

Internal Marketing and Organizational Identification in Services: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The service sector, known as the third industrial sector, focuses on providing intangible services rather than physical products. However, internal marketing has emerged as a critical strategy, defined as a company's approach to treating its employees as internal customers and delivering its core services to them as well. This approach significantly bolsters employee identification with the organization, fostering alignment between personal expectations and corporate goals. Consequently, internal marketing underpins fundamental business successes, enhances employee retention, and elevates service quality through heightened motivation. Employees who internalize the company's customer value proposition generate positive outputs that enrich organizational culture. This research aims to evaluate employee organizational identification levels based on internal marketing activities in Istanbul-based service sector firms. Data were collected from 420 participants, primarily service sector employees, using validated organizational identification and internal marketing scales—covering sub-dimensions such as healthy work

environment, employee development, selection, recruitment, rewards, and motivation—alongside demographic questions.

Employing cross sectional, regression analysis, and t-tests, the study uncovered a positive and significant relationship between internal marketing and organizational identification. Positive significant associations were found with sub-dimensions including healthy work environment, employee development, selection, rewards, and motivation. In contrast, personnel recruitment exhibited a negative significant relationship. Key conclusions highlight the healthy work environment's substantial impact on identification. Overall, regression and t-test results affirm that internal marketing positively influences organizational identification among service sector employees, offering implications for HR practices.

Keywords: Service Sector, Internal Marketing, Organizational Identification, Employees.

JEL Codes: M12, M31, M54, D23

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1. Introduction

Industrialization and manufacturing-oriented productivity growth have historically been treated as the primary drivers of economic expansion. However, as global economic structures evolved, the limitations of manufacturing-centered development models became increasingly apparent, paving the way for the service sector to emerge as an alternative engine of growth. Particularly in industrialized economies following World War II, the service economy transformed from merely a supplementary sector into a domain offering unique opportunities for sustainable income growth and long-term development.

The service sector is distinguished by features such as intangibility, simultaneity of production and consumption, variability, and perishability. These characteristics intensify the role of human labor and interaction in value creation, placing employees at the very center of service delivery. Consequently, organizations have increasingly adopted internal marketing as a strategic approach to enhance employee motivation, commitment, and alignment with organizational objectives. Berry (1981) defines internal marketing as viewing employees as internal customers, arguing that organizations should design internal offerings to satisfy their needs and expectations. By doing so, internal marketing complements traditional human resource practices, focusing heavily on internal communication and value alignment to foster higher service quality, customer satisfaction, and employee retention.

An important psychological outcome associated with effective internal marketing is organizational identification. Rooted in social identification theory, this concept refers to the psychological bond individuals develop with their organization. Employees who strongly identify with their workplace internalize its goals and values, perceiving organizational success as part of their own self-concept. This alignment fosters a strong sense of belonging, positively shapes work attitudes such as job satisfaction, and encourages behaviors that support overall organizational effectiveness.

Empirical studies provide substantial evidence regarding the vital role of internal marketing in shaping employee attitudes across various service contexts. Research consistently demonstrates that internal marketing practices significantly enhance job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and person-organization fit (Joung et al., 2015; Thai et al., 2023). Furthermore, effective internal marketing has been linked to improved financial and non-financial performance, including enhanced service quality and customer satisfaction (Pool & Amirbakzadeh, 2017; De Bruin et al., 2021). While management often highlights these practices, their true effectiveness relies on genuinely addressing employee needs rather

than functioning merely as symbolic showcases (Papasolomou-Doukakis & Kitchen, 2004). Additionally, studies have highlighted the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the relationship between internal marketing and outcomes like organizational identification and job performance (Bailey et al., 2016; Chiu et al., 2020).

Despite this extensive literature, direct examinations of the relationship between internal marketing practices and organizational identification remain limited, particularly from the perspective of frontline employees in consumer-oriented service sectors. Most existing studies address this relationship indirectly or as part of broader conceptual models. Based on this gap, the present study aims to investigate the direct impact of internal marketing practices on employees' organizational identification within the specific context of consumer-oriented service sectors in Türkiye. By focusing on this dynamic emerging market, the research seeks to contribute to a more integrated and culturally contextualized understanding of employee-centered management strategies in modern service organizations.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Service Sector

As often mentioned in the literature, the economy is divided into two main sectors. These are defined as "goods-producing sector" and "service-producing sector". The importance of the service sector is constantly repeated for reasons such as providing basic services, bringing positive experiences, providing employment opportunities, and acting as an indicator of economic growth (Capello and Fratessi, 2013, p.43-64). This provides many additional benefits to sector employees. One of these benefits is that risks such as job loss, dismissal or closure of the workplace during periods of economic downturn due to factors such as various economic crises, natural disasters, epidemics, migration or war are lower in the service sector compared to other sectors, and this situation offers job security to service sector employees. The service sector enterprises, aiming to develop and grow, are focused on completing the tasks in full and providing quality service. This situation has led researchers and business owners to take a series of measures to increase the qualification rate of service sector employees and to ensure their sustainability.

