

Effects of Internal Marketing on Employees' Customer Orientation in Ethiopian Airlines

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Abstract

Internal marketing is taking employees as the most invaluable asset of an organization and treating them as internal customers because this result in gaining competitive advantage by organization respected. This research paper was conducted to examine the effect of internal marketing on customer orientation in Ethiopian Airlines. The target population of the study was employees of Ethiopian Airlines assigned in the area where there is a direct contact with customers either in person or through telephone. The data collection resulted from 208 feedbacks received from employees' working at Passenger Service, Ethiopian Cargo, Global Call Center, ADD-CBT and Baggage Service, ADD- Sales office-Passenger, Ticket office and Ethiopian Cargo Sales. In addition to correlation analysis, further regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of internal marketing on customer orientation. The result indicate that all selected dimensions of internal marketing have significant relation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment where both job satisfaction and organizational commitment have significant effect on customer orientation as well.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Training and Development, Communication, Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Organization Commitment, Customer Orientation

Introduction and statement of the study

"I have always believed that the way you treat your employees is the way they treat your customers". Sir Richard Branson.

In today's competitive world, service giving organizations give high value to their customers. In fact, many sayings and proverbs are posted in eye catching way to attract and retain customers. Gaining satisfaction and loyalty of external customers is an impossible task unless the needs and wants of human force (internal customers) in organizations are met; internal marketing being the most important approach that helps organizations in this direction. When an organization considers its employees as a cost related asset, the organization might fail in today's competitive world as employees are one of the competitive advantages to an organization.

Internal marketing 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 (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003)

In general, Ethiopian Airlines has seven separate strategic business units. All these units have different nature of business and different types of customers. The company has set its vision 2025 to become the most competitive and leading aviation group in Africa by providing safe, market driven and customer focused passenger and cargo transport, aviation training, flight catering, MRO and Ground Service. In order to realize this vision, Ethiopian Airlines needs to have eligible, hardworking and customer oriented employees, where this starts from recruiting and retaining the most qualified employees, especially for those unites whose employees make direct contact with external customers. These departments are Passenger Services, Ethiopian Cargo, Global Call Centre, ADD-CBT and Baggage Service, ADD- Sales office-Passenger, Ticket office and Ethiopian Cargo Sales.

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether internal marketing has relation with employees' customer orientation at Ethiopian Airlines and to assess its effect on service personnel customer orientation in the selected departments.

The second research gap that made this research unique was absence of sufficient research conducted on internal marketing in relation with customer orientation studied on Airline industries.

Research Questions

- Does Internal Marketing have effect on employees' customer orientation?
- What is the effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on customer orientation?
- By which mediation factor is customer orientation highly affected?

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of internal marketing in employees' customer orientation in Ethiopian Airlines. Internal Marketing has different but related dimensions which were previously stated in the dimension of Internal Marketing part, among stated dimensions, for this study paper purpose the most commonly quoted dimensions were selected. These are Training and Development, Communication, and Motivation.

Training and Development is defined as a system for assisting employees to develop within their current jobs or advance to fulfill their goals for the future (Karen, 2007). Employee development programs should contain the three "Cs: core workplace competencies, contextual framework within which the organization conducts its business, and corporate citizenship. The core competencies are, learning to learn, communication and collaboration, creative thinking and problem solving, and career self-management (Kottke, 1999). The primary goals of many employee development programs is to communicate the vision of the organization, help workers understand the corporate values and culture, and show employees at every level how they can help the company succeed (Gerbman, 2000). They exist in order to support business's strategic goals by providing learning opportunities and engraining the organizational culture (Kottke, 1999). Although the need for technical training in a specific position will never disappear, understanding an organization's culture and fitting into it are becoming increasingly important for employee success. Two factors that are crucial to the success of employee development programs are keeping them current and putting learning in the hands of employees. (Karen, 2007).

