

## THE APPLICATIONS OF INTERNAL MARKETING VARIABLES TO DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS

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*This study was done to understand the gaps between two industries for the same concept named internal marketing. The study fills the gap with the help of defining IM from the literature review and then transfiguring the idea for the tourism industry focussed towards DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations). The study has got 13 variables of internal marketing and redefined them for the tourism sector, i.e., inter-functional coordination and integration, customer orientation, marketing-like approach, job satisfaction, empowerment, stakeholder's motivation, quality of service, stakeholder's development, training and development, vision of the firm, strategic rewards, internal communication and senior leadership. These definitions can be helpful for planners and managers of DMOs in weaving a strategy to obtain a better performance from all stakeholders. Government departments, agencies, consultancies, and NTOs can also use these definitions for policy planning and implementation.*

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**Keywords:** *Internal marketing, DMOs, Service marketing triangle, Tourism industry, and Destination performance*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

More than 35 years ago, internal marketing was first proposed as a solution to the problem of delivering high service quality consistently by Berry, Hensel, & Burke, (1976). The internal marketing concept emerged from services marketing, and its primary concern was to get everyone who was involved in service encounters – the front-line squad of contact workforce to perform superior in the interaction with customers (Kaurav & Prakash, 2011).

Since the 1970s, IM has appeared to be the solution to the problem related to consistently delivering high service quality (Berry, Hensel, & Burke, 1976). The literature dedicated to IM is rapidly evolving and increasing (Sasser & Arbeit, 1976; Berry L., 1981; Gronroos, 1981; Richardson & Robinson, 1986; Barnes, 1989; George, 1990; Piercy & Morgan, 1990, 1991; Collins & Payne, 1991; Piercy, 1995; Foreman & Money, 1995; Varey, 1995; Cahill, 1995, 1996; Sergeant & Asif, 1998; Pitt & Foreman, 1999; Varey & Lewis, 1999; Ballantyne, 2000; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000; Bansal, Mendelson, & Sharma, 2001; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Ballantyne, 2003; Lings, 2004; Lings & Greenley, 2005; Panigyrakis & Theodoridis, 2009). By following few paragraphs concept of internal marketing is explored with the supportive and argued phenomenon.

Numerous Researchers have tried to define internal marketing number of times, but their definitions have appeared to be extremely narrow, usually unclear in explaining concepts of IM:

Berry L.L. (1981), has studied all the dimensions of employees and defined internal marketing as- “Viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products and then endeavouring to offer products that satisfy the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organisation.” In

the same study, he has stated that the same marketing tools used to attract customers can also serve to attract and retain the best employees, who can be considered of as ‘internal customers’.

Chowdhary & Prakash (2005), explained internal marketing as “Internal marketing refers to selling the service concept to the internal audience before it can be sold externally. The organisation must ensure all support and enable the employees to deliver what is promised.”

Clow & Kurtz (2008), also defined internal marketing as “the process of using marketing concepts to enhance the satisfaction of company’s employees is called internal marketing.”

Rafiq & Ahmed (1998), expanded the idea of internal marketing and defined it as, “... a planned effort using a marketing-like approach to overcome organisational resistance to change and to align, motivate and inter-functionally coordinate 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”.

De Bussy, Ewing, & Pitt, (2003) argued for the concepts given earlier and stated that the concepts of internal marketing are not limited to the ‘front-line’ customer service staff alone. Even the employees who do not interact directly with their clients may impact upon the perceived service quality, because they directly influence the service providers. If all the employees perform their jobs well, they are counted as a value-added component of the service and product offering.

## **CHALLENGES WHILE IMPLEMENTING IM IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

Here is the pictorial depiction of the major challenges and issues in implementing the concept of internal marketing in the tourism industry.

- Earlier there were direct employees, which can be directly controlled or administered. Now, stakeholders cannot be directly supervised by DMOs. DMOs are not actual controllers of the stakeholders.
- No presence of clear rules and regulation by DMOs for maintaining the conduct of stakeholders. Stakeholders work in their way, have different strategies for different situations. Binding to follow the DMO leadership would not be possible.
- Absence of transparent framework for measuring business performance of stakeholders in the tourism sector.