The service sector, which has a more developed presence in national economies compared to the agricultural and industrial sectors, offers intangible products or services and carries out tasks that are beneficial to customers, buyers, businesses, or the general public (Belgin, 2010, p.112-114). Unlike the manufacturing sector, the service sector, which does

not rely on the sale of tangible products to make a profit, but rather focuses on two-way communication with the consumer, is fundamentally consumer-oriented, either directly or in combination.

The service sector is globally divided into segments, each consisting of several industries. The service sector is highly diverse, with traditional and modern sub-sectors exhibiting different structures. Traditional services (retail trade, hairdressing, repair services) are labor-intensive, local, and low-tech; direct customer interaction is paramount. Modern services (banking, telecommunications, IT consulting), on the other hand, are focused on technology, data analytics, and scalability; digitalization and global competition are dominant. The general category of the service sector is difficult to define narrowly as a wide variety of industries make up the sector. Examples of activities that fall within the service sector, also known as the third tier of the economy, encompass services such as advice, experience, and discussion instead of the production of physical goods, and include sales, banking, education, consultancy, insurance, catering, health, home care, after-sales support and storage, data processing, capitalization and investment, scientific, technical, social assistance, art, and entertainment services, among others.

2.2. Internal Marketing

Ensuring sustainable competitive advantage in an environment where competitors are intense is one of the most important objectives of businesses. As this situation is becoming more and more difficult every day, businesses are shifting from a sales-oriented marketing approach where the understanding of "the more I produce, the more I sell" has come to an end, to a modern marketing approach where qualified products produced in a customer-oriented manner should take place. Access to information is currently very easy for both businesses and customers. In this context, businesses have realized that focusing solely on cost reduction and price competitiveness is not sufficient in the long run; they have embraced the necessity of establishing a more holistic and continuous interaction with external environmental factors such as customer expectations, competitive dynamics, and technological developments in order to achieve sustainable success (Vel, et al., 2019, p.5-27).

Internal marketing is a concept with multiple dimensions and contributes to the efficiency of both manufacturing and service-providing businesses. The personnel handled in internal marketing in terms of functional segmentation in marketing are divided into two groups as front-line and support. While front-line staff refers to the group in direct contact with the customer, sales staff is in the position of selling products to the customer. It can be stated

that internal marketing activities for salespeople, in terms of marketing unit personnel, are aimed at achieving personnel efficiency by guiding them to that effect (Frost and Kumar, 2001, p.371-386).

The increase in the satisfaction rates of employees, who are expressed as internal customers, with their organizations, positively increases the quality of the service provided by the business and the performance of the business. Employee satisfaction, which reveals many positive effects such as quality and business performance of service-oriented organizations, can change as a result of psychological and environmental factors (Chi and Gursoy, 2009, p. 245-253). Studies on employee satisfaction in the literature indicate that employees should have a higher priority than customers (Rosenbluth, 1994, p. 227). There seems to be a dominant idea that if employees are happy, satisfied, and dedicated to their work, it will lead to the satisfaction of the stakeholders of the business and the customers receiving service-oriented organizations (Bansal et al., 2001, p. 61-76). Skilled personnel are considered an important asset for gaining a competitive advantage. The primary point to be considered for customer satisfaction and loyalty is that the employees within the enterprise should be happy and their needs should be met (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003, p. 1177-1186). Another important point to be mentioned here is that more customers can be obtained as a result of internal marketing activities. Therefore, it can be considered an important output that the investments made in employees through internal marketing activities will result in higher employee loyalty.

During the production process, testing the product by internal customers and then sending it to the market for sales will offer the company privileges in many areas, such as time, quality, and price. Having control over the problems that may occur before the product is tried by the consumer during the production phase will also eliminate the dissatisfaction that will occur as a result of the problems experienced by the customers. In addition, offering the product to the employees below the market price will make the employees feel that they are being privileged, and this will increase their motivation and satisfaction level (Arslanoğlu et al. 2020, p.22-34).

To briefly mention the variables that should be considered as a whole during the implementation of internal marketing (Urk, 2015);

- Reward and motivation: It is defined as the process of developing policies and systems to increase employees' tendency to stay in the organization in order to achieve organizational goals (Wasiu and Adebajo, 2014, p. 16)
- Effective communication: Creating an awareness of mutual responsibility through the development of a two-way communication system

among employees ensures both efficiency and the improvement of the quality of service-oriented organizations provided to consumers, i.e., external customers (Maglajlic et al., 2018, p. 292)

- Selection and recruitment of candidates: In this process, although choosing the most suitable candidates and placing them in the right areas is considered as a factor affecting the success of the business, it can be stated that the human resources department significantly affects the success of the business by developing various candidate evaluation tests in order for the process to proceed in a proper way.
- Training and development: It refers to supporting the career development of personnel who are placed in positions appropriate to their job content and competencies through various training and development programs.
- Support systems: It refers to the necessity of managing all resources with a proactive approach by means of business facilities that enable employees to fulfill their responsibilities and to master technological records, such as all the information and documents, databases and digital archives they need (Urk, 2015, p. 44-45).
- Healthy working environment: It refers to the provision of health and safety facilities to the employee by the enterprise through providing occupational health and safety facilities that enable employees to have ergonomic working conditions.

