STUDY ON EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION ON INTERNAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SEVERAL ROMANIAN COMPANIES

Luigi Dumitrescu, PhD Professor
"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Sibiu, Romania
Iuliana Cetină, PhD Professor
Alma Pentescu, PhD Candidate
The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract
Concerned to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in an increasingly competitive environment and under the pressure of educated and demanding customers, the Romanian companies must adopt the internal marketing view in the relations with their employees. In this context, this paper puts forth the following three objectives: (1) to highlight the internal marketing's importance in adopting customer orientation within Romanian companies; (2) to present the content of internal marketing; and (3) to highlight, trough a direct marketing research, the application of internal marketing strategies and tactics in the activity of large companies and small businesses operating on the Romanian market. The conclusions drawn from this research can be capitalized on applying the marketing view within these companies' activity. This paper also shows, from the employees' point of view, that there are some differences in applying internal marketing strategies and tactics within large companies and small businesses.

Keywords: Customer orientation, internal marketing, direct marketing research, relationship marketing

Introduction
Employees are the most intimate consumers of a company's practices. Thus, they need to be empowered with authentic values. Companies should use in relation with their employees the same approach they use with customers (Bendapudi, N., Bendapudi, V., 2009).
Since both the customer service climate and the employee climate are strongly correlated with the general perception of the buyer, following aspects emerge: (1) from the customers' point of view, the employees represent the company's offer; (2) employees represent the company, contributing to the increase or decrease of its reputation; (3) employees are responsible for applying the marketing view within the customer relationship (Dumitrescu, Apostu, 2009).
Employees' role in creating value for the company is highlighted by the process of aligning their behaviour with the brand promises, made to co-workers or customers. The goal of this process is to build an internal brand (Vallaster, de Chernatony, 2006). Building an internal brand implies building organisational structures within the company, which cover four elements of the company's identity: (1) organisational culture, comprising all the strategies, techniques and methods by which the company's management communicates the rules, norms and values which must be implemented by the employees (Schneider, 1988); (2) organisational design, namely consistency in keeping brand promises, made through company's external communications; (3) organisational behaviour, according to brand

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promises; (4) integrated organisational communication, with both internal and external customers.

Management's decisions concerning employees' activity influence directly the company's competitiveness, in general, and the marketing's efficiency, in particular, at three stages: goals, strategies and tactics.

Since market differentiation between competitors is done increasingly by the quality of employees and their interaction with the customer (Bruhn, 1999), companies have been forced to integrate customer orientation with employee orientation, applying the internal marketing view.

Internal marketing – part of the global vision of customer orientation:

Aiming to develop employee awareness of their roles, so that the company can establish direct relations with its customers, internal marketing is an extension of relational marketing that occurs within the company (Hooley, Saunders, Piercy, 1998).

This concept, whose theoretical background has been deeply debated, became a marketing research field globally (table 1).

Table1
Perspectives on the internal marketing concept

Author(s)/date	Key points
Berry et al., 1976	Internal marketing results to jobs (internal products) that satisfy the needs of employees (internal market) while satisfying the objectives of the organization. Internal marketing is a strategy. A marketing program based on communication with employees. The development of their potential and motivating - remunerating those who offer excellent service.
Sasser and Arbeit, 1976	Internal marketing results into job satisfaction. Internal marketing is implemented through internal market research and job re-engineering aimed at developing jobs that attract and retain excellent service providers.
Berry, 1981, 1987	Internal marketing results in job satisfaction. Internal marketing is a strategy for job re-engineering and internal communication aimed at deriving customer-minded front-line personnel.
Grönroos, 1983	Internal marketing results in customer consciousness. Internal marketing is a strategy for developing the required "state of mind" that will allow customer service effectiveness under a broader relationship.
Gummesson, 1987	Internal marketing results to increased levels of productivity and efficiency. Internal marketing is implemented through communication with employees and culture change mechanisms.
George, 1990	Internal marketing results in effective internal exchanges. Internal marketing is implemented through coordinating human resource and marketing departments to improve the company's service orientation.
Ahmed and Rafiq, 1993	Internal marketing results to increased marketing strategy effectiveness by aligning, motivating and integrating the employees towards the implementation of company strategies. Internal marketing is implemented through the application of marketing techniques along with human resource management practices to facilitate the implementation of the company's market objectives.
Foreman and Money, 1995	Internal marketing may have various objectives depending on who is targeted (specific groups of employees or the entire organization). Internal marketing is implemented through communication, development and participative management and motivation and rewards.
Piercy, 1995	Internal marketing results to strategic alignment. Internal marketing allows the removal of interdepartmental barriers for developing and implementing the company's market objectives.
Author(s)/date	Key points
Grönroos, 1997	Internal marketing results to sales- and service-minded personnel. Internal marketing should be integrated with the marketing function because marketing is the responsibility of every employee who influences customer's value.
Wasmer and Brunner, 1999	Internal marketing results to individual employee's objectives alignment with company objectives. Internal marketing is implemented through formal and informal internal market research and communication to "sell" the company's objectives

