

INTERNAL MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR MAINTAINING HIGH QUALITY SERVICES PROVIDED BY SERVICES FIRMS

A CASE OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN JORDAN

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Abstract

Services industry is giving great attention to internal marketing concept through which such firms can gain competitive advantage over other firms through maintaining high quality services provided by such firms. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the role of Internal marketing element on maintaining high quality services provided by Hospitality firms in Jordan as one of the services firms operating in the country .To achieve the goals of the present paper 151 questionnaires were self distributed out of which only 141 were usable for analysis. The population of the present study were all managers working in Hospitality firms operating in Amman city The Capital of Jordan out of which the sample were selected randomly in order to evaluate the relationship between the independent variable of internal marketing elements namely; employees training, employees motivation, and employees empowerment and the dependent variable represented by maintaining high quality services provided by hospitality firms; which was in the proposed model. Later on the data were analyzed using SPSS program. The findings of the present study show that there is a positive relationship between internal marketing elements and services quality of hospitality firms and recommended that such firms should build up an organizational culture in services industry which foster and enhance internal marketing applications due to the benefits such companies can gain when applying it.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Employee Training, Motivation, Employee Empowerment, Quality, Hospitality Industry, Jordan

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INTRODUCTION

Internal marketing is applicable in both services and non services organizations, but evidences indicate that internal marketing plays more critical role in services organizations particularly in hospitality firms where a strong emphasis is given to employees as an element of the services marketing mix since the ultimate evaluation of hospitality is based on the experience customer have had with employees .Therefore , internal marketing as a management strategy and philosophy is considered to be the arms of hospitality services firms through which influencing employees' attitudes and behavior through employees selection, training, motivations, empowerment, retaining and development which all contributes significantly in improving hospitality services quality .Since employees of services organizations play an important role in delivering high quality services to external customers; therefore it is not only necessary for employees to understand the organizational processes, products and procedures, but also equally to be knowledgeable and skilled to handle and manage internal relationship, which enables them to provide high quality services to the customers .This motivates hospitality firms' management to treat employees as an internal customer which foster psychological safety and trust between the employees and management of hospitality firms (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003). This would reduces uncertainty and increases security among the employees along with loyalty to the organization which creates accommodating environment for both the parties involved based on the experience will have with the firms' employees (Koteler and Armstrong, 2006).

The role of human resources can not be neglected here, since it offer tools that can apply internal marketing effectively through employees hiring, training, motivating and development which would improve interactive marketing performances through customer – focused and skillful employees in hospitality industry (Ahmed and Rafiq ,2003, Gronroos, 2007 and Caradie, 2011). It is therefore necessary for hospitality managers to design a hospitality product that will be so attractive to customers to adopt by concentrating on those services areas in which creativity is evident and manifested through personal contacts and personal experiences between staff and gust of hospitality organizations because this is what gust see and feel and what employees see, from the hospitality porter to the services wanted by the gust, and from the front desk clerk to the waiting staff. To achieve this in a proper way, it is necessary for hospitality firms to focus on training and professional development, in which knowledge, skills, and motivation are the important factors that enable employees to successfully perform their tasks with high quality (Galicic and Laskarin, 2014). Many hospitality firms realized that providing high quality services to its customers starts with giving good services to its employees, therefore marketing techniques should be used by hospitality firms' management to market

itself to its own employees who will be satisfied and motivated to provide and maintain high quality services to the external customers.

The present study provides an extensive explanation for the mechanism through which internal marketing elements play in maintaining high quality services of hospitality firms in Jordan through training, motivating, empowerment and development of employees. As of 2013, the hospitality industry in Jordan accounts for 7.7 percent of the country's GDP (down from 2010, when hospitality brought in 14 percent). In 2012, the travel industry generated \$3.5 billion dollars despite the fact that the actual number of visitors dropped 7.3 percent.

This paper provides an analysis of the relationship between internal marketing variables and services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan. The study will contribute to understanding of marketing as it is applied by services firms and understanding internal marketing in specific.