In internal marketing, treating employees as customers and implementing a number of training and developmental activities increases employee satisfaction and reduces employee turnover (Wu et al., 2013, p. 436–449). In the literature, it is argued that internal marketing contributes to organizational change and as a result, practices such as support, cooperation, employee engagement, and social and environmental responsibilities become prioritized in the business (Cassundé et al., 2015, p. 49–71). The internal marketing approach allows employees to view their coworkers as internal customers rather than colleagues in order to spread marketing responsibility throughout the organization.

Service-oriented organizations have experienced enduring transformation as a result of the pressure of the competitive environment and the ability to act flexibly, and this change is actually an important opportunity for the sector. The opportunities created by this challenging process, which will continue in the future, will also manifest themselves as utilization for the interest of employees, customers, shareholders, society, and management (Greene et al., 1994, p. 5-13).

The bond of success between the business and its customers will be possible through the effective

guidance of the exchange between the personnel group and itself (Kelemen & Pappasolomou, 2007, p. 746–768). The main point to be comprehended in the section stated so far is that the basic situation in internal marketing is to ensure the effective continuity of the internal change element to be experienced between the organization and the employee. Therefore, it will be possible to achieve the desired target in the market (Bak et al., 1994, p. 37-47).

Kotler (1994) categorizes marketing in service-oriented organizations under three headings as follows (Çoban, 2004, p. 85-98):

- External marketing is the relationship between the consumer and the business.
- Internal marketing is the relationship between the employee and the business.
- Interactive marketing is the relationship between the employee and the consumer.

In their joint study “Expanding the concept of marketing”, Kotler and Levy (1969, p.10-15) argued that the concept of marketing should be defined as a comprehensive concept that includes physical products, services, employees, organizations, and ideas beyond the basic activities of businesses expecting profit. The target is no longer only the external customer. The employees of the business are also included in the field of activity of the marketing department and the scope has been expanded (Jean & Colette, 2020, p. 27-36).

2.3. Organizational Identification

The concept of organizational identity is frequently discussed in management literature because it is an effective factor in establishing a psychological bond between a company and its employees. (Edwards, 2005, p.207-230). Freud, one of the pioneers of the term identification, defines this concept as the emotional closeness of the parties to each other. Although the similarity network here is expressed as managing the emotional bond with other members of the organization, it is stated that people tend to identify within the group and try to classify the life around them in order to regulate their own actions (Edwards, 2005, p. 209-230). Organizational identification occurs when employees perceive themselves as a part of the organization, regardless of whether the organization is experiencing positive or negative circumstances. If the employee is behaviorally supported within the organization, he/she establishes a bond with the organization (Turunç and Çelik, 2010, p. 183-206). Where there is identification, employees are able to work together and have a team spirit. But it may not be entirely accurate to call it merely cooperative activity. At its core is a sense of reciprocity of expectation and giving behavior (Gossett, 2002, p. 385-404). Organizational identification has a ver-

satellite importance in modern business life. The concept of organizational identification is an important subject in organizational behavior studies. Due to the perceived precious value of citizenship in businesses, it is associated with positive outcomes like performance, motivation, and satisfaction. Besides, it has been suggested that when employees exhibit cynical attitudes, their sense of organizational identification decreases (Kerse and Karabey, 2017, p. 383) and there is a negative relationship with turnover (Aslan and İnce, 2019, p. 479-502). If a person identifies with his/her organization during career planning, and also identifies with the organization itself, he or she will not prefer to leave the current organization, even if he or she is offered better opportunities than his/her current situation. The important point in this case is that the goals of the employee and the goals of the organization, personal values and organizational values are in harmony. While the perception of having a fair environment and effective leadership understanding within the enterprise will facilitate this process, attitudes and perceptions are also considered as important values for identification within the organization (Carmeli et al., 2007, p. 972-992).

3. Purpose, Method and Findings of the Research

3.1. Purpose and Method

This study primarily aims to determine the extent and direction of how internal marketing activities implemented in service sector businesses affect employees' levels of organizational identification. The research focuses on examining how employees' self-perception as part of the organization is shaped by internal marketing practices, using quantitative data. In this context, internal marketing is considered the independent variable, and organizational identification is considered the dependent variable; the relationship between the two variables is tested using linear regression analysis. The findings are evaluated in light of theoretical and empirical studies in the literature and interpreted within the context of the service sector.

In line with the objective of this research, hypotheses were formulated and are presented below to empirically test the relationship between internal marketing practices and employees' levels of organizational identification. The main hypothesis of this study is based on the assumption that internal marketing practices, taken as a whole, have a significant impact on employees' levels of identification with the organization. The sub-hypotheses were developed to determine through which dimensions of

internal marketing this effect occurs.

H0: Internal marketing practices have no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Internal marketing practices have an effect on organizational identification.

