the employees for extra role behavior through employee engagement at work (Vazifehdoost & Hooshmand, 2012). According to Kotler and Keller (2009) "satisfied customers come from satisfied employees". The employees become the ultimate source of building long term customer relationship between organization and customers (Kaur, & Sharma, 2015) through their positive work behavior and this inevitable role employees can be observed best in service industry, where the employee satisfaction and committed behavior move the organization for long term sustainability (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003) through internal marketing.

Internal marketing is the promotion of a company's goals, mission, products and services for its own employees (Kunzman, 2018). Internal Marketing refers to the work of attracting, developing, motivating and sustaining highly skilled employees by providing them with the necessities they need (Yao et al., 2013) and is a fundamental mean to retain and motivate the employees for work engagement (Czaplewski, et al., 2001). Though some years ago the relevance of internal marketing was more concerned with employees of service industry to bring an excellence in service industries (Berry, 1981) but at the present time it is considered as a model of organizational change, (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002) and viewed as a mechanism of strategic alignment of employees' efforts of building brand image of their organization for consumer satisfaction and retention (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003) as well. However, internal marketing can take place at technical level (Lozano-Ramírez, 2016) like internal communication and training programs (Diaz et al., 2015) and is referred as amalgamation of human resource strategies to integrate employees (Mieres et al., 2012; 2011; Kaur and Sharma, 2015). Therefore, the organizations are required to concentrate on the HR processes of internal marketing that can help in retaining the employees (Ahmed et al., 2012) and achieving the organizational goals (Cania, 2016) because Internal Marketing is an idea to put people first to achieve organizational goals (Proctor, 2010).

The study of employee behavior claims that internal marketing leads to employee engagement (Shahzad & Naeem, 2013). However, there is lack of agreement of researchers upon employee engagement (Shahzad & Naeem, 2013). Likewise, investigation on internal marketing in Asian perspectives has been scant and varies to Western perspectives (Park and Tran, 2018). Though there are several studies involve with internal marketing since last two decades, however, very little is explored of employees as customer and his attitude for employee engagement as behavior (Yildiz & Kara, 2017). While, Hsieh & Wang (2016) conducted a study in hotel industry of city Taiwan and found the positive relation between variables internal marketing, trust and employee work engagement. Thus, further this relationship of variables should be explored in developing nation (Sohail & Jang, 2017). The objective of this study was to investigate that why

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the organizations flop to frame an effective framework that address needs of employees as an internal marketers and to develop model to examine the relationship between internal marketing practices and employees' attitudinal behavior of frontline employees of banking sector. The banking sector was selected because it is one of the very important sector of services industry of Pakistan (Akhtar et al., 2016) and the economic development of any country is determined by undertaken by its financial sector. Further, the study was made to know whether using internal marketing the HR builds positive attitude of social identity. Consequently, to confirm role of attitude between internal marketing and employee engagement through social identity theory the mediation of trust and organizational identification was investigated.

## INTERNAL MARKETING

Usually internal marketing involves in facilitating the Employee recruitment Staff training, Internal Market research, Internal Communication (Torfeh et al 2015). The formal journey of internal marketing in research took place with Bery (1976) who suggested to care employee as internal customer before external customers and not to discriminate between internal and external customer. Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) define internal marketing as strategy treating employees as customers and forming their jobs fit to their needs. The study of Hernández-Díaz et al., (2015) suggested to consider internal marketing as (website, memos, personal letters, e-mails, etc.) for communication and (demonstrations, workshops and other specialized training activities) for training. Correspondingly, the conclusion from the study of Huang & Thiele (2015) advocates three dimensions of internal marketing that include communication, training and market research. Internal communication is an agreement between managers and employees (Varey and Lewis, 1999) and its effects on personal selling and advertising as it is channel between organization and customers. Further, the maximum literature on training suggest to incorporate the marketing techniques with human resource practices as internal marketing is a function of human resource management (Abzari et al., 2011). Similarly, internal market research involves exploring and understanding how to market the employees' the needs through human resource policies (Huang & Thiele, 2015). Some researchers observed internal marketing with all factors that create healthier relations with the personnel (Ahmad et al., 2012) while some focused on leaders role in achieving internal marketing (Wieseke et al., 2009). In contrast, the lack of a customer orientated approach towards the employees lead to unhappy employees, unsatisfied customers, and reduced marketing effectiveness through negative word-of-mouth communication (Cooper and Cronin, 2000). Therefore:

