

## **Internal marketing in manufacturing organizations: An exploratory study**

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**Abstract:** *Customer satisfaction is a key to an organization's competitive advantage. Every interaction of the customers' with the company influences their satisfaction and their perception towards that company. This is clear in case of a service. The service employees play a crucial role in shaping customers perception, attitude and opinion about a company and are one of the most crucial factors in delivering satisfactory customer experience. Internal Marketing - which seeks to motivate employees in all functions to consistently deliver a satisfying customer experience has been well studied in service organizations. The purpose of this paper is to explore Internal Marketing in non-service organizations such as a manufacturing firm to find out the status of Internal Marketing in that organization. The methodology adopted here were two fold. Firstly, a survey was conducted among the employees of the organization using a questionnaire. Secondly, personal interview was held with the top-level management. Measures used in this study were drawn from earlier study "Internal-market orientation and its measurement" by Gounaris in 2006. Reliability of research instrument was tested by a pilot study and data was collected using convenience sampling. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used for analyzing data.*

**Keywords:** Internal Marketing, Customer Experience, Service Organisations, Manufacturing Organisations, Empirical Research.

### **Introduction**

Customer satisfaction is the key for an organization's competitive advantage and the employees are one of the most crucial factors in delivering satisfactory customer experience. Particularly in service organizations employees are the backbone of the business and therefore they need to be motivated to give their best. In fact, the "employee-customer" interaction is a critical factor in a customer's perception of the service quality. (Turkoz & Aklyol, 2008). Further, it was also found that the level of employee satisfaction is strongly and directly related to customer satisfaction and productivity (Asif & Sargeant, 2000 ; Rafiq & Ahmad, 2000). This situation led to the development of a phenomenon called the internal marketing (IM) and definitions of IM started appearing as early as in 1976. One of the initial definitions considered "employee as internal customer and job as product" (Berry, Hensel, & Burke, 1976). Later many other authors, practitioners, and researchers have put forward varying definitions for IM. The review of literature on this subject has revealed definitions with varying perspectives leading to an unsettled situation. In this paper, we have come up with a comprehensive definition (anonymous) and hope will settle the issue. Secondly, while discussing IM, the academic literature places its attention mainly on the service industry and those employees that come in contact with the

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customers. This is because, in a service business, majority of the people employed are engaged in marketing activities. Thus, it has been mostly studied and researched in service organisations such as, Oil and Gas industry, Health industry, Hospitality industry, Banking industry, IT industry, Education, Retail industry, Airlines industry, Car rental industry and so on (Martinez & Wang, 2013). But there is hardly any study done in a manufacturing industry. Therefore, in this paper, we have looked into a manufacturing unit to explore the status of IM in manufacturing firm with the following two objectives:

