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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION THROUGH E-GOVERNANCE <i>VIJAY BHASKAR KOUDIKI & K JANARDHANAM</i>	1
2.	IMPORTANCE OF CAPITAL STRUCTURE ANALYSIS IN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY <i>DR. J. S. V. GOPALA SARMA</i>	6
3.	LINKING INTERNAL MARKETING AND EMPLOYEE'S IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE: A CROSS-LEVEL MEDIATION ANALYSIS <i>YU-PING HSU, TSAI-FANG YU & CHUN-TSEN YEH</i>	11
4.	STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS CASE STUDY WITH RESPECT TO KAMAYANI SCHOOL FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED <i>PREETI CHAUDHARY & DR. MITA MEHTA</i>	18
5.	PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS IN INDIA – AN ANALYTICAL STUDY <i>DR. M. NAGAMANI & K. ABIRAMI</i>	22
6.	A STUDY ON CONCEPT OF IFRS, BENEFICIARIES AND CHALLENGES <i>S. BHUVANESWARI & JAMEELA M.K</i>	27
7.	WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A STUDY OF INDIAN SCENARIO <i>GURVEEN KAUR</i>	30
8.	FINANCIAL INCLUSION REVISITED <i>CA SANGEETA S</i>	38
9.	TRIBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA: AN APPRAISAL <i>DR. PADMINI TOMAR</i>	42
10.	A STUDY OF INVESTOR PERCEPTION WHILE INVESTING IN RISK FREE SECURITIES <i>JITIN SHARMA</i>	47
11.	THE IMPACT OF NEED FOR COGNITION IN SELECTION OF DEODORANTS AMONG FEMALE YOUNGSTERS <i>DR. DEEPAK JOSHI</i>	53
12.	AN ANALYSIS OF MANUFACTURING SECTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION IN NAGALAND <i>MEDONGULIE ZATSU & DR. Y. TEMJENZULU JAMIR</i>	58
13.	GREEN BANKING AND ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY OF PRIVATE BANKS IN KARNATAKA <i>DR. M. PRABHU & GIRISH V.</i>	62
14.	A STUDY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENT ANALYSIS OF OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION LIMITED <i>L. PRABHA, DEEPIKA S & DHIVYA.B</i>	65
15.	MARKET REACTION ANALYSIS TO STOCK SPLIT ANNOUNCEMENT IN INDONESIA STOCK EXCHANGE <i>EDI SUMANTO, SRI HARTOYO & LUKYTAWATI ANGGRAENI</i>	69
16.	PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN HARYANA <i>VINOD KUMAR & SANTOSH</i>	74
17.	CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: A STUDY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF JAMMU & KASHMIR <i>ZAHOOOR AHMAD BOLAKI</i>	78
18.	STARTUP INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES: A CASE OF E-TOUR AND TRAVEL STARTUPS IN INDIA <i>DR. SONAL SHARMA</i>	83
19.	SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND USE OF IRRIGATION WATER IN INDIA <i>A.K. ELUMALAI</i>	88
20.	HUMAN RESOURCE ACCOUNTING: AN OVERVIEW <i>KAINAT SIDDIQUI</i>	92
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	96

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LINKING INTERNAL MARKETING AND EMPLOYEE'S IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE: A CROSS-LEVEL MEDIATION ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The direct relationship between internal marketing and attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, etc.) is well-established in the extant literature on internal marketing. However, in-role performance as a behavioral outcome of internal marketing has received relatively little attention. To bridge this gap in the research, we attempt to examine the direct effect of an organization's internal marketing on employee in-role performance, as well as the mediating effects of service climate, goal commitment, person-job fit (P-J fit), and person-organization fit (P-O fit) therein. The data for this study were collected from the tourism and hospitality industries (i.e., hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, etc.) in Taiwan. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was used to test the hypotheses. The results reveal that an organization's internal marketing is positively related to employee in-role performance, and that the relationship is significantly mediated by the organization-level service climate and individual-level goal commitment, P-J fit, and P-O fit. We also discuss the limitations and suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS

goal commitment, in-role performance, internal marketing, person-job fit, person-organization fit, service climate.