**H<sub>1</sub>.** Internal marketing has significant positive relation with employee engagement.

### *Organizational Trust*

Trust as an attitude is perceived different among the employees and management of organizations. The caring culture for employees is a routine trust (Paliszkievich, 2011) while, the positive care based perception of employees from the organizational practices is taken as organizational trust (Jucevicius & Jucevicius, 2015). Having the desire to be cared suggest the organizations to be ethical in their practices for employees (Lin, 2010). Organizational trust is more connected with effective communication of employees and management (Zeffane & Ryan, 2011). Trust and reliable information are foundation of good relations between employees and management (Doiphin, 2005). Trust plays an important role for developing extra role behavior of employees for management (Yang & Mossholder, 2010). The studies of Blunsdon & Reed (2003), Brown et al., (2015) depict the importance of trust in the studies of organizational Behavior. The study of Thaotrakool (2013) found positive relation between internal marketing and trust. Thus;

**H<sub>2</sub>.** Internal marketing has significant positive relation with trust.

Similarly, trust can develop a change in worker identity (Akerlof and Kranton, 2005). Trust binds the social structures together (Atkison & Butcher, 2003). Literature on trust advocate that leadership play has a crucial impact on determining the level of trust among employees. Like, the efforts made for employee display the level of trust or distrust in the organization (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006). The trust received from high level of cooperation from management is recognized with high level of organizational identification (Bylok et al., 2015). The relationship of trust and organizational identity were found positively correlated in the study of Brown et al., (2015). Therefore, the study proposes that:

**H<sub>3</sub>.** Trust has significant positive relation with organizational identity.

### *Organizational Identity*

Organizational identity is mostly linked with attitude linked to collective rather than individual interests. This emotional state is represented well by Social identity theory of Mael and Ashforth, (1992) which advocates that individuals engage with social identity exhibits the cooperative behavior that results the organizational benefit (Dukerich et al., 2002). Social identity is their own perception based on their knowledge that develops their emotional affiliation and attaches them to the membership of organization (Tajfel, 1981) where they work. Tyler (1999) suggests that employee evaluate their self-esteem with prestige

of organization so they try to be associated with organization that enhance their esteem and prestige. Thus, the organization that carries the positive reputation and image possess the attraction for employees and they feel like to continue with it. Hence, the literature support evident that organizational identification creates an extra-role behavior at the workplace. The dedicated staff who understand the company's products / services / mission make better sellers that significantly improves the online visibility any business and increases the quality of potential customers (Kunzman, 2018).

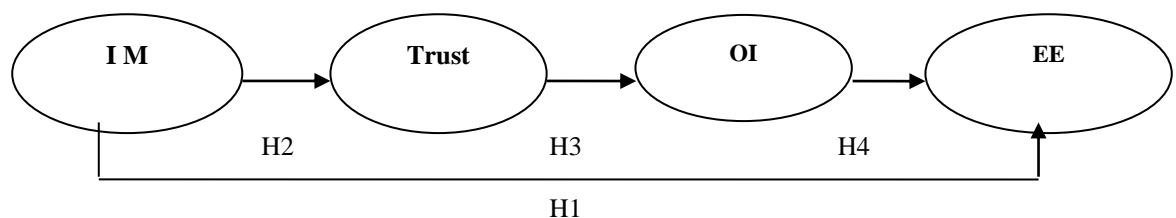
**H4.** Organizational identity has significant positive relation with employee engagement.