1. To explore, if IM occurs in manufacturing organizations,
2. If it happens, what extent it is administered.

### **Literature Review**

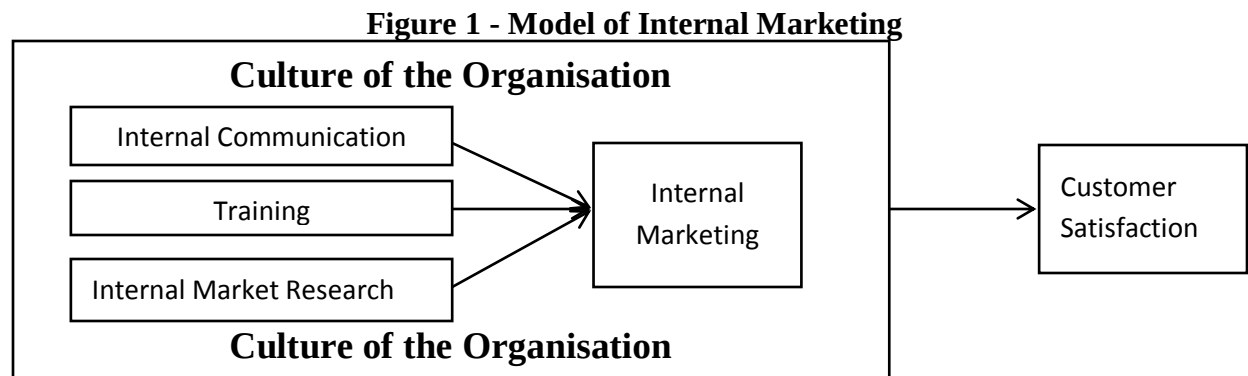
Originally in 1976, as mentioned earlier, internal marketing was defined by Berry et al. as “Internal marketing is concerned with making available internal products (jobs) that satisfy the needs of a vital internal market (employees) while satisfying the objectives of the organization” Grönroos (1981), defined internal marketing as an act of selling a corporation to its employees as internal customers based on the tenet that highly satisfied employees will help create a market-oriented and customer-centered corporation. While this may be true, it does not clearly tell a manager what should he regularly do to ensure internal marketing is sustained. This is because, IM is not a onetime activity. Another definition of IM is "attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining qualified employees through job products that satisfy their needs" (Berry & Parasuraman, 1992). Yet another definition says that “IM is defined as treating both employees and customers with equal importance through proactive programs in order to achieve the objectives of the organization (Woodruffe, 1995). These definitions are more encompassing and places a manager in a better position to act. Stauss and Hoffman (2000), defines Internal marketing as “The planned use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of current employees” and Rafiq and Ahmed (2000), say that IM is: "A planned effort using a marketing-like approach to overcome organizational resistance to change and to align, motivate, and inter-functionally co-ordinate and integrate employees towards the effective implementation of corporate and functional strategies in order to deliver customer satisfaction through a process of creating motivated and customer oriented employees". The same view is also expressed by Forman and money (1995), when they include internal communications, education, creating of motivation, empowerment, guidance and organizational incentives as indexes while consider internal marketing synonymous with human resources management. Rafiq and Ahmed in 2003 defined internal marketing as a cultural framework and an instrument to achieve strategic alignment between front-line employees and marketing (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Kotler and Keller (2016), defines IM as ‘the task of hiring, training and motivating able employees who want to serve customers well’.

A close examination of the definitions reveals that the central theme of each definition varies from employees to organisations and its culture to customers’ satisfaction and alignment of different departments to achieve corporate goal. For example, Ahmed, Rafiq and Saad (2003) focused on employees’ job satisfaction Bell, Menguc and Stefani (2004) on motivation. Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) dealt with organisational commitment. Though internal marketing is employees centric, it is more of a management philosophy that requires multilevel management to continuously encourage and enhance employees’ understanding of their roles and organizations (Berry, Hensel, & Burke, 1976)

Keeping these different perspectives in view, a comprehensive definition can be: “Internal Marketing is a cultural framework in an organisation that seeks to align, motivate and empower employees in all functions and at all managerial levels to consistently deliver a satisfying customer experience”. Culture in the above statement may be defined as ‘the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society’. It includes the behavior of ‘hiring and training able employees who want to serve customers well’.

It could be argued that IM is no different from good HR management practices. While it may be agreed that Internal marketing and HRM represent an interface between marketing and HR from the service management perspective (Grönroos, 1990), it is definitely more than good HR. This is simply because the overall responsibility of internal marketing lies with the top management and not with HR department alone. Going a step further, neither does the responsibility of internal marketing lies completely with marketing department alone. Broadly we might say that 50% of the responsibility of IM lies with top management, 25% with HR and rest 25% with the concerned department.

Review of existing body of literature on internal marketing yields a three dimensional model made up of internal communication, training, and internal market research. In our opinion, another important dimension – culture of the organization- is needed to be added and can be depicted in Figure 1.



There have been studies that have considered culture from the broader perspective (Kale, 2007; Kelemen & Papasolomou, 2007; Budhwar, Varma, Malhotra, & Mukherjee, 2009). For example, Kale talks of Western cultures and Eastern cultures, Kelemen & Papasolomou examines national cultures. However, in the proposed model above, culture here is used to denote ‘the ideas, customs, and social behaviour’ within the organisation that impacts the morale of the employees.