INTRODUCTION

In the service industry, the customer's perception of service quality largely depends on the service-providing process. In this process, certain factors, such as the attitude of service employees, in-site performance, and crisis disposal influence customer evaluations of the service-providing organization (Bitner et al., 1990; Lings, 2004). Previous research suggests that to deliver better service and consequently achieve customer satisfaction, an organization can implement internal marketing policies to convey its marketing beliefs and values to its employees, while attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining customer-conscious employees by integrating human resource management (HRM) practices. In other words, internal marketing involves a combined application of marketing and HRM, aiming to continuously improve the service quality that employees provide to external customers (Cooper & Cronin, 2000; Kelemen & Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2004).

Chowdhary (2003) emphasized that internal marketing practices can be utilized effectively to ensure that employees meet expected performance levels. Although Chowdhary (2003) provided a link between internal marketing and employee performance, this linkage has not been extensively verified. In past research, certain factors, such as service climate, goal commitment, person-job fit (P-J fit), and person-organization fit (P-O fit) have been found to positively affect job performance (Borucki & Burke, 1999; Kristof, 1996; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005). Therefore, in the current study, we intend to verify whether service climate, goal commitment, P-J fit, and P-O fit serve as the process variables that mediate the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance.

Despite the growing body of research on internal marketing in the management field, no known studies have simultaneously examined the relationships among internal marketing, service climate, goal commitment, P-J fit, P-O fit, and in-role performance through cross-level analysis. Hence, by applying the social exchange theory and theory of work adjustment, we attempt to investigate the direct effect of organization-level internal marketing on employee in-role performance, as well as the mediating effects of organization-level service climate and individual-level goal commitment, P-J fit, and P-O fit. The former theory helps to justify the relationships among internal marketing, service climate, and in-role performance, as well as the relationships among internal marketing, goal commitment, and in-role performance; the latter theory helps to explain the relationship of internal marketing with P-J fit, P-O fit, and in-role performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTERNAL MARKETING

Since the 1970s, a number of researchers have provided different definitions and viewpoints on internal marketing. According to Johnson and Seymour (1985), internal marketing refers to the creation of a kind of organizational internal environment that supports customer orientation and generates service-mindedness. Green et al. (1994) emphasized that organizations that highly interact with customers should sell their products to their employees as internal customers prior to selling the same products to external customers. The reason for this is that only when employees identify with their organization's service values and understand the significance of providing excellent service can they satisfy the needs of external customers.

Generally, internal marketing can be conceptualized into different perspectives. For instance, Gronroos (1981) and Berry (1984) advocated that a company should regard employees as internal customers and sell the service values to them; in doing so, the company becomes customer-conscious and market-oriented. Another perspective involves the integration of HRM functions with internal marketing. Tansuhaj et al. (1988: 32) pointed out that "a comprehensive internal marketing program is all about employee recruitment, training, motivation, communication, and retention efforts." George and Gronroos (1991) argued that internal marketing strives to manage the human resources of an organization from the marketing perspective. Moreover, internal marketing aims to integrate the various functions of the organization in two ways: (1) ensure that employees at each level have an understanding of the organization's activities and marketing events in an organizational environment that emphasizes customer consciousness; and (2) ensure that all employees are properly stimulated and have the capacity to

exhibit service-oriented behaviors. The present study adopts the perspectives provided by Tansuhaj et al. (1988) and George and Gronroos (1991) as mentioned above.

SERVICE CLIMATE

The environment in which employees work may have intangible norms or work climates. Thus, an organization's service climate may influence the service behavior of its employees. Service climate is a collective and shared phenomenon, which delineates employees' perceptions or beliefs regarding managerial practices, procedures, and behaviors that are supported and rewarded with regard to effective delivery of customer service (Schneider et al., 1998).

Schneider and Bowen (1993) indicated that when employees detect the existence of a strong service climate in their organization while providing external services, they tend to provide high-quality products and services to promote the corporate image and show their loyalty to the organization. Yoon et al. (2001) emphasized that the service climate sensed by employees will exert a positive influence on the process of providing service to customers. In exploring the effect of service climate on customer satisfaction, Dietz et al. (2004) reported that when employees sense the existence of a positive service climate, they tend to engage in more service-oriented behavior to increase customer satisfaction. Thus, service climate influences not only the customer-oriented behavior of employees (Williams and Attaway, 1996), but also their service performance (Borucki & Burke, 1999; Zhang et al., 2011).