Tsai and Tang (2008), Gounaris (2006), Bansal, Mendelson, and Sharma (2001), Varey and Lewis (1999) and Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) has selected training and development among the dimension where internal marketing can be explained of; hence it has been selected to be included for this case study.

Communication for the purpose of study can be defined as accurate and open flow of information between employees and management. Internal communication is about relationships and creating a respected atmosphere for all the people within the organization (Argenti, 2009).

There are three communication types; top-down communication occurs when communication flows from people at higher levels to those at lower levels in the organizational hierarchy, such as tasks like job instructions, providing information and feedback. Upward communication includes messages flowing from subordinates to superiors and continues up the organizational hierarchy. These types of communications convey messages such as what subordinates are doing, unsolved work problems and suggestions for improvements. Horizontal communication consists of messages between employees of the organization with equal power, messages like task coordination, problem solving, sharing information, conflict resolution and building relationships fall under this kind of communication. (Adler & Elmhurst, 1996)

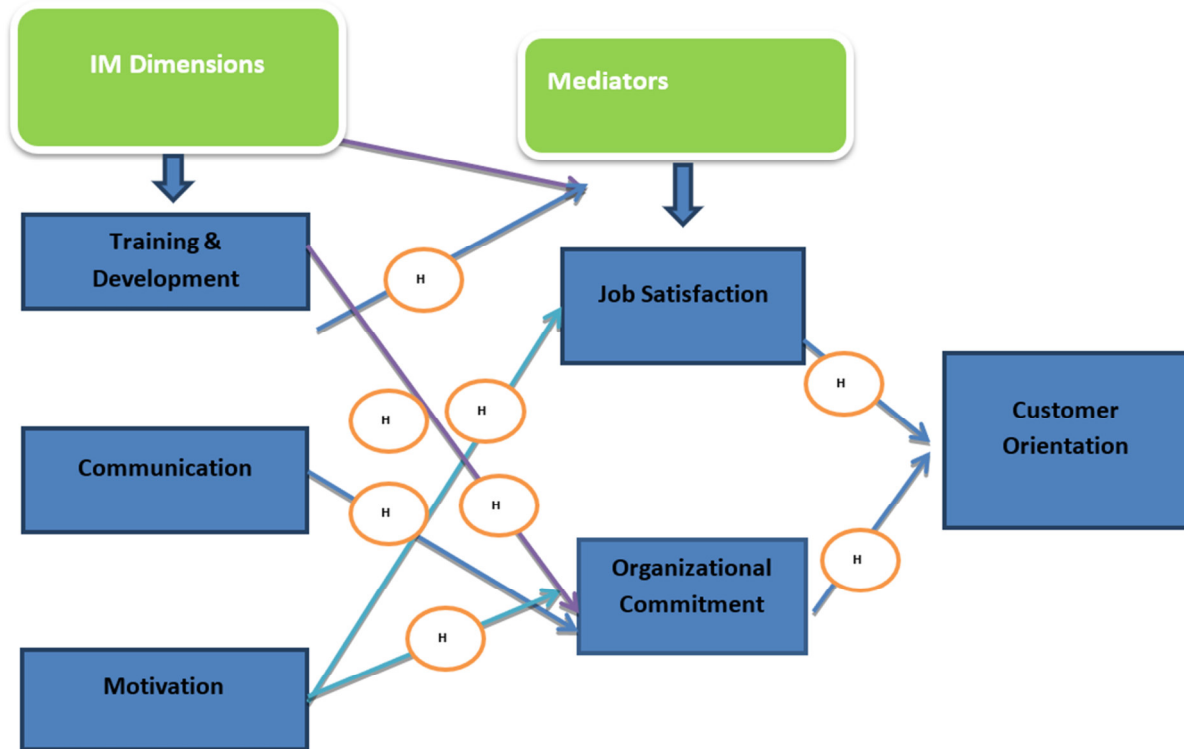
People must be able to ask questions and expect to be answered and also they should be able to suggest improvements or come up with new ideas is an essential part of employee self-confidence, commitment and participation. In order for employees to feel that they are a part of the organization and that they really matter, upward communication is very important (Dunmore, 2002). It has also been selected by different scholars as one of internal marketing dimensions. Below are the lists of scholars Bansal, Mendelson, and Sharma (2001), Varey and Lewis (1999) and Ahmed and Rafiq (2003).