In fact, the onus of instilling into employees company culture, values, and vision is on the leaders of the organisation (Berry, Hensel, & Burke, 1976).

The need for internal marketing lies in motivating and spurring the employees to provide customer satisfaction by giving their best performance (Lings & Greenley, 2005). The heightened role of employees in service organisation led to the concept of internal marketing (Mishra, 2010). Pitt and Foreman argue that many firms, especially service firms, transact with the employees in a way similar to that of external customers and the nature of interactions rests on the degree of participation of these employees in the delivery of the firm’s offerings (Pitt & Foreman, 1999). Further, they also argue that IM is not always carried out by the entire firm for all the employees – there have been instances of IM being carried out by departments, groups

or functions within an organisations. Based on goal congruency and performance ambiguity they have depicted four possible levels of IM. In the first case, dealing with impersonal market where there is low performance ambiguity and goal incongruence, there is no need of IM. In the second case of relational market where is low performance ambiguity and high goal congruence, IM would be nice. In the third case, called impersonal hierarchy, there is goal incongruency as well as high performance ambiguity. Here IM is illegitimate. The fourth case is relational hierarchy where the performance ambiguity high coupled with high level of goal congruence. Here IM become necessary.

In a manufacturing organisation the employees are partially responsible for its success and goal congruence can be emphasized by promoting the role of the employees in achieving the same. This builds a relational hierarchy. Here the situation is the one where the performance ambiguity is moderate (between low ambiguity and high ambiguity) with moderate to high goal congruency. Therefore, it falls under the fourth case but bordering the second case. This implies that IM is necessary albeit to a lesser degree.

Thus a research proposition would be:

P1: IM in manufacturing organizations is practiced to a lesser degree than service organisations.

## Research Methodology

### Sampling Design

To explore the dimensions of “Internal Marketing” and to ascertain the existence of Internal Marketing in manufacturing unit, data from a sample of 175 operators and supervisors of “Laguna Clothing Pvt Ltd, Bangalore” was collected for our study. Laguna Clothing is a renowned manufacturer of premium international brands of shirts. Convenience sampling method was used for data collection. Measures used in the study were drawn from an earlier study by Spiros P. Gounaris titled, “Internal-market orientation and its measurement” (Gounaris, 2006). Some modifications were made to make it suitable for manufacturing sector. A pilot test was done on the questionnaire to check the reliability of research instrument. The value of Chronbach Alpha obtained was 0.79, Table 1 which is above the threshold value. The result portrays satisfactory level of reliability of the questionnaire. Respondents were encouraged to give their honest answers with simple self-explanatory questions written both in English and Kannada - regional language.

### Method of Analyzing Data

For analyzing data t-test, simple mean, variance and percentages were calculated with the help of SPSS 20.

## Data Analysis and Results

**Table 1: Cronbach Alpha**

| Scale: Reliability Analysis with a pilot study of 20 respondents Reliability Statistics |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Cronbach Alpha                                                                          | No of Items |
| 0.79                                                                                    | 21          |

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The overall statistical results for reliability analysis (overall alpha) of this dimension give a value of 0.763 which portrays satisfactory level of internal consistency among the responses in this dimension. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 2.