INTERNAL MARKETING, SERVICE CLIMATE, AND IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE

The social exchange theory draws a relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance. According to the norm of reciprocity, "one individual voluntarily provides a benefit to another, invoking an obligation of the other party to reciprocate some benefit in return" (Whitener et al., 1998: 515). Chowdhary (2003) indicated that internal marketing practices can ensure that employees meet the expected benchmarks for in-role performance. Employee in-role performance refers to behaviors related to the tasks and responsibilities specified in the employee's job description and is tied to the reward systems of the organization (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Moreover, from marketing and customer-orientation perspectives, when employees perceive that they will receive rewards for providing good service to customers and that the organization will reward (e.g., through internal marketing practices) employees who provide good service, the organization's service climate will improve (Schneider & Bowen, 1985). The current study predicts that an organization's internal marketing practices can enable the development of a positive service climate.

The norm of reciprocity explains the relationship between service climate and in-role performance. Schneider et al. (1992) found that when employees sense the existence of a highly positive service climate in the organization, they tend to internalize the service spirit into their personal values, optimize their in-role performance, and subsequently provide higher quality service to customers. A similar aspect is supported by Borucki and Burck (1999), who indicated that an organization's service climate is helpful for improving employees' in-role performance.

The preceding discussion provides sufficient grounds for proposing that an organization's internal marketing can help foster a positive service climate, which in turn can encourage desirable employee in-role performance. In view of the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Internal marketing is positively related to in-role performance;

H2: Internal marketing is positively related to service climate;

H3: Service climate mediates the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance, such that internal marketing improves service climate, thereby resulting in better employee in-role performance.

GOAL COMMITMENT

The goal-setting theory, presented by Locke (1968), advocated that a goal is a motivator for employees, as it determines the direction, intensity, and continuity of their efforts. By letting employees participate in the setting of goals, managers can combine work goals with employees' personal needs, so that employees accept and agree with these goals.

Goal commitment refers to the intensity of efforts that individuals continuously make to attain their goals, as they consider their goals to be attractive and important. When employees believe that they can attain their goals and that doing so is of substantial significance, they will be much more committed to these goals (Locke, 1968; Leifer & McGannon, 1986).

INTERNAL MARKETING, GOAL COMMITMENT, AND IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE

The relationships among internal marketing, goal commitment, and in-role performance can be justified by the social exchange theory. When employees perceive that internal marketing can develop service-mindedness and help them to attain their performance goals, they may feel obligated to reciprocate by demonstrating high levels of goal commitment. Previous research indicates that employees who are more committed to their goals will strive to achieve them and persist in such effort longer (Locke et al., 1988). This persistence constitutes one of the powerful factors of task performance (Locke & Latham, 2002). Hence, goal commitment is viewed as the most proximal antecedent of job performance (Locke et al., 1988).

This study predicts that an organization's internal marketing will foster employees' goal commitment. In turn, highly goal-committed employees will put in extra effort on behalf of their organization, which will result in higher levels of in-role performance. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Internal marketing is positively related to goal commitment;

H5: Goal commitment mediates the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance, such that internal marketing increases goal commitment, thereby resulting in higher in-role performance.

P-J FIT AND P-O FIT

In agreement with the study of Edwards (1991), Cable and DeRue (2002) proposed that P-J fit can be classified into two categories: the first is the demands-abilities fit, in which the KSAs (knowledge, skills, and abilities) of employees match the requirements of their jobs; the second is the needs-supplies fit, in which the needs, desires, or preferences of the employees are met by the jobs that they perform and the rewards of their jobs. Following Edwards (1991) and Cable and DeRue (2002), the present study conceptualizes P-J fit in terms of the demand-abilities and needs-supplies fit.