Motivation: Webster's dictionary defined motivation as something that causes a person to act; hence for the purpose of this study any initiation taken by employers to motivate employees is included in motivation. Such features are rewards, incentives, feedbacks, appraisals and abundant salary. Scholars that stated motivation or imitation taken by employers to motivate employees are Tsai and Tang (2008), Gounaris (2006), Rafiq and Ahmed (1993) Bansal, Mendelson, and Sharma (2001), Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1991)

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment has been identified as intervening factors between internal marketing and customer orientation. Job satisfaction is defined as job satisfaction as the extent of affective reactions to which frontline employees likes their jobs. It is a positive emotion since frontline employees can benefit from salary or bonuses from satisfying customers. According to the affect theory of social exchange, researchers have suggested that job satisfaction of frontline employees would have positive effect on customer orientation behavior (Rastegar, Reza & Alireza, 2012). Job satisfaction is also defined as the extent people are satisfied with their work or a set of favorable or unfavorable feelings and emotions with which employees view their work (Newstrom & Davis, 1997).

Organizational commitment is 'typically conceived of as an individual's psychological bond to the organization, including a sense of job involvement, loyalty, and a belief in the values of the organization'. According to another definition, organizational commitment is defined in terms of the strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organization. Organizational commitment is characterized by three factors: A strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, A willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and A definite desire to maintain organizational membership (Porter, Streers & Boulian, 1973)

Figure 1;The Conceptual Frame Work

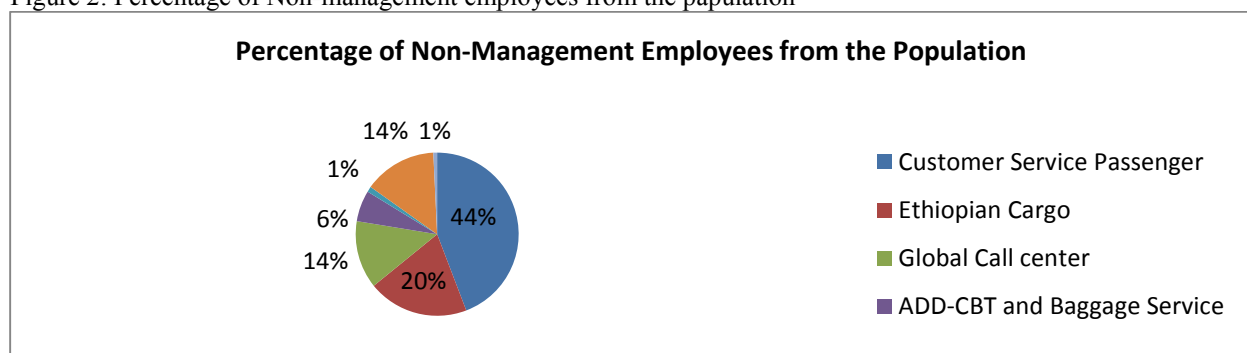


RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The general purpose of the study was to examine the effect of internal marketing on customer orientation in Ethiopian Airlines specifically on non-management employees working in department where there is direct contact with external customers either in person or through telephone. Hence, the sample population of this study was employees working in below mentioned seven departments; Passenger Service, Ethiopian Cargo, Global Call center, ADD-CBT and Baggage Service, Ticket office, ADD- Sales office-Passenger, and Ethiopian Cargo Sales.

Primary and secondary data source of data were used.. The target population of this study was non-management employees of Ethiopian Airlines specifically who are working in areas where there is a direct contact with external customer in person or through telephone. The selected departments were Passenger Service, Ethiopian Cargo, Global Call center, ADD-CBT and Baggage Service, ADD- Sales office-Passenger and Ticket office. The total sum of employees working in these departments is 633.