H0: Independent variables have no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Independent variables have an effect on organizational identification.

H0: Healthy working environment has no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Healthy working environment has an effect on organizational identification.

H0: Employee development has no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Employee development has an effect on organizational identification.

H0: Reward and motivation have no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Reward and motivation have an effect on organizational identification.

H0: Personnel recruitment has no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Personnel recruitment has an effect on organizational identification.

H0: Employee selection has no effect on organizational identification.

H1: Employee selection has an effect on organizational identification.

Parameter estimates in linear regression analysis were made by the Least Squares Method. According to the Least Squares Method, the dependent variable values obtained from the sample regression model should be as close as possible to the observed dependent variable values (Gujarati and Porter, 2018, p. 56). This can be achieved by finding the parameter values that minimize the sum of residual squares. If the residual squares are minimum, the estimated parameters are the best, linear, and bias-free estimates. The explanatory power of the estimated regression model is also important (Stock and Watson, 2012, p. 161). The salience coefficient calculated in this context expresses the proportion of the change that can be explained by regression within the total change in the dependent variable. In addition, the determinants of gender, marital status, age, education and income were also analyzed to identify the effect of demographic variables on the model. The SPSS package program is used for the analysis of the collected data. Within this framework, and consistent with the study's hypothesis, the model developed for this study is as follows (Figure 1).

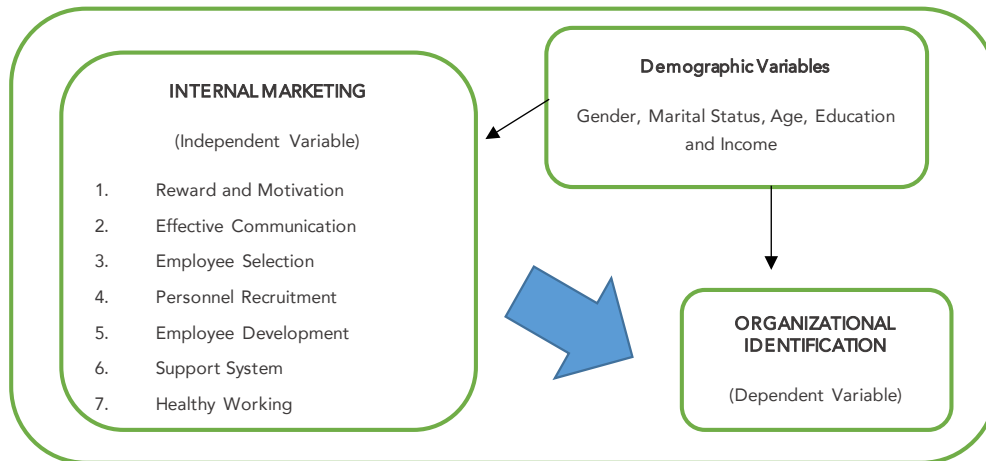


Figure 1. The Model of the Research

While preparing this model, first of all, literature research was conducted to identify the gaps in the relevant literature, and then the hypothesis was formed through the accessed studies. The relationships in the variables in this model are considered as a whole.

3.2. Population and Sample of the Study

The service sector encompasses economic activities that provide various services to individuals or businesses rather than producing tangible goods. This sector generally includes areas not directly involved in goods production and emphasizes customer satisfaction, experience, and interaction. The traditional service sector consists of industries reliant on physical locations and characterized by intensive face-to-face interactions with customers, as well as labor-intensive processes (e.g., restaurants, hotels, banks). In contrast, the modern service sector includes services driven by digitalization and technology, often delivered through automation and online platforms (e.g., e-commerce, cloud-based software). These two subcategories differ in their methods of service delivery and the nature of employee-customer interactions, offering a framework for the contextual interpretation of research findings. The sample of this study consists of individuals working in hotel, restaurant, and banking enterprises of the traditional service sector in Istanbul. In December 2024, a total of 15,596,000 paid employees were employed across Turkey's traditional service sector (hotels, restaurants, banking, etc.) (TÜİK, 2025). The service sector accounts for 55.5% to 59.0% of total employment. Istanbul's share in this sector is around 25%, estimated at approximately 3.5 million people. A convenience sampling method was preferred in determining the sample, taking into account the scope, time, and accessibility limitations of the study. This method allows the inclusion of individuals who are directly involved in the data generation process until a sufficient sample size is reached (Rangaswamy, 1995, p. 220). Within this a total of 425 qu-

estionnaires were administered, and after excluding five questionnaires due to incomplete or inconsistent responses, the analyses were conducted based on data obtained from 420 participants. The sample size was considered sufficient in terms of sensitivity and reliability levels, as well as the size of the population and the number of observation units. Given the population size ($N \approx 3.5$ million), with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the required minimum sample size ($n \approx 384$) has been exceeded (Yamane, 1967). Additionally, sample sizes between 300-500 are considered "good to very good" for descriptive and correlation analyses, making the 420 participants statistically adequate (Comrey & Lee, 1992).