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement has roots in 1800 and advanced in 1900 by Khan. This notion is still in process of development by researchers and academicians (Itam & Sigh, 2017). Employee engagement represents the relationship between employee and employer and engaged employees exhibit higher than non-engaged employees (Itam & Sigh, 2017). The employee engagement was first introduced in 1990 by Khan (Choo, et al., 2013). According to Balain & Sparrow (2009), employees can be categorized in three types: first as engaged – who work dedicatedly and feel happy in association with their organization; second not engaged – who lack motivated and just fulfil their job duties; third actively disengaged – who are not interested in their work and criticisms on their jobs. The consistency and uniformity of values among employees and management are essential for the success of organizations. Engaged employees effect positively on the organizational reputation (Dreher, 2014). The study of Anthony-McMann et al. (2017) observed employee engagement relate negative with workplace stress and burnout therefore 2016 85% of executives still ranked engagement as a top priority (Deloitte, 2016).

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Aon Hewitt, (2013) representing the veracious behaviors remains a critical component for organizations. Therefore, the under discussion study is an effort to work on the gap found through literature review between internal marketing and employee engagement. The study involves the organizational trust and organizational identity as attitude through lens of social identity theory that serves as sequential mediator between internal marketing and employee engagement as behavior.



**Fig 1:** Theoretical Perceived Model

IM=Internal marketing, Trust= organizational trust, OI=Organizational identity, EE= Employee engagement

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study involves the quantitative method to observe the relationship of variables used in above discussed perceived model. Questionnaire survey method was used with sample size 450 of employees of local Banks of twin city Rawalpindi and Islamabad of Pakistan. The frontline employees of banking industry were selected as they are more in customer care and training and communication is the integral part of their job. Questionnaire was used as it permits the maximize generalizability, objectivity and reliability of results (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was self-administered and described demographic questions to know about age, gender, education and experience. While second part was comprised of well-established scales of used of previous research studies with twelve items of four variables. The survey items were based on five-point Likert scales from 1=strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree. The majority of respondents were male. The results were measured on SEM MPLUS software. The demographic ratio of the total sample population was 27% female, 73% male. We invited 500 employees to participate the survey, however, out of 450 respondent 541 responded.

## **DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

First of all the formal permission was sought through higher authorities of selected banks with assurance of using data for academic purpose. The higher authorities and supervisors were not taken into account as they were the implementer of Internal Marketing practices. The data was analyzed on SEM and Mplus. As first step the authors assessed measurement model validity through overall CFA overall model fitness of Hair et al., (2010) and followed Jaccard and Wan (1996) that suggest CFI by Bentler (1990) and TLI by Tucker &

Lewis (1973) value should be above 0.90 and RMSEA in the range of 0.05 to 0.10 considered fair fit and values above 0.10 indicated poor fit (MacCallum et al, 1996). SRMR values less than .05 considered good fit (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000) However, for testing goodness of fit a measurement four components that include i) convergence ii) discriminance iii) nomological iv) content to be observed (Hair et al., 2010). The CFA result obtained from study analysis were RMSEA .09, SRMR .03, CFI 0.94, TLI 0.91- and degree of freedom 48 = P value less than 0.00 significant revealed the goodness of model fit. Overall results of CFA confirmed the validity for model fit. Further to confirm validity of CFA the study applied the one factor analysis alternative model strategy to establish discriminant validity. According to this method the results of CFA should be different from previous results. Thus, the results of one factor CFA analysis were found absolutely different as RMSEA 0.2, SRMR 0.1, CFI 0.7, TLI 0.6. The difference between two factor and one factor analysis confirmed the validity of Model.

Finding the positive CFA results the study next moved to measure discriminant validity of constructs through correlation among observed variables results. Table 1 provides the correlations of all internal marketing, trust, organizational identity and employee engagement.