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

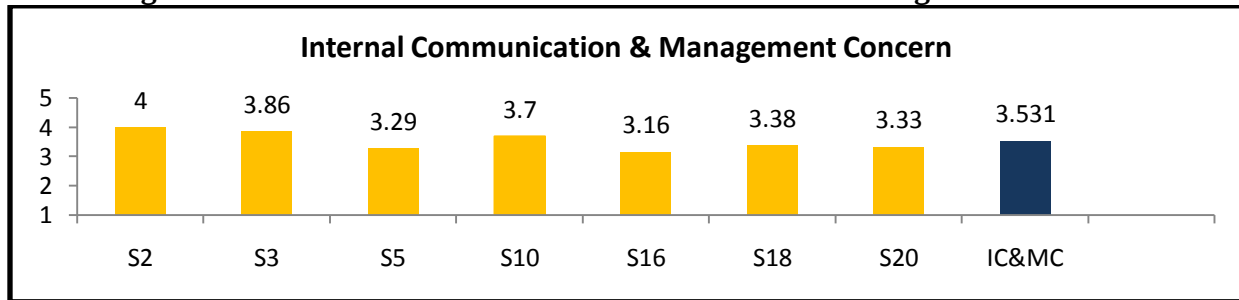
| Group                            | Respondents' Characteristics | Number of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Gender                           | Male                         | 83                    | 47.4           |
|                                  | Female                       | 92                    | 52.6           |
| Education(last degree completed) | 10 <sup>th</sup>             | 47                    | 26.9           |
|                                  | 12 <sup>th</sup>             | 126                   | 72.0           |
|                                  | Diploma                      | 2                     | 1.1            |
| Designation                      | Operator                     | 170                   | 97.1           |
|                                  | Supervisor                   | 2                     | 1.1            |
|                                  | Asst. Manager                | 1                     | 0.6            |
|                                  | Senior Manager               | 2                     | 1.1            |

### Dimensions of internal marketing & their prevalence in manufacturing sector

#### Internal Communication & Management Concern

**Table 3: Mean Score of Internal Communication & Management Concern**

| Descriptive Statistics                                                                  | N          | Minimum | Maximum | Mean         | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| S2_My organization gathers employee feedback                                            | 175        | 4       | 4       | 4.00         | 0.000          |
| S3_We have regular meetings with managers and ongoing communication channels are opened | 175        | 3       | 4       | 3.86         | 0.345          |
| S5_My organization regularly seeks employee suggestions.                                | 175        | 2       | 4       | 3.29         | 0.653          |
| S10_My organization talks with me to identify issues that I may have.                   | 175        | 2       | 4       | 3.70         | 0.647          |
| S16_Before any change in the system or policy is made my supervisor informs advance     | 175        | 2       | 4       | 3.16         | 0.586          |
| S18_ My organization collects data on employee complaints                               | 175        | 2       | 4       | 3.38         | 0.815          |
| S20_ There is an internal communication program for all employees in my organization    | 175        | 2       | 4       | 3.33         | 0.762          |
| Internal Communication & Management Concern                                             | <b>175</b> |         |         | <b>3.531</b> |                |

**Figure 2: Mean Score of Internal Communication & Management Concern**

### Interpretation

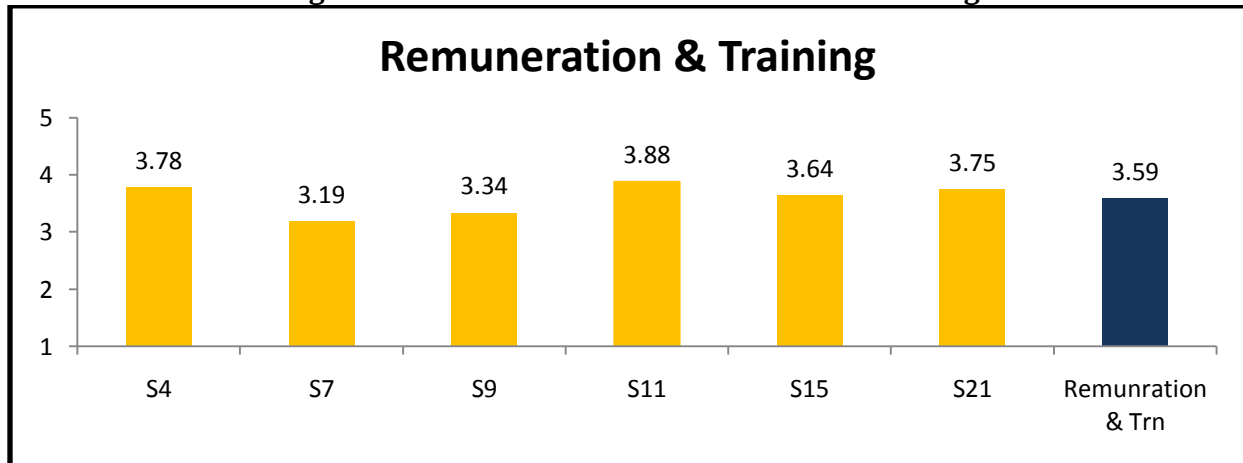
At a macro level, it has been observed that the value on “Internal Communication and Management concern” is 3.531 Table 3 and Figure 2, which implies employees in manufacturing unit are accepting the presence of that component at a minimal level. Though the organization takes employee feedback, and conduct regular meetings with managers but in terms of implementing their suggestions, the company has received a low score. Since most of the data is collected from the operators, it can be concluded that they are neither involved in decision-making nor they get prior information before any policy changes.