Considering the characteristics of the sample, it should be noted that the service sector is a labor-intensive field where employees are in continuous interaction with customers and organizational processes. Therefore, the perceptions of employees included in the sample regarding internal marketing practices and organizational identification are shaped not only by organizational policies but also by their daily work experiences, emotional labor, and interpersonal relationships. This contextual feature of the sample provides a meaningful basis for interpreting the research findings, particularly those related to psychological attachment and identification.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments and Scales

This study adopted a quantitative research method and used a structured questionnaire as a data collection tool. The questionnaire used in the research was not taken directly from a ready-made questionnaire; rather, it was created by combining scales whose validity and reliability have been proven in the literature, in line with the purpose of the study. In other words, a separate and independent questionnaire was not developed in this study; the data collection tool was prepared by integrating existing scales.

The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section contains questions aimed at determining the demographic characteristics of the parti-

Participants. This section includes a total of five questions covering gender, marital status, age, education level, and occupation information. These questions were prepared to define the structure of the sample and to be used as control variables in the analyses.

In the second section, the Internal Marketing Scale was used to measure internal marketing practices in service businesses. The scale was developed by ElSamen and Alshurideh (2012) and adapted into Turkish by Urk (2015). The Internal Marketing Scale consists of seven sub-dimensions: reward and motivation, effective communication, employee selection, personnel recruitment, employee development, support system, and healthy work environment. The scale form used in the study consists of a total of 32 items. The validity and reliability analyses of the scale were reported in detail in the thesis study conducted by Urk (2015). In this study, it was also observed that the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficients for the sub-dimensions were above acceptable levels.

In the third section of the survey form, the Organizational Identity Scale was used to measure the level of organizational identification. This scale was developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) and adapted into Turkish by Tak and Aydemir (2004). The scale form is unidimensional and consists of six items. In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.87, and it was concluded that the scale is reliable.

All statements in the survey form were arranged using a five-point Likert scale to measure the perceptions and attitudes of the participants. The scaling was rated between "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Strongly Agree" (5). Prior to the implementation

of the survey, a pilot study was conducted with 40 participants to test the comprehensibility of the statements and the functionality of the measurement tool. The pilot study showed that the statements were clear and understandable, and no changes were needed to the survey form.

Data collection was conducted online; the survey form was prepared using the Google Forms platform. Participants were contacted via online link, and data was collected in February 2023 over a period of approximately one month. Ethical committee approval was obtained before the start of the research, and the necessary permissions for the scales used were also obtained from the authors.

Despite time and cost constraints, it is considered that conducting the study within the context of the service sector will contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between internal marketing practices and organizational identification.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 software. Explanatory and confirmatory factor analyses, structural equation modeling, and validity and reliability tests were applied. These analyses enabled the evaluation of relationships between variables while taking into account the structural characteristics of the sample.

3.4. Findings

This part of the study analyzes the demographic data as well as the evaluation status of the scales and presents the results of the findings obtained from the study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Related to Internal Marketing Variable.

Series	IC
Sample	1 402
Observations	402
Mean	3.587065
Median	3.718750
Maximum	5.000000
Minimum	1.000000
Std. Dev.	0.811110
Skewness	-0.490510
Kurtosis	3.015859
Jarque-Bera	16.12441
Probability	0.000315

As a result of the method used to evaluate the conformity of the data obtained with this statistical hypothesis testing technique according to the normal

distribution, the Jarque-Bera statistic probability value is less than 0.05 and does not fit the normal distribution. $0.000315 < 0.05$.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Identification Variable

Series	OZ
Sample	1 402
Observations	402
Mean	3.753317
Median	4.000000
Maximum	5.000000
Minimum	1.000000
Std. Dev.	0.8288805
Skewness	-0.915557
Kurtosis	3.690403
Jarque-Bera	64.146441
Probability	0.000000

The probability value of the Jarque-Bera test statistic is less than 0.05 and does not fit a normal distribution. $0.000000 < 0,05$.

If it does not correspond to a normal distribution,

the estimates will still be bias-free and have the smallest variance because the assumption of normality is not required to apply the GAUSS-MARKOV theorem (DESTE) (Gujarati and Porter, 2018, s. 509).

Table 3. Reliability Coefficient Findings for Internal Marketing Scale Items

Dimensions	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	Scale
Eigen value	16.847	2.538	1.754	1.357	1.245	1.053	.753	
Explained Variance	20.456	14.397	12.449	10.430	8.837	7.695	5.569	79.833
Cronbach's Alpha	.910	.872	.914	.861	.804	.763	.837	.970

(KMO: 0.912; Bartlett test: Chi-square: 14418.692; p: 0.000)

Table 3 provides the reliability coefficients for the Internal Marketing Scale. Overall, Bartlett's test confirms the suitability of factor analysis for these items, while the KMO value verifies adequate sample size.

Eigenvalues and explained variance ratios further support structuring into seven dimensions statistically. Moreover, all sub-dimensions exhibit high reliability.