**Table 1.** Discriminant Validity of Constructs

	IM	TR	OI	EE
IM	1.00			
TR	0.22	1.00		
OI	0.23	0.76	1.00	
EE	0.23	0.67	0.85	1.00

IM= Internal marketing, TR=Organizational trust, OI=Organizational identification

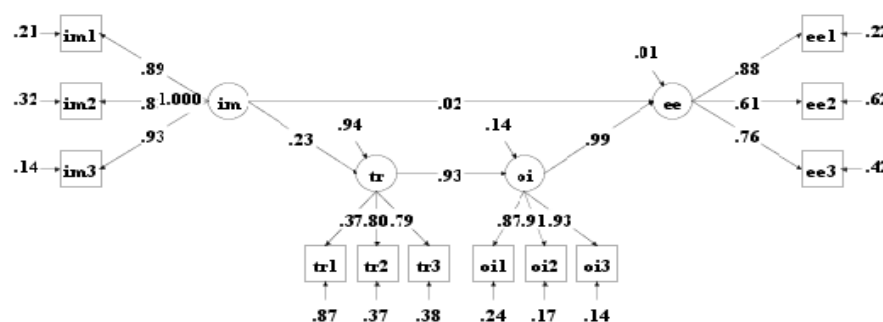
EE=Employee Engagement

### STRUCTURAL EQUATIONAL MODELING ANALYSIS

Before steering the results of SEM analysis, CFA and measurement model was observed to confirm the validity of variables used in analysis of perceived model. The row of Table 2 reflects the results of measurement model whereas second describes the results obtained from SEM analysis with Mplus. The results of root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.09, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.04, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.93 and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.92 were found good fit.

**Table 2.** Results of goodness for fit

Model	Chi-Sq	Df	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI	CFI
Measurement	3518.	48	0.09	0.03	0.94	0.91
Model	P=.0					
SEM	153.39 P=.0	51	0.09	0.04	0.93	0.92



**Fig 2.** Structural equation model

Note. The standardized coefficient values of structural equation model. P value= < 0.05

im=Internal marketing, tr= Organizational trust, oi=Organizational identity, ee= Employee engagement

The hypothesis 1 addressed that internal marketing has significant positive relation with trust with beta value (0.21, P= <0.001). Hypothesis2. Internal marketing has significant positive relation with organizational trust

accepted with beta value (0.23,  $P = <0.001$ ). Hypothesis 3 organizational trust has significant positive relation with organizational identity accepted with beta value (0.93,  $P = <0.001$ ). Finally, hypothesis 4 organizational identity has significant positive relation with employee engagement accepted with beta value (0.99,  $P = <0.001$ ). However, the results show the partial mediation of organizational trust and organizational identity between internal marketing and employee engagement.

### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Employee behavior influence on employee engagement therefore organizations that consider commination and training as priority have always satisfied and contented employees. Therefore, considering the organizational level issues the management should design their training and improve the level of internal communication and research and has to respond to inquiries from employees, show willingness to help them, provide comprehensive education and training opportunities timely and encourage comments (Rafiq and Ahmad, 2013). Likewise, Managers and professionals are encouraged to design and practice a pay system that recounts and praises employee performance in meeting customer needs and maintaining good customer relationships (Park and Tran, 2018). Internal marketing is tool that motivates employee engagement and develops the organizational trust. While trust plays a key role to develop organizational identity among employees Therefore, management should focus on building interpersonal and inter-organizational trust through better communication and trainings of employees and need to focus internal marketing dimensions while focusing on external marketing (Ramos, 2018).

### LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

It is understood that that no study go without limitation. This study also suffers with limitations as well. Firstly, qualitative study and mixed method can provide better results (Seawright, 2016) which is neglected area of the present study. Secondly, Framework can be applied beyond the service industries. Thirdly, the theories like social exchange, economic exchange, and reciprocity can be applied. Fourthly, the study can be explored through longitudinal framework. However, despite having some limitation, it is expected that this study can contribute for the management to improve their level of satisfaction of employees through the implementation of internal marketing which is the neglected area for frontline employees in most of the organizations in Pakistan. Finally, a comparative study with employees other countries and innovative organizations can be enhanced.

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