P-O fit can be defined as value congruence that depicts the similarity between organizational values and those of the organization's employees (Kristof, 1996). Chan (1996) defined P-O fit as the compatibility of the individual's attributes and those of the organization. Individual attributes include an individual's beliefs, values, interests, and dispositional traits, whereas organizational attributes include the values, norms, and culture of an organization. Past research found P-O fit to be positively related to individual goal attainment, such as job performance (Kristof, 1996), and work attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Verquer et al., 2003).

INTERNAL MARKETING, P-O FIT, P-J FIT, AND IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE

The theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) deals with the interaction between employees and their work environment. The theory delineates that the behavior and performance of employees is guided by fulfilling their organizational duties and responsibilities. In return, the organization rewards employees in the form of providing social interaction, compensation, and a safe working environment, thereby satisfying their individual needs. To maintain this interaction, an organization's employees and its work environment should continually function to meet each other's requirements.

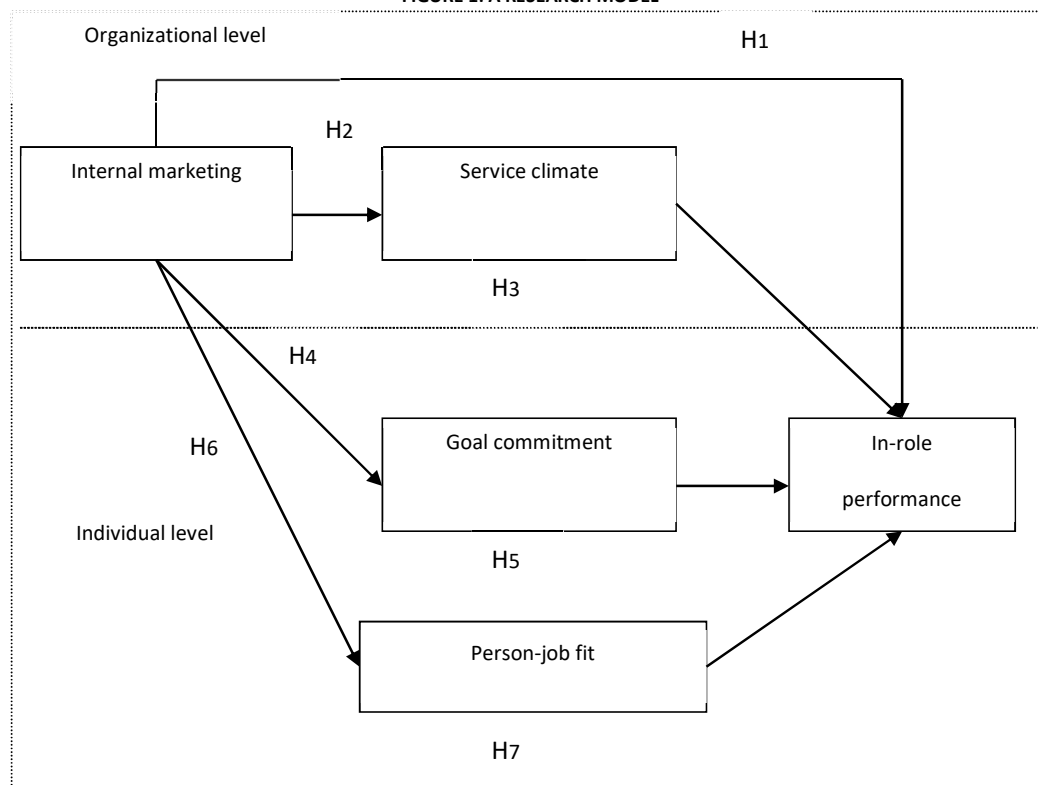
In this study, internal marketing corresponds to the organization's work environment. When employees perceive a good fit between their KSAs and job requirements (i.e., performance appraisal aspects of internal marketing), as well as among their values, needs, desires, and work environment (i.e., vision, development, rewards, and retention aspects of internal marketing), they would be motivated to improve their job performance (Brich et al., 2002; Greenberg, 2002; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005). In other words, effective use of internal marketing is likely to increase employees' P-J fit and P-O fit, thereby resulting in higher in-role performance. In view of the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: Internal marketing is positively related to P-J fit and P-O fit;

H7: P-J fit and P-O fit mediate the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance, such that internal marketing increases P-J fit and P-O fit, thereby resulting in higher in-role performance.