### Remuneration & Training

**Table 4: Mean Score of Remuneration & Training**

| Descriptive Statistics                                                                                                                 | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| S4_In this company training is closely related to the individual needs of each employee                                                | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.78 | 0.253          |
| S7_When I do something extraordinary I know that I will receive some financial reward or bonus                                         | 175 | 1       | 5       | 3.19 | 0.831          |
| S9_If one is moved from one department to another, the new supervisor will personally train him/her for a pre-specified period of time | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.34 | 0.762          |
| S11_Every one gets an annual bonus regardless of their performance                                                                     | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.88 | 0.419          |
| S15_My organization focuses efforts on training employees                                                                              | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.64 | 0.537          |
| S21_Training in my organisation has enabled me to do my job well                                                                       | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.75 | 0.580          |
| Remuneration & Training                                                                                                                | 175 |         |         | 3.59 |                |

**Figure 3: Mean Score of Remuneration & Training**



### Interpretation

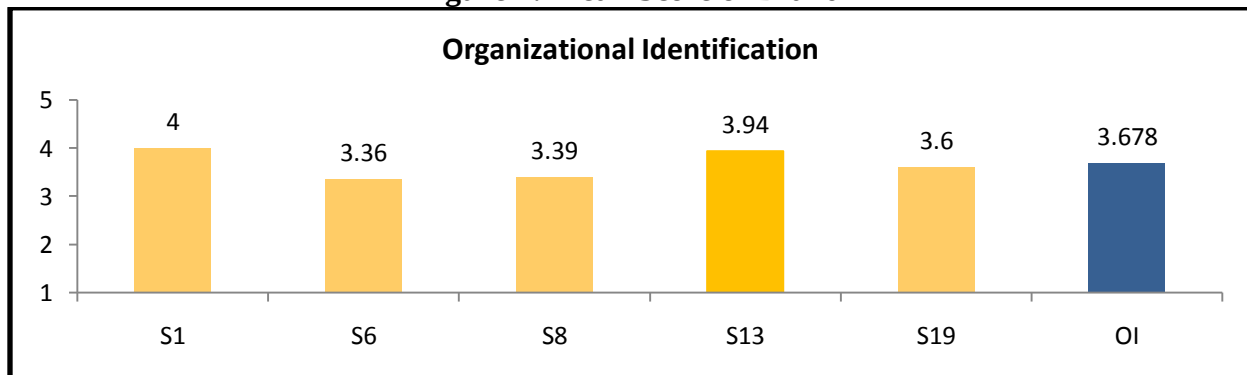
In our case, the score obtained in the parameter titled “Remuneration & training” is 3.59 Table 4 and Figure 3, which refers that the manufacturing unit pays to its employees at per industry standard and conducts training from time to time. Employees get annual bonus regardless of their performance. Trainings being conducted as per the need and requirement of the individual employee. Also training helps them substantially to perform better in their job. The company lacks in terms of individual reward and recognition area as well as supervised training are not being conducted when an employee moves to a new section. Overall it is being observed that the presence of internal marketing in terms of training is not satisfactory.