Figure 2: Percentage of Non-management employees from the population



The survey size of this study was determined using indicative table (Sample Size Indicative Table, 2013)

Table 1: Sample Size Indicative Table

Population size	Confidence level = 95%			Confidence level = 99%		
	Margin of error			Margin of error		
	5%	2,5%	1%	5%	2,5%	1%
100	80	94	99	87	96	99
500	217	377	475	285	421	485
1.000	278	606	906	399	727	943
10.000	370	1.332	4.899	622	2.098	6.239
100.000	383	1.513	8.762	659	2.585	14.227
500.000	384	1.532	9.423	663	2.640	16.055
1.000.000	384	1.534	9.512	663	2.647	16.317

The technique selected for this study was stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling was used when the population is classified into different group/strata. As per Table 1, the population of this study is a combination of different departments which make the group heterogeneous. In case of heterogeneous group, the population should be stratified into strata based on their commonness; in this case each separate department has been defined as strata. This sampling technique was also selected as results are known to be more reliable. Thus, the developed questionnaires were distributed by adopting proportional allocating strategy to each stratum using simple random sampling

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses were conducted to indicate if there were any violations of the assumptions of multicollinearity, normality, and reliability test was conducted. To indicate if multicollinearity was violated, the tolerance, VIF and condition indexes were evaluated from a Colinearity Diagnostics table in SPSS.. The tolerance values for each of the variables scales ranged from .540 to .615 which are not less than .20; thus, further verifying that the assumption is not violated. This was verified by the VIF values which ranged from 1.627 to 1.850 which are under 10 suggesting that the assumption of no multicollinearity is tenable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The condition index indicated values ranging from 1.000 to 22.701. All variables values are below 30 so none of which suggest serious multicollinearity problems.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine effect of internal marketing on customer orientation. In this survey, eight hypotheses were developed to study the indirect impact of internal marketing dimensions on customer orientation through job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Relationship between Internal Marketing and Job Satisfaction (H1, H3 & H5)

Different scholars have stated various variables as dimension of internal marketing, among those variables, for the purpose of this survey, only three were selected as dimension of internal marketing. The impact of these three independent variables; Training and development (TD), Communication (CM) and Motivation (MT) were examined on the first dependent variable i.e. job satisfaction using multiple regression.

Table 2: Model Summary for Job Satisfaction

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.642 ^a	.413	.404	.88735

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation, Communication, TrngDvt

The above regression model presents how much of the variance in the measure of Job satisfaction is explained by the underlying internal marketing elements. The predictor variables i.e. Training and Development, Communication & Motivation have accounted 40 % of adjusted R square which indicates 40% of the variance is explained by the predictors whereas the remaining 60% are explained by other variable of this model.

Table 3: ANOVA of Job Satisfaction

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	112.818	3	37.606	47.760	.000 ^b
	Residual	160.627	204	.787		
	Total	273.444	207			

a. Dependent Variable: JobSat

b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation, Communication, TrngDvt

The above ANOVA table shows the acceptability of the model. The p-value is less < 0.05 i.e. 0.000 which indicates the variation is explained by the model is not due to chance

Table 4: Summary of Coefficient on Job Satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
	(Constant)	-.071	.366				-.195	.846
1	TrngDvt	.232	.131	.121	1.767	.079	-.027	.491
	Communication	.261	.070	.252	3.727	.000	.123	.399
	Motivation	.477	.084	.384	5.670	.000	.311	.642

a. Dependent Variable: JobSat

The above coefficient table shows the constant, beta value and p-value of the variables to examine the significance of set hypothesis. The significance level of each variable is P-value. .079, .000, .000 and their standardized coefficients are 0.121, 0.252 & 0.384. The p-value of training is above 0.05 which implies that it has no significant relationship with the job satisfaction.