Table 4. Reliability Coefficient Findings for Organizational Identification Scale Items

Statistics and test information about the dimension	
Eigen value	3.734
Explained variance (%)	62.233
KMO	.869
Cronbach's Alpha	.877
Bartlett's Test	1149.313 (p=0.000)

Reliability coefficient findings for the Organizational Identification Scale are given in Table 4. In summary, Bartlett's test indicates that applying factor analysis to the items would be the right decision and should be done, and the KMO coefficient indicates that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis. Eigenvalue

and explained variance ratio values support that expressing the items as a single dimension is a statistically appropriate decision. In addition, the reliability of the Organizational Identification scale was found to be high.

3.5. Demographic Information

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of the Respondents According to Their Demographic Information

		Number	Percent
Gender	Female	217	54.0
	Male	185	46.0
Marital Status	Married	160	39.8
	Single	242	60.2
Age Group	18-22 years old	231	57.5
	23-32 years old	72	17.9
	33-42 years old	75	18.7
	43-49 years old	24	6.0
Education	Primary	35	8.7
	High School	143	35.6
	Associate deg.	159	39.6
	Bachelor's degree	65	16.2
Income	0-5,500 TL	97	24.1
	5,501-8,500 TL	26	6.5
	8,501-11,500 TL	96	23.9
	11,501- 14,500 TL	48	11.9
	14,5001 TL and above	135	33.6
Total		402	100.0

Table 5 presents the frequency distribution of participants' demographic characteristics. The results indicate that 54% were female and 46% male; 39.8% married and 60.2% single. Age group distribution shows 57.5% in 18-22, 17.9% in 23-32, 18.7% in 33-42, and 6% in 43-49. For education, 8.7% have primary

schooling, 35.6% high school, 39.6% associate's degree, and 16.2% bachelor's degree. Monthly income levels: 24.1% at 0-5,500 TL, 6.5% at 5,501-8,500 TL, 23.9% at 8,501-11,500 TL, 11.9% at 11,501-14,500 TL, and 33.6% at 14,501 TL and above.

3.6. Scale Statistics

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Identification Scale, and Internal Marketing Scale and Its Sub-Dimensions

Dimension/Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reward and Motivation,	3.49	0.888
Effective Communication,	3.55	0.951
Employee Selection,	3.44	1.085
Personnel Recruitment,	3.39	0.982
Employee Development,	3.75	0.862
Support System,	3.81	0.855
Healthy Working Environment	3.84	0.818
Internal Marketing Scale	3.59	0.811
Organizational Identification Scale	3.75	0.829

Descriptive statistics for the Organizational Identification Scale, and the Internal Marketing Scale and its sub-dimensions are given in Table 6. When we examine the averages, we realize that the highest average is in the Healthy Working Environment su-

b-dimension of the Internal Marketing Scale with 3.84, and the lowest average is in the Personnel Recruitment sub-dimension of the Internal Marketing Scale with 3.39.

3.7. Analysis of the Relationship Between Organizational Identification and Internal Marketing Variables

Table 7. Correlation Analysis Findings for the Relationship Between Organizational Identification and Internal Marketing Scale and Its Sub-Dimensions

		(X1)	(X2)	(X3)	(X4)	(X5)	(X6)	(X7)
Reward and Motivation (X1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.769**	.708**	.732**	.723**	.717**	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Effective Communic. (X2)	Pearson Correlation	.769**	1	.773**	.713**	.762**	.711**	.628**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Employee Selection (X3)	Pearson Correlation	.708**	.773**	1	.890**	.842**	.721**	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Personnel Recruitment (X4)	Pearson Correlation	.732**	.713**	.890**	1	.827**	.722**	.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Employee Developm. (X5)	Pearson Correlation	.723**	.762**	.842**	.827**	1	.770**	.672**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
Support System (X6)	Pearson Correlation	.717**	.711**	.721**	.722**	.770**	1	.743**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Healthy Working Environ. (X7)	Pearson Correlation	.667**	.628**	.687**	.725**	.672**	.743**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 presents the results of the correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationships among the internal marketing sub-dimensions. The findings indicate that all sub-dimensions are positively and statistically significantly correlated with each other at the 0.01 level. This result suggests that internal marketing practices in service organizations operate in a complementary and interconnected manner rather than as isolated managerial activities. In particular, strong correlations between employee selection,

personnel recruitment, and employee development point to the structural coherence of human resource practices. In service-sector settings, where service quality is largely shaped by employee behavior, such interrelated practices may reinforce employees' perceptions of organizational consistency and fairness. Overall, the correlation results confirm that the internal marketing scale has a coherent structure and that its sub-dimensions move in the same direction.