Based on the relevant literature explored above, a research model is developed and presented below.

FIGURE 1: A RESEARCH MODEL



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected from the tourism and hospitality industries (i.e., hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, etc.) in Taiwan. We designed two sets of questionnaires - an employee questionnaire and a supervisor questionnaire to reduce the potential for common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The employee questionnaire included questions on internal marketing, service climate, goal commitment, P-J fit, P-O fit, and demographic questions (i.e., gender, age, and organizational tenure). The supervisor questionnaire included questions on employee in-role performance and demographic aspects. Prior research highlights that a portion of the data aggregated to a cross-level can reduce the presence of CMV (Peng, Kao, and Lin 2006). This study meets the individual-level data aggregation at the organizational level (See data aggregation).

Of the 540 sets of questionnaires, 306 sets of completed questionnaires were returned. 50 sets were excluded due to incomplete responses, thereby yielding a total of 256 sets of useful questionnaires. The effective response rate is 42.4%. In the total sample, 54.7% were female and 45.3% were male. Furthermore, 50.8% of participants were below 30-years-old, whereas 34.4% were aged between 31 and 35. With regard to the organizational tenure, 60.9% of the participants have been in their present job for less than five years, whereas 30.5% have worked in their current organization for 6-10 years.

MEASURES

Except for the demographic control variables (i.e., gender, age, and tenure), all variables in this study were assessed on a five-point Likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree), and were averaged to form an overall score. High scores represent high levels of the variables.

Internal marketing: In this study, we examined internal marketing at the organizational level. The internal marketing scale was developed by Foreman and Money (1995) and comprises three subscales, i.e., "vision" (three items), "development" (eight items), and "rewards" (four items). Vision refers to the extent to which an organization gives its employees something to believe in. Development denotes the extent to which an organization offers training and development opportunities to improve the service ability of its employees. Reward represents the extent to which an organization adopts appropriate incentives based on employee contributions. Sample items included the following: "In this organization, the employees are properly trained to perform their service roles"; "In our organization, employees who provide excellent service are rewarded for their efforts"; and "Our organization communicates its vision well to employees".

Service climate: We employed Kelley's (1992) three-item scale of service climate to study service climate at the organizational level. Sample items included the following: "In this organization, consistent service performance is important"; "In this organization, prompt service from its employees is stressed"; and "In this organization, a reputation for good service is emphasized".

Goal commitment: Based on Hollenbeck et al. (1989), we adopted the five-item shortened scale of goal commitment validated by Klein et al. (2001). Participants were asked to indicate their level of commitment to agreed-upon goals. Of the five items, three items were reverse-coded. Sample items included the following: "It is hard to take my work goals seriously"; "I am strongly committed to pursuing this goal"; and "I think this is a good goal to aim for".

P-J fit and P-O fit: The six-item scale for P-J fit and the three-item scale for P-O fit were adopted from Cable and DeRue's (2002) scale. The following are sample items from the P-J fit scale: "The match between the demands of my job and my personal skills is very good"; "The attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled very well by my present job"; and "My abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of my job". Sample items for the P-O fit include the following: "The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values"; "My personal values match my organization's values and culture"; and "My organization's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life".

In-role performance: In-role performance was measured using a four-item scale developed by Van Dyne and Lepine (1998). The present study uses supervisory ratings to assess an employee's in-role performance that includes behaviors formally recognized by the organization's reward system. Sample items included the following: "This subordinate performs the tasks that are expected as part of the job"; "This subordinate fulfills the responsibilities specified in his/her job description"; and "This subordinate meets performance expectations".

Control variables: Gender (Bowen, Swim, & Jacobs 2000), age (Waldmann & Avolio, 1986), and tenure (O'Hara et al., 1991) were controlled to prevent their impact on in-role performance. The study coded gender as 0 = women and 1 = men. Age was measured in continuous numbers. Tenure was measured by the number of years that the participants had worked in their current organizations.