Rationale of the Research

Internal marketing is a philosophy for managing personnel and a systematic way of developing and enhancing a service organizational output and it is becoming a part of the operations of hospitality firms with the aim of training, motivating , empowering and developing employees in order to maintain high quality services specially with the highly competitive environment in the hospitality industry where competition is increasing day by day and more focus is given to employees and services quality in the industry. Therefore the present study is considering an important issue for hospitality firms where employees are an important element in achieving and maintaining high quality services who are in direct contact with the external customers .This forces hospitality firms to pay more attention on internal marketing strategy in order to apply the concept and achieve the goals of the firm.

Research Problem

Human resources are an important element in the hospitality industry and their stability enhance high quality services provided by them , for this internal marketing has received considerable coverage in the services sector which forced managers to give great attention to the internal marketing through investing in human resources particularly to services providers and who are in direct contact with customers .This encourage such firms to invest in human capital so that it can face the tough competition In the industry. Based on the above mentioned the following are the research questions

- 1-What is the level internal marketing application in hospitality industry in Jordan?
- 2- What is the role of internal marketing in maintaining high quality services of hospitality industry in Jordan?

3- What is the role of internal marketing processes in providing high quality services through employee training, motivation, empowerment and development in hospitality industry in Jordan?

Research Objectives

- 1- Identifying the concept of internal marketing .
- 2- Analyzing the importance of internal marketing in hospitality industry.
- 3- Determining the elements of internal marketing.
- 4- Knowing the role of internal marketing elements (namely, training, Motivating, empowerment and development) in maintaining high quality services quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal Marketing

Internal marketing concept was first adopted by services and its main concern was "to get everyone who was involved in services encounter – the first line or contact staff-to perform better in the interaction with customers" (Aburub et al., 2011).

Internal marketing defined by Cahill (1996) as the process of attracting ,motivating, developing and retaining qualified employees through job- products and satisfying their needs. On the other hand internal marketing is a philosophy of treating employees as customers indeed called internal customers. Johnson et al., 1986 defined internal marketing as "a service firms to provide all members of the organization with a clear understanding of the corporate mission and objectives and with training , motivating ,and evaluating performances to achieve the desired goals in a better way i,e high quality services." This indicate that the essence of internal marketing in services firms is to enhance and maintain high quality services provided to the market.

Kotler and Armstrong (2006) has developed services marketing triangle, which explains the relationship between services firms and its employees and customers. As shown in figure (2) there are three forms of marketing activities in the hospitality industry namely; internal, external and interactive marketing.

First type of marketing is the external marketing which represents hospitality firms' offering to external customers (guests) represented by pricing, promoting, and distributing hospitality services. The second form of marketing activities in hospitality industry is the internal marketing which involves the work carried out by hospitality firms to educate, motivate, train, empower, develop and retain highly loyal employees in the front –stage and back stage who are responsible for providing high quality services in order to satisfy customers.

Finally, there is an interactive marketing which represent the skills, talents and experiences of the staff members of the hospitality firm to communicate and deal effectively with the customers (guests).

Elements of Internal Marketing

It is to be noted that hospitality industry firms depends greatly on human resources in providing services to the customers where there is a high level of interactions between customers and employees of hospitality firms which makes such interaction an important reason for the success or the failure of such firms. For this reasons all hospitality firms are taking into consideration internal marketing tools and elements on order to assure high quality services provided to the customers. The following section gives a clear summary of the internal marketing elements namely:

1-Employees Selection - The most important starting point of internal marketing in the hospitality firms is selection of employees. This is to be done effectively, there should be a faire selection of highly skilled , talented and qualified personnel who are responsible to provide high quality services in hospitality firms where direct contact between employees and customers take place. For this reason it is necessary for managers in hospitality industry to pay great important to selection procedure of employees starting from prospecting to appointing them. (Tanner et al., 2014).

2-Employees Training - Employees training enables them to experiment with the latest technologies in such a way that something is created and this adds to the firms' overall knowledge stock which will be responsible for providing high quality services in the hospitality firms (Bauernschuster et al., (2008). The most important component of quality management in hospitality industry is focusing on services production personnel through strengthening personal accountability, giving recognition to co- workers, and expanding the areas of individual decision – making on the part of the workers, which can be trained effectively to enhance services quality through activating the creativity and cooperation between workers involved in the process of preparing and providing hospitality firms. Training of employees is necessary for several reasons (Chung,1997):

- 1-physical closeness of staff and guests in services provision and consumption
- 2- The time the staff and guests spent together
- 3-The feedback tat the staff receive directly from the guest
- 4- The amount the information that the guest provide and,
- 5- the fact that hospitality employees understand the satisfied guest are essential if they are to keep their jobs.