Accordingly, the first hypothesis which states there is a positive relationship between employee training and development and job satisfaction is not supported by the data collected on this survey as its p-value is 0.079 which is greater than 0.05.

The second hypothesis developed states; there is a positive relationship between Communication and Job satisfaction. The hypothesis has been accepted as its p- value is no different than zero. Henceforth, we conclude that communication has significant relation with job satisfaction.

The last independent variable that presumed to have relation with job satisfaction is motivation. The fifth hypothesis states that there is a positive relationship between motivation and Job Satisfaction. The p-value of motivation is no different than zero, hence the hypothesis is accepted. The regression equation developed is $Job\ Satisfaction = -.071 + 0.232 * TD + 0.261 * CM + 0.477 * MT + e$

Relationship between Internal Marketing and Organization Commitment (H2, H4 & H6)

The impact of the above three independent variables; Training and development (TD), Communication (CM) and Motivation (MT) were examined on the second independent variable organizational commitment

Table 5: Model Summary for Organizational Commitment

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.578 ^a	.334	.324	.55030	.334	34.051	3	204	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation, Communication, TrngDvt

According to the above regression model, the variance in the measure of organizational commitment explained by the underlying internal marketing elements is 33.4%, the remaining 64.6% are explained by other variable of this model.

Table 6: ANOVA for Organizational Commitment

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.936	3	10.312	34.051	.000 ^b
	Residual	61.778	204	.303		
	Total	92.713	207			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Communicate

b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivation, Communication, Training Development

The above ANOVA table shows the acceptability of the model. The p-value is less < 0.05 i.e. 0.000 which indicates the variation is explained by the model is not due to chance

Table 7: Summary of Coefficient on Organizational Commitment

Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.937	.227		8.533	.000
	TrngDvt	.366	.081	.329	4.493	.000
	Communication	.124	.043	.206	2.861	.005
	Motivation	.108	.052	.150	2.081	.039

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Communicate

The above Table 13 reveals that the significance level of each variable where is P-values are .000, .005, .039 and their standardized coefficients are 0.329, 0.206 & 0.150. The p-value of all the independent variables are below 0.05 which implies all have a significant relationship with the independent variable; Organizational Commitment; hence the second hypothesis which states that there is a positive relation between Employees Training and Development and Organizational Commitment is accepted because the P-value of Training and development is 0.000 which is less than 0.05, hence the independent variable; Training and Development has significant relationship with organizational commitment.

The fourth hypothesis which states, there is a positive relationship between Communication and Organizational Commitment is also accepted because the P-value of communication is 0.005 which is less than 0.05, hence communication has significant relationship with organizational commitment; hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The six hypotheses which states, there is a positive relationship between motivation and Organizational Commitment is also accepted due to the P-value of Motivation is 0.039 which is less than 0.05; hence Motivation has significant relationship with organizational commitment. The regression equation developed is
Therefore, Organization Commitment = 1.937+0.329TD+0.206CM+0.150MT+e

Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Customer Orientation (H7)

The ultimate goal of this study was to examine if internal marketing has effect on customer orientation through job satisfaction and organizational commitment; consequently, further regression analysis was conducted taking customer orientation as constant variable and job satisfaction as predictors.

The regression analysis shows that Job satisfaction has a weak but significant positive effect on Customer orientation (P<0.05; β =0.184). Thus, H7, proposing there is a positive relationship between Job Satisfaction and Customer Orientation is accepted due to the fact that the p-value of job satisfaction is 0.008.

Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Customer Orientation (H8)

The effect of internal marketing on customer orientation through organizational commitment was also investigated using regression analysis. The test finding indicates that Organizational Commitment has a significant effect on Customer Orientation (P<0.05; β = 0.498). Therefore the last hypothesis, hypothesis eight, which states there is a positive relationship between Organizational Commitment and Customer Orientation is accepted. The regression equation is Customer Orientation= α+βJS*JS+βOC*OC+e, where this implies Job Satisfaction and OC shows Organization Commitment.