### Internal Market Research (Organisational Identification& Job description)

#### Organizational Identification

**Table 5: Mean Score of Organizational Identification**

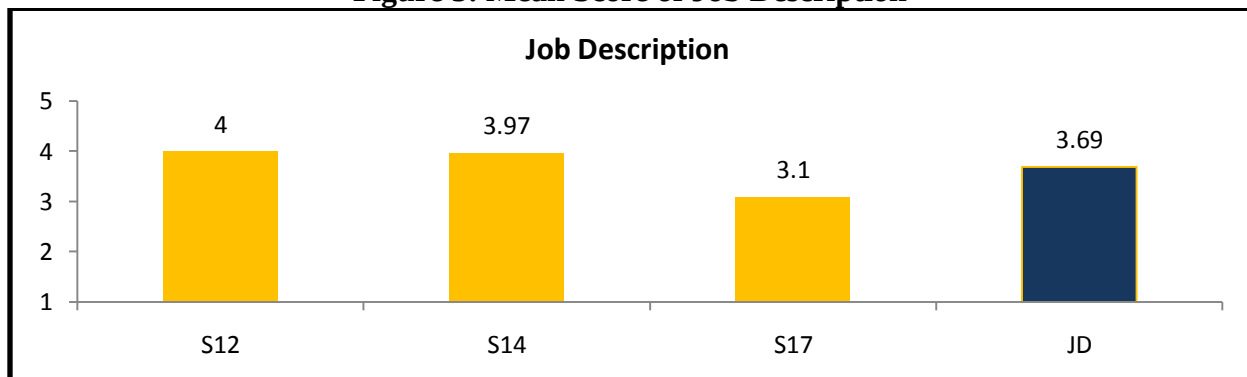
| Descriptive Statistics                                                                      | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| S1_I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization                            | 175 | 4       | 4       | 4.00  | 0.000          |
| S6_I would accept almost any type of job assignment to keep working for the organization    | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.36  | 0.752          |
| S8_My organization communicates a clear brand image to me.                                  | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.39  | 0.775          |
| S13_Employees at all levels understand the direction and key priorities of my organization. | 175 | 3       | 4       | 3.94  | 0.243          |
| S19_ The employees in the organization feel secured in the job                              | 175 | 3       | 5       | 3.60  | 0.705          |
| Organizational Identification                                                               | 175 |         |         | 3.678 |                |

**Figure 2: Mean Score of Brand****Interpretation**

A study (Rolf Van Dick et al, 2009) suggested internal marketing is basically a process in which leaders instil into the followers a sense of openness and belongingness within the organisation and as well as organisational commitment, formerly known as “Organisational identification (OI)”. Employees’ motivational level depends on how much they identify themselves as a part of organisation. Actually OI is inculcated to the subordinates by the cascading effect of the leader’s OI. In the above case the value of OI is 3.678 Table 5 and Figure 4, which implies respondents in the manufacturing sector agree with presence of Internal market orientation in the form of OI. Though none of them have agreed strongly. OI lead to internal customer attitude development, motivation and loyalty.

**Job Description****Table 6: Mean Score of Job Description**

| Descriptive Statistics                                                     | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| S12_I am satisfied with the responsibility and role that I have in my work | 175 | 4       | 4       | 4.00 | 0.000          |
| S14_I feel that I work in good working condition                           | 175 | 2       | 4       | 3.97 | 0.199          |
| S17_My supervisor allows me to use my own judgment in solving problems     | 175 | 1       | 4       | 3.10 | 0.977          |
| Job Description                                                            | 175 |         |         | 3.69 |                |