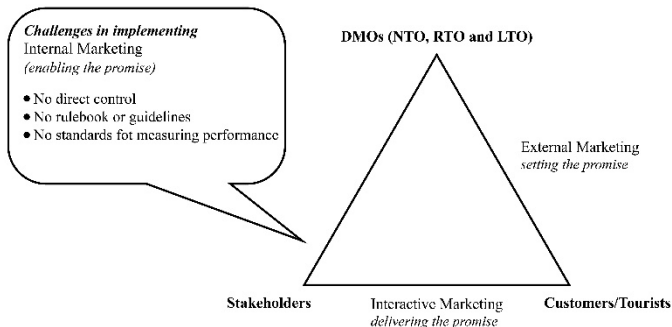


Figure 1: Services marketing triangle presenting challenges in implementing the IMC in the tourism industry (Source: Drawn by authors, based on literature review).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researchers had gone through the extensive literature review for identifying all the constructs and variables constitute internal marketing. In the process, the team has selected various concepts

and tableside them for proper knowledge dissemination in this area of research.

This piece of research is a conceptual paper identifying all the variables related to the concept of internal marketing and has interpreted them for the tourism industry. The whole study is based on secondary data which has been collected through various national and international journals of repute.

## **CONSTRUCTS AND VARIABLES OF IM IN SERVICE AND TOURISM INDUSTRY**

From extensive and varied literature reviews, 13 constructs have been identified to make up the core structure of internal marketing for research, are derived. The constructs are i) inter-functional coordination and integration, ii) customer orientation, iii) marketing-like approach, iv) job satisfaction, v) empowerment, vi) stakeholder's motivation, vii) quality of service, viii) stakeholder's development, ix) vision of the firm, x) strategic rewards, xi) internal communication, xii) senior leadership, and xiii) training and development. For understanding and differentiating the constructs mentioned above, further discussions are followed here:

***Inter-functional coordination and integration:*** A major impetus of internal marketing, amongst other things, is to be a vehicle for internal strategic implementation (Winter, 1985). This can be done through inter-functional coordination and integration. The concept is defined as the coordinated utilisation of an organisation's resources in creating superior value for target customers (Narver & Slater, 1990). When an organisation can use its resources efficiently to create value, it will ensure long-term profitability thus improving business performance. The role of internal marketing in integrating marketing and personnel functions must be to the extent in which personnel become a resource for the marketing function (Glassman & McAfee, 1992; Sincic & Vokic, 2007; Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, 2008; Kaurav, 2015; Kaurav,

Paul, & Chowdhary, 2015; Kaurav, Prakash, Chowdhary, & Briggs, 2016).

**Interpretation:** In case of tourism this variable deal with how tourism authorities facilitate coordination among stakeholders like- restaurateurs and hoteliers, tour guides and escorts, travel agencies, tour operators, public and private monument authorities, merchandisers (souvenir shop owners, Emporium owners, owners of books and cassette shops, etc.), employees of local tourism department, civil authorities, event managers, etc. at a destination.

**Customer orientation:** Gronroos (1981) first allude to the fact that customer orientation is the driving force for internal marketing. This is especially significant for services organisations where the most crucial part of the business occurs during stakeholder-customer contact. Hence, internal marketing aims to get motivated and customer-oriented stakeholders. Later Bansal, Mendelson, & Sharma, (2001), also supported Gronroos that customer orientation is the result of better internal marketing policies. Internal marketing always generates customer focused strategies and customer orientation of employees for better results in many aspects (Hogg & Carter, 1996; Naude, Desai, & Murphy, 2003; Kaurav, 2015).

**Interpretation:** In the case of a tourism destination this variable deal with whether tourism authorities expand their efforts to educate and motivate various stakeholders to provide superior services to visitors.