DATA AGGREGATION

To examine the appropriateness of data aggregation (i.e., internal marketing and service climate), this study examined the inter-rater agreement of internal marketing and service climate by calculating the rwg(j) values (James et al., 1984). For this purpose, a normal distribution of the expected error variance was used

(LeBreton & Senter, 2008). The mean rwg(j) across the organization was found to be 0.776 for internal marketing and 0.611 for service climate, thereby demonstrating an acceptable level of inter-rater agreement (Mathieu & Schulze, 2006).

According to the suggestion of Bliese (2000), this study also calculated intra-class correlation coefficients [ICCs; i.e., ICC(1) and ICC(2) values]. We obtained ICC(1) values of 0.251 for internal marketing and 0.221 for service climate, thereby meeting the standard value of 0.12. Moreover, we obtained ICC(2) values of 0.845 for internal marketing and 0.822 for service climate, thereby meeting the standard value of 0.6 (Lin & Peng, 2008). This study conceptualized internal marketing and service climate at the organizational level. The aforementioned results show that the data aggregation was appropriate.

RESULTS

HLM 6.08 (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was utilized to test the cross-level direct and mediating effects. A null model was executed to test whether employee in-role performance would vary according to different organizations. Table 1 presents the mean estimation of in-role performance intercept (γ_{00})=3.842, the between-organization variance of in-role performance (τ_{00})=0.090, and the within-organization variance of in-role performance (σ^2)=0.545. The ICC of in-role performance was found to be 14.2% [0.090/(0.090+0.545)], which indicates that 14.2% of the variance of in-role performance was due to between-organization variance and 85.8% [0.545/(0.090+0.545)] was due to within-organization variance. These findings suggest that HLM analysis is necessary if the between-organization variance of in-role performance is to be considered (Cohen, 1988).

Moreover, to satisfy the rule of the dependent variable (DV) on within-organization variance and between-organization variance (Hofmann, 1997), this study examined independent-dependent relationships. In line with previous research (Gliner et al., 2002), more rigorous statistically significant levels, i.e., $p < 0.01$ (highly significant) and $p < 0.001$ (extremely significant), were used to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. In intercepts-as-outcome model 1 (Table 1), $\gamma_{01} = 0.725$ ($p < 0.01$), which indicates that internal marketing positively affected in-role performance. Thus, H1 was supported. In the random coefficient regression model (Table 1), $\gamma_{01} = 0.916$ ($p < 0.001$), thereby indicating a positive relationship between internal marketing and service climate. Thus, H2 was supported.

Employing the mediation approach suggested by Mathieu and Taylor (2007), this study further examined the cross-level mediation hypotheses. First, the relationship between the independent variable (IV) and the DV was examined. Second, the relationship between the IV and the mediator was tested. Third, the relationship between the mediator and the DV was examined when the IV was included in the model. The mediation condition is considered to be satisfied if the relationship between the IV and DV is non-significant, while that between the mediator and DV remains significant.

To test the cross-level mediation hypothesis (H3), internal marketing (IV), and service climate (mediating variable) were tested at the organizational level, whereas in-role performance (DV) was tested at the individual level. Table 1 shows that the results satisfied the first three conditions of Mathieu and Taylor (2007). With regard to the last condition, intercepts-as-outcome model 2 shows that γ_{01} (-0.599) became non-significant after service climate was included in the model. This result demonstrates that service climate had full mediating effects on the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance. Therefore, service climate served as an organization-level full mediator, and H3 was supported.

TABLE 1: HIERARCHICAL LINEAR MODELING ANALYSIS-INTERNAL MARKETING, SERVICE CLIMATE, AND IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE

Variables	Null model	Intercepts-as-outcome model-1(H1)	Random coefficient regression model (H2) DV: Service climate	Intercepts-as-outcome model-2(H3)
Intercept $\gamma_{00}(\tau_{00})$	3.842*** (0.090***)	1.418 (0.031)	0.230 (0.099)	2.135 (0.019)
Control variables				
Gender γ_{10}		0.011	-0.097	0.035
Age γ_{20}		-0.171**	0.060	-0.183**
Tenure γ_{30}		-0.122	0.143**	-0.098
Organizational level				
Internal marketing γ_{01}		0.725**	0.916***	-0.599
Service climate γ_{02}				1.095
σ^2	0.545	0.528	0.377	0.527
Deviance	590.936	581.676	492.404	578.912

Notes: Companies $N=15$; Employees $N=256$. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. DV=dependent variable.