Investing in training in hospitality industry create a climate of constant learning that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas among employees, thereby promoting the generation of knowledge and innovation which will lead to improving services quality and create satisfied customers and employees.(Lan and Ngo, 2004; Choi ,2007; West and Richter ,2008; Nguyen et al., 2010;Sung and Choi ,2013;and Mbengo and Chinakidzwa 2014).

3- Employees Motivation - There is a growing trends in today' business for recognizing the need to humanize jobs and to give the employees more and more responsibility to enhance their job satisfaction, particularly in the hospitality industry where low employees satisfaction is closely related to the lack of motivations (financially and non financially) and frustration of operators which will be reflected directly on the customers where direct contact takes place with employees and finally affect negatively the services quality, so satisfied employees can only produce satisfied customers who are treated well and motivated by hospitality firms (Laiden et al., 2000;Bhatnagar ,2007; Kim et al., 2012; Galicic and Laskarin , 2014).

4- Employees Empowerment - Empowerment is the process of delegating power and authority to employees so that objectives of the organization is achieved. Empowerment of employees starts from upper level management to the lower level managers which enables all employees of the firm to well understand its vision, mission, and values which makes the employees feel themselves motivated ,risk taking and initiator and all these are reflected positively on the quality of the services provided by employees in the hospitality industry(Laiden et al., 2000 ;Bhatnagar, 2007; Tutar et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2012; Galicic and Laskarin , 2014 ;and Mbengo and Chinakidzwa 2014).

Empowerment of employees as an element of internal marketing can achieve various benefits to the hospitality firms where employees are in some circumstances are responsible to take the decision immediately, these benefits are motivating factor for employees ,reducing the burden of top management, qualifying subordinates to take responsibility and exploring talented and highly qualified employees who can be responsible for improving the services quality (Rafiq and Ahmed 2003).

Internal Marketing and Quality

The relationship between internal marketing and services depends on the quality of hospitality services and their relation to customer satisfaction , this study is a try to fill the gap between internal marketing and services quality in hospitality industry in Jordan from managerial point of view where internal marketing strategies and tools are applicable on them and they can determine the real impact of such tools on their efficiency and performances which are responsible for providing certain level of services quality which measure the differences

between actual services performances and expected services performances. Researches indicate that to get high quality services it is necessary to satisfy employee who are responsible directly for customer satisfaction in hospitality industry effectively. This assure the fact that satisfying employees through different internal marketing tools such as proper employees selection, employees training, employees motivation, employees empowerment, and employees development may result in satisfying customers since hospitality firms' employees intercommunicate directly with customers while providing the services and their activities affect services quality dimensions represented by credibility, responsiveness, reliability, courtesy, competency, and empathy which are proved by different researches that it may have great impact on customer satisfaction and services quality directly (Ling, 2000; Deghan, 2006; Zeithmal and Britner ,2006; Lovelock and Writz ,2014 ; and Aburuob et al., 2014).

Hospitality marketers should adopt internal marketing tools in order to accomplish hospitality firms goals which are directly related to services quality namely: (Galicic and Laskarin, 2014) attracting new guests, achieving the satisfaction of existing guests and achieving employees satisfaction.

This new trend in hospitality industry adopted by marketers ensures that marketers don not focus on selling only , but on achieving employees satisfaction as well as guests satisfaction which all come if the quality of services is up to and / or exceeded the expectations of the guests. This process is known as internal marketing which implies great changes in the hospitality which was focusing on the marketing mix , but rather on the guest satisfaction and employees satisfaction. Hospitality firms that apply internal marketing can gain a number of competitive advantages (Ozretic ,2010; Ferrell and Hartline 2008; and Galicic and Laskarin, 2014):

- 1- Effective communication among employees.
- 2- Enhancing employees satisfaction and loyalty.
- 3-Increasing firms productivity and performances.
- 4-Maintaining high quality services.
- 5-Achieving hospitality firms' goals, and
- 6-improving guests relations with public relations.