Discussion of the Result

This study was aimed to examine the impact of internal marketing on customer orientation on Ethiopian Airlines through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Training and Development, Communication and Motivation were selected as internal marketing dimensions because they have been repeatedly used by various researchers as it has been clearly indicated in literature review part. For the purpose of this study eight hypotheses were developed, brief discussion on each hypothesis is given below.

H1: Training and Development is positively related to Job Satisfaction.

According to the test result of this study, the data collected didn't support the hypothesis developed and showed training and development has no significant relationship with Job satisfaction, nevertheless many researchers studied the effect of training and development on employee's job satisfaction and how the job training and development related to job satisfaction and proved the theory to be true. Among the studies conducted, a study conducted on the effect of employee development program on job satisfaction and employee retention by Karen (2007) was taken as example.

When people receive relevant and valuable training, they are generally happier in their jobs. When that training is carried to the next level and becomes overall development, employees tend to feel even more valued by their employers. They are not only given the tool to do their jobs well, but they are also given opportunities to develop new skills and attain career goals. Companies that invest on their employees and clearly communicate the importance of employees may keep employees (Karen, 2007). The most likely explanation for the result of this study is due to most training programs apart from the basic training given by the company for new comers, are refresher trainings which are limited in number and are highly at technical with a high tendency of employees considering the training program as part of the job not as personal development program and also the mechanism of delivering the training is not adult learning style. Hence, employee's job satisfaction drawn from the training could be insignificant for Ethiopian Airlines.

H2: There is a positive relation between Employees Training and Development and Organizational Commitment

The research finding in table eleven shows that there is a positive relation between employees training and development and organizational commitment. Previous studies such as a case study conducted on Employee's Belief Regarding Training Benefit and Organizational Commitment also proved there is significant positive relationship between employee training and development with organizational commitment. Most successful training programs result in some intangible benefits. Intangible benefits are those positive results that either cannot be converted to monetary values. Increased level of employees' organizational commitment is one of the intangible benefits of employee training. Based on the research result, organizations can improve their training and development program so as to enhance organizational commitment. (Amir et al, 2013)

H3: There is a positive relationship between Communication and Job satisfaction.

As the above statistics Table 8 implies, communication has a positive relation with job satisfaction in Ethiopian Airlines. The study attested that when employees feel that they are good contributors, they will be encouraged to get involved and participate more for the sake of the organization. Yet again, when manager communicates effectively with the employees, listens to their complaints, answering their questions and provide those ways to communicate effectively, the organization will encourage them to enhance their work and feel satisfied about their jobs. The result was also supported by a case study which was conducted on The Relationship between Internal Communication and Job Satisfaction by Hrund (2011) which showed that with active and assessable communication, employees are better able to understand their job and are more connected to it.

H4: There is a positive relationship between Communication and Organizational Commitment.

The data collected supports the hypothesis which states, there is a positive relationship between communication and organizational commitment. The flow of information between management group and subordinates, as well as among employees have positive moderate impact on employees organizational commitment one have to his/her organization.

By developing well organized and free communication practice within the organization, organizational commitment can be created which have a benefit of increasing employees' sense of belonging, commitment towards the corporation and efforts towards the continuation of their existence in the corporation. This finding is congruent a case study conducted on The Relationship between Communication Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment in three Guatelman Organization by Federico (1996).

H5: There is a positive relationship between motivation and Job Satisfaction

One of the research findings that can be concluded from the statistics provided in table 8 is that motivation is positively related with employee's job satisfaction in Ethiopian Airlines. Giving the employees sense of achievement, providing them with new opportunities for advancement and promotions are key motivator that creates positive job attitudes. In addition, this result is also consistent with Mohammadi, Hashemi and Moradi (2012) finding of the positive correlation between motivation and job satisfaction.