	internally.
Varey and Lewis, 1999	Internal marketing results to change management. Internal marketing is the philosophy and the behaviour that allows rapid organizational change in response to the company's macro and micro environments.
Ahmed and Rafiq, 2000	Internal marketing results to increased productivity and job improvements. Internal marketing is the planned effort to achieve employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and interfunctional coordination through employee empowerment.
Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003	Internal marketing results to increased productivity and job improvements. Internal marketing is a cultural framework and an instrument to achieve strategic alignment while building customer service competence by managing internal relations through internal communication.
Naude, Desai and Murphy, 2003	Internal marketing results to increased job satisfaction and market orientation adoption. Internal marketing perceived implementation is influenced by individual and organization characteristics.
Ballantyne, 2003	Internal marketing results to knowledge renewal. Internal marketing influences service procedures and operations facilitating their re-engineering using input from both the external and internal environment.
Lings, 2004	Internal-market orientation represents a company philosophy and results to increased levels of job satisfaction. Three major facets of internal-market orientation, namely internal market research, communications, response.
Lings and Greenley, 2005	Internal marketing interchangeably used with internal-market orientation to describe the effort to improve internal climate. It results to increased levels of job satisfaction.

(Source: Adapted from Gounaris, S. P., Internal Market Orientation and Its Measurements,
Journal of Business Research, Vol. 59, 2005, pp. 433-434)

Univocally accepted as important, nowadays internal marketing is approached from three perspectives: (1) as a standard, implying a coherent orientation of all company's decisions in accordance with its employees' needs; (2) as a method, assuming that the internal (within the company) and external markets are consistent and can be equally approached, thus achieving a transposition of the external marketing mix into an internal marketing mix; and (3) as a set of relations, assuming that customers' and employees' satisfaction are interrelated, in a relationship marketing context, being perceived as a network which should be continually supported (Strauss, Schulze, 1990).

Regardless of the accepted definition, internal marketing has three main characteristics: marketing (1) is a systematic planning process (figure 1); (2) is a simultaneous orientation towards customers and employees; (3) is a generalized internal vision. Knowing their employees, correctly defining their needs and expectations, as well as knowing how satisfied they are, embody the information of the internal marketing plan of the company. At large, the activities covered by this plan address two general issues: (1) managing employee attitudes in accordance with the marketing view and (2) managing internal communication according to the marketing view.

Analysis of the internal and external situation

Strategic planning of internal marketing
• Setting internal marketing goals • Internal marketing strategy • Internal marketing segmentation decisions

Operative planning of internal marketing
• Marketing management instruments • Human resources management instruments

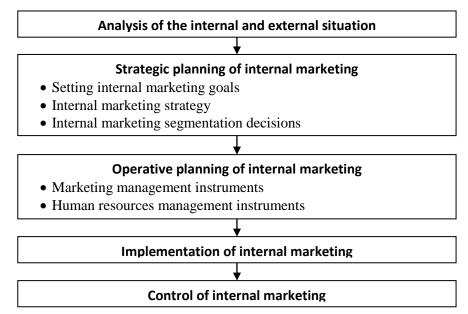| Implementation of internal marketing |
| --- |

Control of internal marketing

Figure 1 – The internal marketing planning process
(Source: Bruhn M., Orientarea spre clienți – temelia afacerii de succes (Customer Orientation:
The Foundation of Successful Business), Bucharest: Economic Publishing House, 2001, p. 215)

Internal marketing is necessary only when the entire organization is going through a process of change, which is customer-oriented and based on the "zero defects" philosophy.