**Figure 3: Mean Score of Job Description**

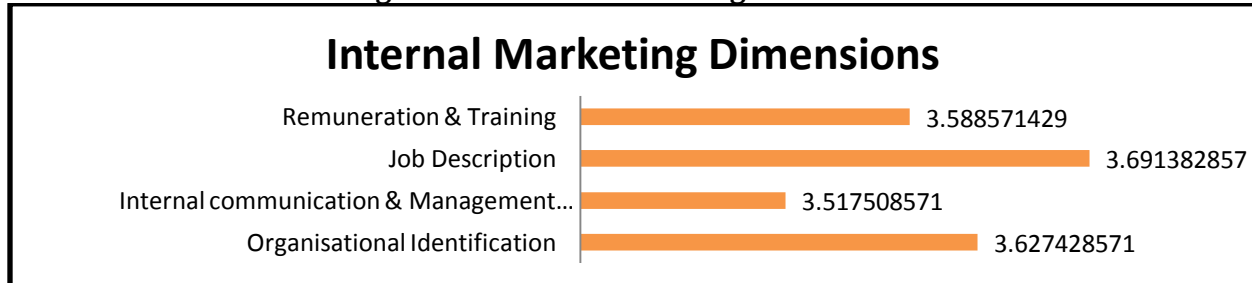


### Interpretation

In our case, it is observed (Table 6 and Figure 5) that employees are satisfied with the roles and responsibilities that they have in work. They also agreed that Laguna has a good working condition. Score obtained in using own judgment of the employee in solving problem is low. The reason might be in the manufacturing set up, whether its assembly line or other production process, technically it is impossible to solve any issue faced by any employee. It needs special expertise in that area.

### Dimensions of Internal Marketing

**Figure 4: Internal Marketing Dimensions**



### Interpretation

From all the above dimensions of internal marketing (Figure 6), it is found that the values on each dimension of “Internal Marketing” are between 3 to 4. This means that the practices of internal marketing in manufacturing sector is not practiced at a high level. Employees responses on all these dimensions are between 3(neutral) to 4 (agree), which implies

**Table 7: Group Statistics**

|                                                        | GENDER | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Organisational Identification</b>                   | Male   | 83 | 3.65542 | .382945        | .042034         |
|                                                        | Female | 92 | 3.60217 | .301636        | .031448         |
| <b>Internal Communication &amp; Management Concern</b> | Male   | 83 | 3.51979 | .220387        | .024191         |
|                                                        | Female | 92 | 3.51553 | .236742        | .024682         |
| <b>Job Description</b>                                 | Male   | 83 | 3.75904 | .300466        | .032980         |
|                                                        | Female | 92 | 3.63043 | .340425        | .035492         |
| <b>Remuneration &amp; Training</b>                     | Male   | 83 | 3.58233 | .292607        | .032118         |
|                                                        | Female | 92 | 3.59420 | .305929        | .031895         |

### Hypothesis – Testing the Dimension Scores of Internal Marketing on the Gender Difference

- H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference of the mean score of “Organisational Identification” between male & female.
- H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference of the mean score of “Internal Communication & Management Concern” between male & female.
- H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference of the mean score of “Job Description” between male & female.
- H0<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant difference of the mean score of “Remuneration & Training” between male & female.

**Table 1: Independent Samples Test**

| <b>Independent Samples Test</b>             |                             |                                                |             |                                     |           |                        |                        |                              |                                                  |              |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|
|                                             |                             | <b>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</b> |             | <b>t-test for Equality of Means</b> |           |                        |                        |                              |                                                  |              |
|                                             |                             | <b>F</b>                                       | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>t</b>                            | <b>df</b> | <b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b> | <b>Mean Difference</b> | <b>Std. Error Difference</b> | <b>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</b> |              |
|                                             |                             |                                                |             |                                     |           |                        |                        |                              | <b>Lower</b>                                     | <b>Upper</b> |
| Organisational Identification               | Equal variances assumed     | 6.864                                          | .010        | 1.027                               | 173       | .306                   | .053248                | .051863                      | -.049119                                         | .155614      |
|                                             | Equal variances not assumed |                                                |             | 1.014                               | 155.568   | .312                   | .053248                | .052496                      | -.050448                                         | .156944      |
| Internal Communication & Management Concern | Equal variances assumed     | .025                                           | .874        | .123                                | 173       | .902                   | .004266                | .034688                      | -.064201                                         | .072732      |
|                                             | Equal variances not assumed |                                                |             | .123                                | 172.823   | .902                   | .004266                | .034560                      | -.063949                                         | .072480      |
| Job Description                             | Equal variances assumed     | 1.994                                          | .160        | 2.637                               | 173       | .009                   | .128601                | .048762                      | .032356                                          | .224846      |
|                                             | Equal variances not assumed |                                                |             | 2.654                               | 172.922   | .009                   | .128601                | .048450                      | .032972                                          | .224230      |
| Remuneration & Training                     | Equal variances assumed     | .720                                           | .397        | -.262                               | 173       | .794                   | -.011874               | .045369                      | -.101421                                         | .077674      |
|                                             | Equal variances not assumed |                                                |             | -.262                               | 172.399   | .793                   | -.011874               | .045264                      | -.101217                                         | .077470      |