Conceptual Research Model and Hypothesis

Based on the literature reviewed the researcher proposed following hypotheses and developed the research model as shown in figure (1).

H1 Internal marketing elements positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan .

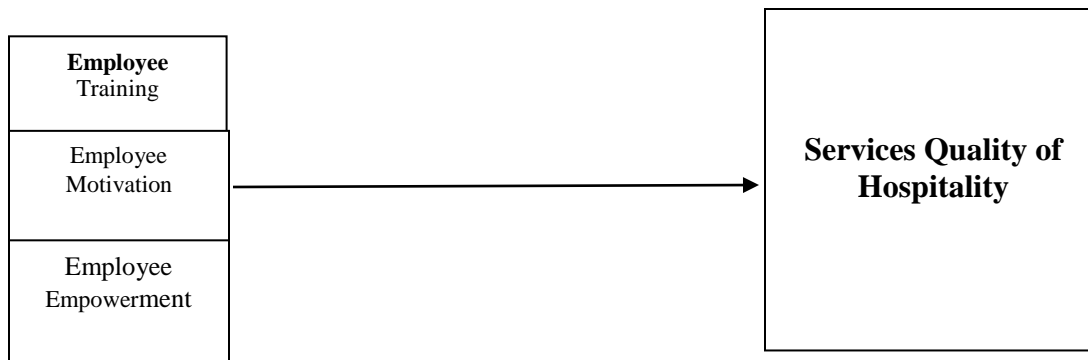
Out of this main hypothesis the following sub –hypothesis are proposed

H1a Employee training positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan.

H1b Employee motivation positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan.

H1c Employee empowerment positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan.

Figure 1: Proposed Research Model



METHODOLOGY

The population of the present study consists of all managers working in hospitality industry (Local and Foreign) in Amman city the capital of Jordan which is estimated that hospitality firms working in 193 firms (<http://www.booking.com/city/Jo/Amman>). The researchers covered only the hospitality headquarter firms located in Amman city the capital of Jordan, where the targeted respondents were expected to exist. The data is collected by using a self-administered questionnaire that measures Internal marketing effect in maintaining high quality services provided by hospitality services firms namely employee motivation ,employee empowerment and employees training. The questionnaire was designed after a preliminary observation on the practice and reviewing the available literature. The researchers circulated the research questionnaire among the parties that had the ability and knowledge to answer it. Therefore, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the managers, which was later on collected.

The questionnaire is drafted in English and divided into two main parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions related to demographic variable of the respondents regarding their years of experience in their current position and experience in the observed hospitality firm. The second part of questionnaire containing Likert-scaled items scoring from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure all the variables used in the study related to internal marketing and its impact on maintaining high quality services. A common or traditional method of measuring the effect of internal marketing elements on managers attitudes towards

maintaining high quality services of hospitality services firms operating in Amman city the capital of Jordan.

The questionnaire of the present study was designed by the researcher, taking into consideration the following internal marketing dimensions according to their functions and goals were considered:-

Internal marketing variables as independent variables:

- Employees Training (10 Questions).
- Employees Motivation(6 Questions).
- Employees Empowerment (9 Questions).

Services quality as a dependent variable (9 Questions)

156 questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents; 141 were received in a usable format, indicating a response rate of 90.4%. One way to assess the potential for non-response bias is to compare data from late respondents to data from on time respondents based on Wallace & Mellor (1988) and Oppenheim (1992). In the current study three responses were received following a reminder. Those late responses were not significantly different from responses in any of the analysis reported in the following results section.

To investigate study instrument validity, the researchers consulted ten experts (Professionals and Academics). The experts were asked to make sure that the research questionnaire does not miss any element that might affect the study results or create bias in the questions. The researchers used Cronbach's Alpha to check the questionnaire for all of its components which equals 0.8901 for all the items of the constructs used in the study. Furthermore, reliability analysis allowed the researchers to study the measurement scales and the items that make them up.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The majority of the respondents 67 % as shown in Table (1) reported that they had five or more years of experience in their current position.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the respondents experience in the Hospitality Firm

Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5 Years	32	22.69%
6-9 Years	28	19.85 %
10-12 Years	36	25.53 %
More than 13 Years	45	31.91%
Total	141	100 %