Research methodology
The decision problem, that made the direct marketing research seem necessary, consists in observing changes in employees' behaviour and attitude, in their reactions to the internal marketing efforts of the organization. In this context, it is necessary to know the impact of the communication, continuity and consistency of the implemented internal marketing strategies on the organizational climate, employees' trust and safety, and on the quality of organizational relationships.

The aim of this research was to study employees' perception on internal marketing strategies implemented within the organization. The marketing research was conducted between May 2013 - September 2013, on a sample of 350 employees of large companies, on the one hand, and small businesses, on the other hand, from the Central Region of Romania. Data was collected online, using a questionnaire with 13 questions. We obtained 324 valid questionnaires, of which 208 were filled in by employees of large companies and 166 by employees who work in small businesses.

In accordance with the purpose of this research 12 objectives were set, four of them being presented in this paper: (1) knowing employees' perception on the position held (the "product" variable of the internal marketing mix); (2) knowing employees' perception on the rewarding system (the "price" variable of the internal marketing mix); (3) knowing employees' perception on the quality of internal communication (the "promotion" variable of the internal marketing mix); (4) knowing employees' perception on the quality of the information dissemination methods (the "placement" variable of the internal marketing mix).

To achieve these objectives, the 4th question (Q4) of the questionnaire contained 14 statements on the internal marketing practices within the organization, specific to the variables of the internal marketing mix. Respondent's preference was measured using Likert's scale and the statistical analysis of respondents' opinion was performed using the IBM SPSS 20.0 program.

Table 2
Q4.1. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.1. Even before employment, the position I applied for had a clear picture	Strongly disagree	1,9%	0%	1,2%
	Disagree	9,6%	12,1%	10,5%
	Neutral	20,2%	31%	24,1%
	Agree	54,8%	34,5%	47,5%
	Strongly agree	13,5%	22,4%	16,7%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Analysis revealed that, at group level, 63.8% of the employees working in large companies agree that before employment, the position for which they applied had a clear picture, 11.5% disagree and the remaining 20.2% have not yet formed an opinion in this regard. In comparison, of those working in small businesses, 56.9% agree with this statement, 12.1% disagree and 31% have not yet formed an opinion in this regard.

Of the grand total, 64.2% of the respondents agree that before employment, the position for which they applied had a clear picture, while 11.7% disagree with this statement.

Table 3
Q4.2. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.2. The job description mentions clearly the duties and responsibilities	Strongly disagree	3,8%	8,6%	5,6%
	Disagree	19,2%	12,1%	16,7%
	Neutral	17,3%	19%	17,9%
	Agree	45,2%	37,9%	42,6%
	Strongly agree	14,4%	22,4%	17,3%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Also, 59.6% of the employees of large companies, respectively 60.3% of the employees of small business consider that the job description mentions clearly their duties and responsibilities.

Table 4
Q4.3. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.3. I think that my current job is appropriate for my education and my career needs	Strongly disagree	7,7%	1,7%	5,6%
	Disagree	13,5%	12,1%	13%
	Neutral	21,2%	22,4%	21,6%
	Agree	39,4%	37,9%	38,9%
	Strongly agree	18,3%	25,9%	21%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

While 57.7% of those working in large companies think that their current job is appropriate for their education and their career needs, within small businesses the percentage of those who agree with this statement is slightly higher (63.8%). Equally, of the grand total, more than half of the respondents (59.9%) agree on the compatibility between their education and their current job.

Table 5
Q4.4. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.4. My current position allows me to not limit myself only to the requirements from the job description	Strongly disagree	1%	3,4%	1,9%
	Disagree	11,5%	6,9%	9,9%
	Neutral	15,4%	13,8%	14,8%
	Agree	32,7%	39,7%	35,2%
	Strongly agree	39,4%	36,2%	38,3%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

As it can be seen in the above table, more than 70% of the surveyed employees (72.1% in large companies and 75.9% in small businesses) feel that their current position allows them to not limit themselves to the requirements from the job description. As regards the whole sample, this percentage remains approximately the same (73.5%), only 11.8% of the respondents having expressed their disagreement.