**Interpretation:** Except in “Job Description”, there is no significant difference observed in the mean scores between male and females shown in table 7 and 8. So male and female respondents perceived the job description facilities provided by the company in a different way. Other than gender, since the number of respondents from different categories of educational qualifications and designations are negligible, so testing the differences of weight ages on “Internal Marketing” dimensions across other demographic variables are meaningless.

### Conclusions

The importance of people in marketing of services cannot be over emphasized. It is clearly brought out in the people element of the service marketing mix consisting of product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence. Further, the employees who come in contact with the customers are considered as i) they are the service, ii) they are the organization in the customer’s eyes, iii) they are the brand and iv) they are marketers (Zeithaml, Bitner, Gremler, & Pandit, 2011).

In our study, amongst all the factors, organisational identification received the highest (3.678) score indicating that the employees identify themselves with the organisation implying the presence of internal marketing. Also in another important factor i.e. job description, the data indicates that employees agree that the working conditions are good. These findings demonstrate that IM is practiced in M/s Laguna Clothing Pvt. Ltd, Bangalore.

**Table 1: Comparison of mean scores between Manufacturing and Service Organisations**

| Sl. No. | Dimensions                                             | Manufacturing<br>(Mean score) | Service<br>(Mean score) |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1       | <b>Internal Communication &amp; Management Concern</b> | 3.52                          |                         |
| 1a      | Internal Communication                                 | -                             | 5.05                    |
| 1b      | Management Concern                                     | -                             | 3.67                    |
| 2       | <b>Remuneration &amp; Training</b>                     | 3.59                          |                         |
| 2a      | Remuneration                                           | -                             | 2.74                    |
| 2b      | Training                                               | -                             | 4.15                    |
| 3       | <b>Organisational Identification</b>                   | 3.62                          | -                       |
| 4       | <b>Job Description</b>                                 | 3.69                          | 4.41                    |
|         |                                                        | 3.61                          | 4.00                    |

(Source: Manufacturing data from this study & Service data from the study by Spiros P. Gounaris, 2005)

Thus the study achieved its objective of exploring the occurrence and extent of IM in manufacturing organisations. It can be concluded (see table 9) that IM do happen in manufacturing though to lesser extent. These findings also concur with Pitt and Foreman argument that in case of relational market where performance ambiguity is low and congruence is high goal, IM would be preferable.

The limitation of this study is very conspicuous. This study is limited to data pertaining to only one firm. In order to generalize the findings, data from more than one firm need to analyzed.

### Managerial Implications

It is well understood by the modern managers that employees play a significant role in customer satisfaction that leads to organization’s ability to perform better and gain an advantage over the competitors. Much of the research is on internal marketing in service marketing is evident by the

presence of great number of paper on the subject. Pitt and Foreman (1999), argue that internal marketing is cannot be clearly identified as necessary or unnecessary. According to them, the necessity of internal marketing might be dependent of the nature of firm's relationship with its employees. Their transactional cost perspective establishes four different levels of internal marketing viz. illegitimate to irrelevant and nice to necessary. Our study establishes that internal marketing in a manufacturing organizations would be nice.

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