Table 8. Linear Regression Model Findings of Organizational Identification Variable and Internal Marketing Variable

	Regression coefficients	Standard regression coefficients	t	p
Fixed	1.269		9.188	0.000
Internal Marketing	0.692	0.678	18.431	0.000
R	R square		F	p
0.678	0.459		339.689	0.000

Table 8 shows the linear regression model created by taking the explanatory variable (independent variable) the opinion about the Internal Marketing variable and the explained variable (dependent

variable) Organizational Identification. Table 8 presents the findings of the simple linear regression analysis examining the effect of internal marketing on organizational identification. The results show

that the regression model is statistically significant, indicating that internal marketing is a meaningful predictor of organizational identification. The adjusted R² value demonstrates that internal marketing explains a substantial proportion of the variance in organizational identification. This finding suggests that employees' perceptions of internal marketing practices play an important role in shaping their sense of belonging and identification with the organization. Moreover, the positive regression coefficient indicates that as internal marketing practices increase, organizational identification also increases. This result supports the view that internal marketing functions as a strategic mechanism that strengthens employee–organization relationships in service enterprises. According to the ANOVA test, the model was found statistically significant. In addition, the model's salience coefficient (adjusted) was calculated

as 0.459. Accordingly, 45.9% of the variability in the Organizational Identification variable is explained by the Internal Marketing variable through the linear regression model. In addition, as shown in the correlation coefficient between the two variables (0.678) and the scatter plot in Figure 2, the relationship between the variables is a positively linear. Based on the t-test results evaluating the significance of the regression coefficients, both coefficients are statistically significant. According to these findings, the regression line is estimated as follows:

$$\text{(Organizational Identification)} = 1.269 + 0.692 * \text{(Internal Marketing)}$$

According to the standard regression coefficient, it is estimated that a one-unit increase in the Internal Marketing variable leads to an increase of 0.692 in the Organizational Identification variable.

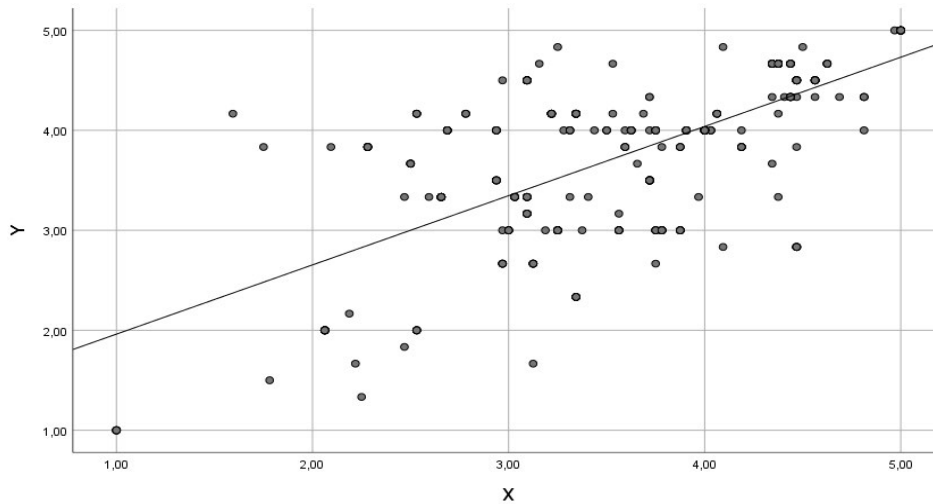


Figure 2. Scatter Plot and Estimation of Regression Line for the Relationship between Internal Marketing (=X) and Organizational Identification (=Y)

Table 9. Linear Regression Model Findings on The Effect of Internal Marketing Sub-Dimensions on Organizational Identification

	Regression coefficients	Standard regression coefficients	T	p
Fixed	0.786		5.160	0.000
Reward and Motivation,	0.137	0.147	2.443	0.015
Effective Communication,	-0.007	-0.008	-0.126	0.900
Employee Selection,	0.210	0.275	3.213	0.001
Personnel Recruitment,	-0.277	-0.329	-3.947	0.000
Employee Development,	0.269	0.280	3.836	0,000
Support System,	-0.104	-0.107	-1.726	0.085
Healthy Working Environment	0.551	0.544	9.791	0.000
R	R square	Adjusted R square	F	P
0.745	0.555	0.547	70.137	0.000

The linear regression model findings of the effect of Internal Marketing sub-dimensions on Organizational Identification are given in Table 9. According to the findings, the overall regression model is statistically significant, and more than half of the variance in organizational identification is explained by the combined effect of internal marketing dimensions. Among the sub-dimensions, healthy working environment emerges as the strongest predictor of organizational identification. This finding highlights the importance of physical and psychological working conditions, particularly in service sectors where emotional labor and interpersonal interaction are intense. Employee development, employee selection, and reward and motivation also have statistically significant positive effects, indicating that practices related to fairness, growth opportunities, and recognition contribute meaningfully to employees' organizational identification. On the other hand, effective communication and support system dimensions do not show statistically significant effects in the model. This result may suggest that these practices are perceived as basic or expected elements of organizational functioning and therefore do not create additional differentiation in employees' identification levels. Overall, the findings indicate that internal marketing influences organizational identification in a differentiated manner, with environmental and developmental factors playing a more decisive role. The significance of the linear regression model between Organizational Identification and Internal Marketing dimensions was examined by ANOVA test. According to the ANOVA test, the model was found statistically significant. In addition, the adjusted R-square value for the model was calculated as 0.547. This value shows that 54.7% of the Organizational Identification variability is explained by the Internal Marketing dimensions through the linear regression model. The coefficients are statistically insignificant in the Effective Communication and Support System sub-dimensions of the Internal Marketing Scale, and the coefficients are statistically significant in the other dimensions. The F statistic is 0.339 and the probability value is less than 0.05, which means that the model as a whole is significant. In addition, as presented in Table 8, according to the results of the linear regression analysis explaining the relationship between internal marketing and organizational identification, the t statistic probability value is less than 0.05 and it is determined that a one-unit increase in internal marketing increases organizational identification by approximately 0.69 units. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables and that each investment in internal marketing increases organizational identification. Similarly, it was also found that each unit increase in the sub-dimensions of internal marketing practices increases organizati-