With regard to the relationship between internal marketing and goal commitment, the intercepts-as-outcome model 2 (Table 2) shows that $\gamma_{01} = 0.647$ ($p < 0.001$), thereby indicating the positive effect of internal marketing on goal commitment and supporting H4. Moreover, with regard to the cross-level mediation hypothesis (H5), internal marketing (IV) was tested at the organizational level, whereas goal commitment (mediator) and in-role performance (DV) were tested at the individual level. It is evident from Table 2 that the first three conditions of Mathieu and Taylor's approach were met. Intercepts-as-outcome model 3 reveals that γ_{01} (0.307) became non-significant after goal commitment was included in the model. This result demonstrates that goal commitment had full mediating effects on the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance. Thus, goal commitment served as an individual-level full mediator, and H5 was supported.

TABLE 2: HIERARCHICAL LINEAR MODELING ANALYSIS-INTERNAL MARKETING, GOAL COMMITMENT, AND IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE

Variables	Null model	Intercepts-as-outcome model-1(H1)	Intercepts-as-outcome model-2(H4) DV: Goal commitment	Intercepts-as-outcome model-3(H5)
Intercept $\gamma_{00}(\tau_{00})$	3.842*** (0.090***)	1.418 (0.031)	2.025** (0.003)	0.032 (0.038)
Control variables				
Gender γ_{10}		0.011	0.081	-0.048
Age γ_{20}		-0.171**	-0.196**	-0.039
Tenure γ_{30}		-0.122	-0.207***	0.016
Individual level				
Goal commitment γ_{40}				0.661***
Person-job fit γ_{50}				
Person-organization fit γ_{60}				
Organizational level				
Internal marketing γ_{01}		0.725**	0.647***	0.307
Service climate γ_{02}				
σ^2	0.545	0.528	0.404	0.365
Deviance	590.936	581.676	507.613	491.450

Notes: Companies $N=15$; Employees $N=256$. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. DV=dependent variable.

With regard to the relationships between internal marketing and P-J fit, and those between internal marketing and P-O fit, intercepts-as-outcome model 2 and intercepts-as-outcome model 3 in Table 3 show that $\gamma_{01} = 0.668$ ($p < 0.001$) and $\gamma_{01} = 0.589$ ($p < 0.001$), respectively, thereby indicating the positive effects of internal marketing on P-J fit and P-O fit. These results support H6. In terms of the cross-level mediation hypothesis (H7), internal marketing (IV) was tested at the organizational level, whereas P-J fit and P-O fit (mediators) as well as in-role performance (DV) were tested at the individual level. The results in Table 3 indicate that the first three conditions of Mathieu and Taylor's approach were satisfied. Furthermore, intercepts-as-outcome models 4 and 5 show that γ_{01} (0.480) and γ_{01} (0.485)

both became non-significant after P-J fit and P-O fit were included in the models, respectively. This finding demonstrates that both P-J fit and P-O fit played individual-level full mediating roles on the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance. Thus, H7 was supported.

TABLE 3: HIERARCHICAL LINEAR MODELING ANALYSIS-INTERNAL MARKETING, PERSON-JOB FIT, PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT, AND IN-ROLE PERFORMANCE

Variables	Null model	Intercepts-as-Outcome model-1(H1)	Intercepts-as-Outcome model-2(H6) DV: P-J fit	Intercepts-as-Outcome model-3(H6) DV: P-O fit	Intercepts-as-Outcome model-4(H7)	Intercepts-as-Outcome model-5(H7)
Intercept $\gamma_{00}(\tau_{00})$	3.842*** (0.090***)	1.418(0.031)	1.310***(0.000)	1.553***(0.000)	0.761(0.482)	0.888(1.191***)
Control variables						
Gender γ_{10}		0.011	0.191**	0.182***	-0.063	-0.055
Age γ_{20}		-0.171**	-0.156***	-0.085	-0.104	-0.123
Tenure γ_{30}		-0.122	0.024	-0.076	-0.147**	-0.105
Individual level						
Goal commitment γ_{40}					0.414***	
Person-job fit γ_{50}						0.374***
Person-organization fit γ_{60}						
Organizational level						
Internal marketing γ_{01}		0.725**	0.668***	0.589***	0.480	0.485
Service climate γ_{02}						
σ^2	0.545	0.528	0.527	0.507	0.418	0.403
Deviance	590.936	581.676	572.143	562.634	538.712	539.752

Notes: Companies $N=15$; Employees $N=256$. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. DV=dependent variable.