Almost 71.64% of the respondents declared are males, while only 28.36 reported that they are females in the observed hospitality firm as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the respondents Sex in the Hospitality Firms

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	101	71.64%
Female	40	28.36%
Total	141	100%

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Rank in the Bank

Rank	Frequency	Percentage
IT Manager	19	13.47%
Human Resource Manager	25	17.73%
Marketing Manager	26	18.43%
Financial Manager	23	16.31%
Public Relation Manager	12	8.51%
Customer Services Manager	21	14.89%
Catering Manager	15	10.63%
Total	141	100%

Hypothesis Testing

H1 Internal marketing elements positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan

Table 4: Overall Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	T	Sign
1	0.46 a	0.22	0.21	8.19	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), hospitality services quality.

Table 5: Regression Analysis for Hypotheses Testing

α	β	R	R ²	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	Independent Variable
1.234	0.210	0.423	0.1789	7.95	0.000	0.412	Employees Training
1.011	0.231	0.681	0.4637	12.33	0.000	0.202	Employees Motivation
0.942	0.253	0.347	0.1204	6.21	0.000	0.221	Employees Empowerment
<i>Degree of freedom (n-1)=140</i>				<i>T-Table Value =1.98</i>		<i>Significant (a>= 0,05)</i>	

Multiple Regression Analysis was employed for testing the three independent variables from factor analysis. Results of this study indicate that 22% of the variance of hospitality services quality provided by hospitality firms was explained by these three variables with a significant T value of 8.19 being significant at P less than or equal (0 .05) which is equal 0.000. Therefore, there is an evidence that these three factors are significantly influencing hospitality firms managers' towards services quality of hospitality firms . The results of coefficient values of regression analysis is shown in table (4). This means that H1 is accepted which states that internal marketing elements presented in this study (employees training ,employees motivation and employees empowerment) positively influencing hospitality services quality provided by hospitality firms from managerial perspective .

H1a Employee training positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan

Upon the result of simple regression shown in table (5), the analysis of linear regression shows correlation between employees training and services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan (R = 42.3%).

In addition, the results show that (17.89%) of the variance in the services quality of hospitality firm in Jordan frequency is explained by employees training programs adopted by hospitality firms in Jordan. On the other hand T value is (7.95) and this value is significant at P equal or less than (0.05), where the P value is (0.000), which is less than the significant level. According to the previous findings, the researcher reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that perceived employees training as an element of internal marketing positively influences services quality of hospitality firms operating in Jordan .

H1b Employee motivation positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan

Upon the results of simple regression shown in table (5), the analysis of linear regression shows correlation between employees motivation as an element of internal marketing and services quality provided by hospitality firms in Jordan (R =68.1%).In addition, the result shows that (46.87%) of the variance in services quality provided by hospitality firms in Jordan is explained by employees motivation as an element of internal marketing. On the other hand, T value is (12.33) and this value is significant at P equal or less than (0.05); where the P value is (0.000), which is less than the significant level. According to the pervious findings, the researcher reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that employees motivation as an element of internal marketing positively influences services quality of hospitality firms operating in Jordan.

H1c Employee empowerment positively influence services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan

Upon the results of simple regression shown in table (5), the analysis of linear regression shows correlation between employees empowerment as an element of internal marketing and services quality of hospitality firms in Jordan ($R = 34.70\%$). This result shows that (12.04%) of the variance in services quality of hospitality firms is explained employees empowerment as an element of internal marketing. On other hand, T value is (6.212) and this value is significant at P equal or less than (0.05), where the P value is (0.000), which is less than the significant level. According to previous results, the researcher reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that employees empowerment as an element of internal marketing positively influences hospitality services quality in Jordan.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Internal marketing is one of the most important keys for services firms particularly hospitality firms were people are responsible for the success of the operation of such firms. Employees need to be trained, motivated, and empowered so that high quality service can be achieved. Hospitality firms working in Amman city the capital of Jordan must give a great attention to internal marketing elements in their operation which can ensure giving employees good skills and competencies to provide high quality services. Hospitality firms should concentrate on training program for the employees in front stage and back stage which can produce positive performances and high quality services. On the other hand, hospitality firms should encourage employees through motivational programs and empowering them to achieve the goals of the firms in an excellent way and ensure high quality services for hospitality firms.

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