**Marketing-like approach:** Internal marketing holds that stakeholders are “best motivated for service-mindedness and customer-oriented behaviour by an active marketing-like approach, where marketing-like techniques are used internally” (George, 1990). The marketing-like approach is defined as a business management philosophy based on the need for customer orientation, profit orientation, and recognition of the role of marketing to communicate the needs of the market to all major corporate departments. Hogg & Carter (1996) express their views in similar

words - marketing like approach or market orientation is a part of overall internal marketing, involving “The use of marketing techniques within the organisation to create and communicate corporate values.”

Interpretation: Marketing like approach means the customer (stakeholder) and profit (maximum tourist arrival) orientation approach adopted by destination managers.

**Job satisfaction:** Job satisfaction is defined as how content an individual is with his or her job. The underlying view of internal marketing is based on the concept that for a service organisation to have satisfied customers, it must first have satisfied stakeholders (George, 1990). Job satisfaction is vital as internal marketing will also serve as a tool for organisations to attract, retain and motivate its stakeholders (Bansal, Mendelson, & Sharma, 2001; Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, 2008; Kaurav, Prakash, Chowdhary, & Briggs, 2016).

Interpretation: Implication for a destination is that there should be a supportive business climate at, a destination; entrepreneurs will be motivated to operate and offer superior services. In contrast, a destination where service providers spend time and effort struggling with petty bureaucratic and administrative issues, they will have little energy to focus on customer issues. This, in turn, will also serve as an entry barrier for entrepreneurs. A thriving destination would require an unabated supply of entrepreneurs who come with innovative ideas and products to keep the destination fresh. Increased competition would also lead to better services for tourists. Take care of your stakeholders; they are caring for your guests. This variable measure how supportive and encouraging the destination is for business.

**Empowerment:** In order for stakeholders to fully appreciate their jobs (i.e. the internal product), they must be allowed more latitude in dispensing their duties (Gronroos, 1981). Berry & Parasuraman (1991) believe that empowerment should be an essential aspect of internal marketing. Empowerment is the

procedure of enabling or authorising an individual to fell, behaves, take action, control work and decision making in autonomous ways (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998; Kaurav, 2015; Kaurav, Prakash, Chowdhary, & Briggs, 2016).

**Interpretation:** In case of tourism this variable describes how empowered, the stakeholders feel to conduct their businesses. Some destination authorises authoritarian and has strict guidelines for the conduct of businesses. This refers to freedom in designing and delivering products for customers, dealing with them and taking care of them. This refers to the amount of control DMOs exercise, over the stakeholders.

**Stakeholder's motivation:** In most organisations, the situation is that the customers are highly demanding of stakeholders while the stakeholders, in turn, hold high expectations from their jobs as sources of self-actualisation and self-development (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998). Here, internal marketing sought to increase stakeholder's motivation by focusing on treating the job as an internal product and try to "sell" it to the stakeholders. This inward-looking philosophy is enhanced by the steps which motivate stakeholders to try out the product first (Preston & Steel 2002; Jaiswal & Saha, 2007; Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, 2008; Kaurav, Prakash, Chowdhary, & Briggs, 2016).

**Interpretation:** DMO managers need to motivate stakeholder for their continue engagements in same or similar activities, like-cultural activities and good civilian system.

**Quality of service:** Preston & Steel (2002), explains, quality of service is defined as a form of attitude, related but not equivalent to satisfaction, which results from the comparison of expectation with performance. Berry & Parasuraman (1991) added that service quality is an essential element in internal marketing because high quality will make it easier for stakeholders to identify themselves with the service they are selling to the customers.



Interpretation: At a destination, good customer service should be the norm rather than the exception. Does destination manager set high standards for service quality? For a networked product like tourism, good service quality could be ensured only when all stakeholders are pressed for superior service. When a destination establishes itself for quality services, stakeholders can drive mileage out of it.

***Stakeholder's development:*** Foreman & Money (1995) define stakeholder development as a strategic investment by an organisation in training its members. If stakeholders are required to perform their tasks well, they must be armed with the necessary skill and knowledge that is required of them. Piercy & Morgan (1989), supported foreman and money that for internal marketing to be employed efficiently within an organisation, stakeholders must be trained and adequately developed to fulfil its service role.