DISCUSSION

By conducting the HLM analysis, we confirm that an organization's internal marketing has direct effects on employee in-role performance (H1), thereby consistent with Chowdhary's (2003) standpoints. The current study also provides empirical support for H2 and H3 — that an organization's internal marketing is positively related to its service climate, and that an organization's service climate, indeed, plays an important mediating role in the relationship between internal marketing and employee in-role performance. Based on the norm of reciprocity, when employees strongly feel that the organization conveys the value of high-quality service and provides appropriate business direction through internal marketing (i.e., vision, training, motivation, rewards, communication, etc.), the overall organizational service climate will be fostered. Subsequently, employees will demonstrate high levels of in-role performance to meet the organization's expectations. The significant relationship between service climate and in-role performance is consistent with that found in previous studies (Borucki & Burck, 1999; Schneider et al., 1992). In addition, the present study shows that an organization's internal marketing had positive effects on the employee's goal commitment (H4), which in turn results in higher in-role performance, thereby providing support for goal commitment as a significant mediator (H5). Under the norm of reciprocity, when employees perceive that internal marketing can equip them with customer-oriented awareness, it is expected that employees will reciprocate by demonstrating high levels of goal commitment. In turn, highly committed employees will put in extra effort on behalf of their organization, which consequently improves in-role performance substantially. The positive relationship between goal commitment and in-role performance has been supported by prior research (Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1988).

Moreover, with respect to internal marketing, P-J fit, P-O fit, and in-role performance, empirical results show that an organization's internal marketing is positively related to the employee's P-J fit and P-O fit (H6), and that both P-J fit and P-O fit fully mediated the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance (H7). As previously indicated, the theory of work adjustment provides a theoretical base for delineating the hypothesized relationships. When employees perceive congruence between their KSAs and job requirements (i.e., performance appraisal aspects of internal marketing) and between their needs, desires, and values and work environment (i.e., vision, development, rewards, and retention aspects of internal marketing), they will perform their jobs well. The positive relationship of P-J fit and P-O fit with in-role performance is in line with the results of previous research (Brkich et al., 2002; Greenberg, 2002; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005).

CONCLUSION

This study explored the cross-level mediation process from an organization's internal marketing to employee in-role performance. In addition to the discovery of the direct relationship between the two variables, the results reveal that the organization-level service climate and the individual-level goal commitment, P-J fit, and P-O fit fully mediated the relationship between internal marketing and in-role performance. The results demonstrate that the effective implementation of internal marketing fosters a positive service climate in the organization and further enhances the levels of in-role performance. Moreover, internal marketing could also improve employee in-role performance through goal commitment, P-J fit, and P-O fit. Such findings add new insights to the extant literature on internal marketing.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study primarily focused on the tourism and hospitality industries in Taiwan. However, the service industry comprises a wide variety of industries and settings. Future researchers can consider studying service employees from different industries (e.g., department stores, banks, estate agents, hospitals, etc.) to expand the generalization of the research findings. Moreover, the current study considered only employee in-role performance. Future researchers could explore the influence of an organization's internal marketing on other important work outcomes, such as customer-oriented behavior and contextual performance/organizational citizenship behaviors through cross-level analysis.

In addition to the mediators examined in this study, psychological attachment and psychological empowerment may constitute important process factors that mediate the relationship between an organization's internal marketing and work outcomes. For instance, previous studies show that psychological attachment positively relates to prosocial behaviors and negatively relates to turnover (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Evidence also exists that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between P-O fit and in-role performance, as well as between P-O fit and job satisfaction (Gregory et al., 2010). Hence, these psychological variables could be investigated in future research.

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