onal identification. In this context, each one-unit increase in healthy working conditions increased organizational identification by 0.551, one unit increase in employee development increased organizational identification by 0.269, one unit increase in reward and motivation increased organizational identification by 0.137, and one unit increase in employee selection increased organizational identification by 0.210.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Evaluation of the Findings

This study investigates the relationship between internal marketing practices and organizational identification within service sector enterprises. The findings indicate that internal marketing practices offered to employees significantly and positively influence their tendency to identify with the organization, leading to the rejection of the main null hypothesis (H_0). Consistent with existing literature, these practices are associated with critical organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, emotional attachment, person-organization fit, and enhanced overall performance (Alp, 2022; Elibol, 2023; Kocaman et al., 2013; Yüce & Kavak, 2017).

The positive impact of internal marketing can be strongly explained through the lens of social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When organizations value their employees and provide supportive environments, individuals are more likely to integrate emotionally and cognitively, internalizing the organization's successes and values as their own. The findings of this study delineate this process through specific internal marketing dimensions:

Healthy Work Environment: The centrality of a healthy work environment emerges as a strong determinant of organizational commitment. Service employees face high physical and psychological stress due to the human-intensive nature of their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Practices that ensure occupational health and safety extend beyond preventing physical injuries; they make employees feel valued as holistic social entities rather than mere productive units (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). This sense of security and value accelerates the internalization of organizational identity.

Employee Development: Training programs, career advancement opportunities, and empowerment initiatives enhance employees' competencies while aligning their personal goals with organizational objectives (London, 2014; Noe, 2017). When employees feel competent and see a clear path for personal growth, their sense of belonging strengthens, facilitating cultural assimilation and long-term commitment.

Reward and Motivation: Fair and transparent reward systems function as critical psychological mechanisms. Grounded in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), performance-based rewards are perceived not merely as economic incentives but as indicators of organizational appreciation (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Evaluated through principles of justice and equity (Colquitt et al., 2001), these systems build trust, foster collaboration, and consolidate employees' emotional bonds with the organization.

Interestingly, the study revealed nuanced findings regarding other dimensions. The personnel recruitment dimension exhibited a negative relationship with organizational identification. From a social identity perspective, rapid workforce expansion may temporarily dilute existing employees' sense of uniqueness and emotional integration, leading to "expectancy disconfirmation" if post-recruitment socialization is inadequate (Ashforth & Mael, 1992; Bailey et al., 2016). Recruitment merely serves as an "entry gate," and its success heavily depends on subsequent integration practices. Furthermore, the lack of a significant relationship regarding communication and support systems may be attributed to the demographic profile of the participants. Younger employees may perceive these practices as routine corporate requirements rather than unique value-adding initiatives (Ersöz & Çiftçi, 2020; Lings, 2004).

4.2. Conclusion and Implications

This study advances the literature by clarifying the mechanisms through which internal marketing influences organizational identification in the service sector. It demonstrates that when internal marketing practices—particularly the provision of a healthy work environment, developmental opportunities, and equitable rewards—are strategically aligned with employees' expectations, they foster a profound emotional closeness to the organization. Given the fiercely competitive nature of service industries such as health, education, tourism, and banking, treating employees as internal customers is not merely an HR function but a strategic necessity for sustaining service quality and creating competitive advantages.

Managers must approach occupational health, safety, and employee development not as legal or routine obligations, but as strategic tools that foster cultural integration. Furthermore, practices such as recruitment must be carefully managed. To mitigate the potential negative impacts of bringing in new personnel, organizations should implement recognition programs and mentoring systems that continuously validate the contributions of existing staff.

A notable limitation of this study is its demographic composition, as the majority of participants were

young employees aged 18–22 (Generation Z). As younger generations often exhibit different, sometimes more critical, perspectives on organizational practices, the findings predominantly reflect early-career attitudes. Future research should aim for cross-generational samples to enhance generalizability. Additionally, subsequent studies could broaden the explanatory framework by examining moderating variables, such as Person-Organization Fit (POF), across diverse sectors and cultural contexts to better understand the boundary conditions of internal marketing's effectiveness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics committee approval (04.11.2022 / 2022-16) was obtained from Istanbul Gelisim University Ethics Committee for the purpose of carrying out this study approval.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person related to the study.

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