Table 6
Q4.5. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.5. I believe I am paid according to my work	Strongly disagree	8,7%	17,2%	11,7%
	Disagree	21,2%	17,2%	19,8%
	Neutral	28,8%	32,8%	30,2%
	Agree	34,6%	27,6%	32,1%
	Strongly agree	6,7%	5,2%	6,2%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

As regards the rewards for a job well done, less than half of the employees' of both large companies (41.3%) and small businesses (32.8%) consider that they are paid according to their work, while approximately 30% express their disagreement, and about 30% have not yet formed an opinion in this regard.

Table 7
Q4.6. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.6. I attend courses and trainings because they increase my value	Strongly disagree	7,7%	17,2%	11,1%
	Disagree	4,8%	19%	9,9%
	Neutral	21,2%	20,7%	21%
	Agree	46,2%	29,3%	40,1%
	Strongly agree	20,2%	13,8%	17,9%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Within large companies, 66.4% of the employees attend courses and trainings to increase their value, in comparison with 43.1% of small businesses' employees who share this point of view. Also, the percentage of those who disagree with this statement is higher within small businesses (36.2%) than within large companies (12.5%).

Table 8
Q4.7. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.7. The offered bonuses and rewards stimulate/ motivate me	Strongly disagree	7,7%	19%	11,7%
	Disagree	17,3%	10,3%	14,8%
	Neutral	26%	27,6%	26,5%
	Agree	27,9%	34,5%	30,2%
	Strongly agree	21,2%	8,6%	16,7%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

While 49.1% of those working in large companies are motivated by the offered bonuses and rewards, within small businesses just 43.1% feel the same way. Equally, of the grand total, more than 40% of the surveyed employees agree with this statement.

Table 9
Q4.8. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.8. I am always, timely, informed of the company's policies and strategies	Strongly disagree	5,8%	13,8%	8,6%
	Disagree	9,6%	10,3%	9,9%
	Neutral	26,9%	29,3%	27,8%
	Agree	41,3%	39,7%	40,7%
	Strongly agree	16,3%	6,9%	13%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

As regards informing employees, on time, of the company's policies and strategies, 57.6% of the employees of large companies and 46.6% of those of small business express their agreement. However, the percentage of those who have not yet formed an opinion in this regard is quite high, namely 26.9% within large companies and 29.3% within small businesses.

Table 10
Q4.9. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.9. The company I work for ensures that I understand the implemented changes	Strongly disagree	6,7%	10,3%	8%
	Disagree	14,4%	8,6%	12,3%
	Neutral	26%	36,2%	29,6%
	Agree	41,3%	41,4%	41,4%
	Strongly agree	11,5%	3,4%	8,6%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

In terms of change management, 52.8% of the employees working in large companies and 44.8% of those working in small businesses think that the company they are working for strives to ensure that employees understand the implemented changes. Equally, as regards the whole sample, 50% agree with this statement, while 20.3% express their disagreement.

Table 11
Q4.10. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.10. I am regularly informed on possible new activities for personal development	Strongly disagree	8,7%	13,8%	10,5%
	Disagree	13,5%	17,2%	14,8%
	Neutral	19,2%	34,5%	24,7%
	Agree	44,2%	29,3%	38,9%
	Strongly agree	14,4%	5,2%	11,1%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

While 58.6% of those working in large companies think that they are regularly informed on possible new activities for their personal development, within small businesses just 34.5% of the employees agree with this statement.

Table 12
Q4.11. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.11. The company's management encourages and supports employees' initiative	Strongly disagree	3,8%	1,7%	3,1%
	Disagree	11,5%	12,1%	11,7%
	Neutral	30,8%	25,9%	29%
	Agree	33,7%	50%	39,5%
	Strongly agree	20,1%	10,3%	16,7%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

As regards supporting employees' initiative, 53.9% of the employees of large companies and 60.3% of those of small businesses think that the company's management encourages and supports their initiative, while approximately 15% express their disagreement in this regard.

Table 13
Q4.12. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.12. The company organizes enough meetings with the line manager in order to assess our personal development	Strongly disagree	9,6%	5,2%	8%
	Disagree	12,5%	25,9%	17,3%
	Neutral	20,2%	29,3%	23,5%
	Agree	39,4%	32,8%	37%
	Strongly agree	18,3%	6,9%	14,2%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

As it can be seen in the above table, the percentage of the employees who consider that the company organizes enough meetings with their line manager in order to assess their personal development is higher within large companies (57.7%) than in small businesses (39.7%). This difference is maintained also for those who disagree, namely 22.1% of the employees of large companies and 31.1% of those who work in small businesses.