A recent study conducted on The Impact of Internal Marketing on Employee's Job Satisfaction of Commercial Banks in Jordan states that motivating employees should be one of the main roles of the manager in the organization. The manager must acknowledge that his/her employees are the most important asset they have in order to have a distinctive output- whether it is a tangible product or an intangible service- and costs of investing in this asset will always be for the benefit of the organization. (Sulieman et al, 2013).

H6: There is a positive relationship between Motivation and Organizational Commitment

The study result has proven that motivation have a significant positive relation with organizational commitment and also has significance relation with organizational commitment. Motivation includes but not limited to

financial reward and benefits attached to job well done, increases employees organizational commitment, accordingly by motivating employees, organization can increase employee's organizational commitment. This finding is also supported by a study conducted on Does motivational factor influence organizational commitment and effectiveness? (Idris & Wan, 2011)

H7: There is a positive relationship between Job Satisfaction and Customer Orientation

The finding articulates there is a weak positive but significant relationship between Job satisfaction and customer orientation where Ethiopian airlines service personnel customer oriented behaviour is positively affected by their job satisfaction. The result found in this study is also similar with a case study conducted on effects of internal marketing on customer orientation (food & drug distribution companies of Kermanshah province) by Rastegar, Reza and Alireza (2012), which also proved that there is a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and Customer Orientation.

Though, there is a weak link between the two factors, creating job satisfaction can bring a positive impact on employees to enable them to give customer oriented behaviour candidly than non-natural one. The probable reason for the weak positive relationship between two factors could be the fact that Ethiopian service personnel are well trained about customer service and the motto of customer being a king is well addressed to every service personnel. Hence, even if employees are not satisfied with their job, they are obliged to demonstrate customer oriented behaviour.

H8: There is a positive relationship between Organizational Commitment and Customer Orientation

According to statistics result, Organizational commitment has a significant relationship with Customer Orientation. According to the study conducted by Rastegar, Reza and Alireza (2012), it has been proved that there is a significant relation between organizational commitment and customer orientation. The research has shown that those employees who are interested in and loyal to their organization have higher occupational performance, are more willing to survive in their organization, do less back biting, possess higher working motivation, and are more in agreement with their organizations. In this way, organizations can realize their targeted goals by identifying their employees' degree of commitment and by changing factors influencing it (Sa'atchi, 2003). For there is a significant positive relation, employees customer orientation can be increased by improving factors that upsurge organizational commitment. All the independent variables which have a positive impact on organizational commitment have indirectly affected customer orientation.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of internal marketing on service personnel customer orientation. The study was conducted on Ethiopian Airlines where service is delivered directly to external customers in person or through telephone. In order to meet this general objective, random sampling: stratified sampling method was used. Questionnaire containing questions on dimension of internal marketing, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and customer orientation behaviour were developed and distributed to seven departments namely Passenger Service, Ethiopian Cargo, Global Call center, ADD-CBT and Baggage Service, Ticket office, ADD- Sales office-Passenger, and Ethiopian Cargo Sales.

The entire research objective for this study was attained; the general objective of this study was to investigate the effect of internal marketing on service personnel customer orientation in Ethiopian Airlines. All selected internal marketing dimensions have significant relation with organizational commitment and organizational commitment has impact on customer orientation which implies internal marketing have indirect impact on customer orientation.

Further regression analysis was also conducted to verify if the independent variables have impact on customer orientation and that it is not limited to having correlation. For this reason, the impact of independent variables; Training and development, communication and motivation on job satisfaction and organizational commitment on customer orientation was conducted through job satisfaction and organizational Commitment.

According to the findings, Training and development had no significant relation with job satisfaction but communication and motivation has significant impact on job satisfaction; on the other hand, job satisfaction has a significant positive relation with customer orientation. The other mediator between internal marketing and customer orientation were organizational commitment, all three dimension of internal marketing has direct significant relation with organizational commitment and organizational commitment also has positive significant impact on customer orientation. Therefore, all selected dimension of internal marketing have impact on customer orientation through organizational commitment.

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