Interpretation: On similar lines, a destination must ensure training of stakeholders on a continuing basis. For a superior tourist experience, it is important to ensure that visitor is satisfied during all encounters involving different stakeholders from a common member of the community to trained guides and taxi drivers. This is a 'must' responsibility of DMOs public or private.

***Training and development:*** Preston & Steel (2002); Jaiswal & Saha (2007); Nahavandi, Caruana, & Farzad, (2008) identifies, first that the training and development part is another critical factor to study internal marketing because it makes stakeholder more comfortable in adjusting them with organisational change.

Interpretation: On similar lines, a destination must ensure training of stakeholders on a continuing basis. For a superior tourist experience, it is crucial to ensure that visitor is satisfied during all encounters involving different stakeholders from an ordinary member of the community to trained guides and taxi drivers. This is a 'must' responsibility of DMOs public or private.

***Vision of the firm:*** Foreman & Money (1995) define vision as short-term and long-term goals that stakeholders can believe in.

Internal marketing programmes that are intensively and sensitively created and put into practice, with this in mind, it will improve both the internal efficiency and external effectiveness of the organisation's marketing efforts.

**Interpretation:** Every destination must have a unique personality that should be projected and used for differentiating it from other destinations. DMOs must have a clear vision for positioning the destination. Ideally, all resources at a destination should be deployed towards sustaining this image. Independently, stakeholders' activities should also reinforce this image. In the absence of such a shared vision, everyone will be doing whatever they feel like and would fail to create a pre-ordained experience. The starting point, therefore, is to have a vision and share it with stakeholders who must buy in.

**Strategic reward:** Strategic rewards defined as a system designed to motivate behaviours, actions and accomplishments that help advance the organisations towards specific business goals. Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) believe the inclusion of strategic reward in implementing internal marketing is important as it will help in accomplishing other goals of internal marketing such as motivation and stakeholder satisfaction (Jaiswal & Saha, 2007; Kaurav, Paul, & Chowdhary, 2015; Kaurav, Prakash, Chowdhary, & Briggs, 2016).

**Interpretation:** Similarly, destinations should also have a reward mechanism to reinforce desirable performance by stakeholders. From simple recognition to monetary rewards/concessions are used by DMOs to reinforce required performance by stakeholders.

**Internal communication:** Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) identify internal communication as the dissemination of information within the organisation to enable the creation of stakeholders with a greater sense of ownership, accountability and responsibility. When stakeholders are well-informed about the expectations of its customers as well as the condition and health of the organisations,

they are more willing to dispense their duties diligently which in turn improves the business performance.

Interpretation: At a destination, it is the DMO's responsibility to keep all stakeholders engaged and together in the so far primacy of tourist interests is concerned. DMOs must continuously keep stakeholders informed about new products, schemes, and strategies. This is important as stakeholders, in this case, are independent entities (not on company rolls).

**Senior leadership:** Ahmed & Rafiq (2003); Jaiswal & Saha (2007), defines senior leadership as the moral and intellectual ability of the upper-echelon management to move the organisation and its stakeholders towards the right direction. Thus, leadership style is important in determining stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours. Management commitment is the most consistent predictor of stakeholders' behaviour, and its effectiveness will lead to an improvement of the well-being of the organisation.

Interpretation: DMOs as public authorities often take some antagonistic stance vis-à-vis, other stakeholders. They become just one of the competitors whereas they have a broader responsibility of herding all on the path set as strategic direction for the destination. Their role is to sell the idea (vision) of the destination and ensure to buy in terms of commitment and compliance from individual members. The success of DMOs is measured regarding sync among activities of different stakeholders at a destination.

## CONCLUSION

This study was done to understand the gaps between the two industries for the same concept named internal marketing. The study fills the gap with the help of defining IM from literature review and then transfiguring the concept for the tourism industry.

The study has defined 13 variables, i.e., inter-functional coordination and integration, customer orientation, marketing-like approach, job satisfaction, empowerment, stakeholder's motivation,

quality of service, stakeholder's development, training and development, vision of the firm, strategic rewards, internal communication and senior leadership of internal marketing for tourism industry.

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