Table 14
Q4.13. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.13. I am being told how valuable my work is (both for the customer and for me, as an employee)	Strongly disagree	6,7%	6,9%	6,8%
	Disagree	19,2%	29,3%	22,8%
	Neutral	24%	34,5%	27,8%
	Agree	33,7%	22,4%	29,6%
	Strongly agree	16,3%	6,9%	13%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Another difference between large companies and small businesses is noticed in terms of communicating how valuable employees' work is. Thus, according to 50% of those working in large companies they are being told how valuable their work is, whereas just 29.3% of those working in small businesses feel the same way. Also, the percentage of those who disagree is 25.9% within large companies and 36.2% within small businesses.

Table 15
Q4.14. results (in percentage)

Statement	Scale	Company type		Grand total
		Large company	Small business	
Q4.14. I have all the tools and instructions necessary to evaluate my performance	Strongly disagree	5,8%	6,9%	6,2%
	Disagree	12,5%	19%	14,8%
	Neutral	23,1%	25,9%	24,1%
	Agree	46,2%	36,2%	42,6%
	Strongly agree	12,5%	12,1%	12,3%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Last but not least, 58.7% of the employees of large companies say that they have all the tools and instructions necessary to evaluate their performance, in comparison with 48.3% of the employees of small businesses. As regards the whole sample, more than half of the surveyed employees (54.95) express their agreement with this statement.

Conclusion

Using the Student's t-test, we noticed that of the 14 investigated variables (Q4 1-14) in seven of them there is a significant difference between large companies and small businesses (table 16).

Table 16
t test
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper
I think that my current job is appropriate for my education and my career needs	Equal variances not assumed			-,469	215,314	,640	-,329	,200
	Equal variances assumed	3,271	,071	-2,087	322	,038	-,525	-,015
I attend courses and trainings because they increase my value	Equal variances not assumed			1,787	224,814	,075	-,024	,490
	Equal variances assumed	10,388	,001	4,610	322	,000	,361	,897
The offered bonuses and rewards motivate me	Equal variances not assumed			4,371	203,179	,000	,345	,910
	Equal variances assumed	,163	,687	2,395	322	,017	,061	,620
I am always, timely, informed of the company's policies and strategies	Equal variances not assumed			5,408	238,174	,000	,442	,949
	Equal variances assumed	,552	,458	2,957	322	,003	,125	,622
I am regularly informed on possible new activities for personal development	Equal variances not assumed			1,464	250,619	,145	-,061	,412
	Equal variances assumed	1,791	,182	3,603	322	,000	,216	,734
The company organizes enough meetings with the line manager in order to assess our personal development	Equal variances not assumed			-,033	271,525	,974	-,222	,215
	Equal variances assumed	4,836	,029	2,554	322	,011	,078	,600
I am being told how valuable my work is (both for the customer and for me, as an employee)	Equal variances not assumed			2,666	269,069	,008	,089	,580
	Equal variances assumed	6,278	,013	3,132	322	,002	,151	,660

As regards the other seven investigated variables, there isn't any significant difference between large companies and small businesses.

Furthermore, most of the employees who agreed with the statements from the questionnaire work in a large company. Thus, we conclude that internal marketing strategies,

specific to the internal marketing mix, are better applied within these companies, as large companies have well-documented processes and procedures for the implementation of these strategies.

Meanwhile, results analysis revealed that internal marketing strategies and tactics are used less within small businesses. This could be caused by: (1) managers lack of knowledge on the internal marketing content; and (2) an organizational culture which, in most cases a "clan" type, favours an authoritarian management style not the participatory one.

Also, we have observed that domestic human resources consultancy companies tend not to apply the internal marketing philosophy. Thus, large companies turn to foreign consultancy companies which have branches in Romania.

Even within large companies operating on the Romanian market there is a significant difference between the internal marketing strategies and tactics applied in their countries of origin and those applied in their Romanian branches. These differences are noticeable especially in terms of motivating Romanian employees, salary package contents, and employee involvement in setting companies' goals and strategies.

The fact that approximately a quarter of the respondents disagree with the statements from the questionnaire highlights that the implementation of the internal marketing view is rather a desideratum than a reality within the companies operating on the Romanian market. Also, the differences between large companies and small businesses are small.

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