

Exploring the Impact of Internal Marketing on Organizational Commitment of Travel Agents' Employees

Marwa Salah*, Mohamed Abou-Shouk*, Nancy M. Fawzy*

Abstract *One effective way of improving employees' performance is increasing their organizational commitment to the workplace. A good internal marketing system could positively contribute to employee organizational commitment development. The current study is exploratory in nature. It aims to explore the impact of internal marketing dimensions on travel agencies' employee organizational commitment. A questionnaire form was used to collect data from travel agencies' employees randomly. Structural equation modelling technique was used to test the hypotheses of the study and reveal rigorous, valid, and reliable findings. Findings revealed that some dimensions of internal marketing are significantly contributing to organizational commitment of travel agencies' employees. Contributions of study to knowledge and practices are also introduced.*

Keywords: *Internal Marketing, Organizational Commitment, Travel Agencies, Employees, Egypt*

INTRODUCTION

The role of employees in the provision of tourism services is indispensable; the direct communication between employees and tourists is a source of competitive advantages for service enterprises (Sokachae & Moghaddam, 2014). One way to improve employee's performance is to increase their organizational commitment. Employees become committed, co-operative, and enthusiastic about the organization when they are treated as internal customers. This process implies that enterprises should use marketing techniques to sell the product internally first for employees (Davis, 2005). Internal marketing is the concept that targets employees as internal customers. It refers to all the actions that an organization has to perform in order to develop, train and motivate its employees in order to enhance the productivity and the quality of the services (Sihombing & Gustam, 2007).

Treating employees as internal customers helps organizations effectively manage their internal customers. As a result, they build good relationships with their internal customers

which in turns help to build effective relationships with external customers. Previous studies have shown that satisfied employees are more organizationally committed. Hence, internal marketing leads through achieving organizational commitment to achieve a positive impact on the organizational performance (Gooshki, Jazvanaghi, Kermani, & Eskandari, 2016).

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the internal marketing on the organizational commitment of travel agencies' employees. The research objectives of this study are:

- a) identify the dimensions of internal marketing and explore its relationships with employee organizational commitment in travel agents' sector,
- b) generate the dimensions of organizational commitment related to travel agents', and
- c) measure the effects of internal marketing dimensions on organizational commitment and rank these dimensions based on its effects' power.

* Tourism Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University, Egypt.
Corresponding author: Mohamed Abou-Shouk; maa15@fayoum.edu.eg

Although internal marketing and employees have been empirically tested (Huang & Rundle-Thiele, 2014) few studies have measured the effect of internal marketing on employees' organizational commitment. In addition, tourism sector lacks such studies dealing with employees and their organizational commitment concerns. This study contributes to knowledge by empirically investigating the role of internal marketing practices on employees' organizational commitment in travel agents particularly when travel agents depend heavily on highly communicative employees to market and sell their services. The following section will handle the concept of internal marketing and its dimensions, and organizational commitment concept and types.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal Marketing in Tourism

Internal marketing (IM) plays a critical role in services organizations particularly in hospitality ones where a strong emphasis is given to employees as an element of the services marketing mix (Azzam, 2016). IM refers to all the actions that an organization has to perform in order to develop, train and motivate its employees in order to enhance the quality of the services provided to customers and improves both productivity of the employees and customers' satisfaction (Abra, 2012). In addition, the complex nature of hospitality industry makes the management of people challenging. IM has been seen as a means of effectively managing employees for enhanced productivity. An excellent IM environment in the tourism would enable employees provide high service quality. Indeed, several studies have confirmed the importance of internal marketing in managing employees in the tourism industry. IM is considered the means by which employee needs can be addressed, and is therefore the basis of the formation of the relationship between the customer and the employee in the tourism setting (Braithwaite, 2016). As a management strategy and philosophy, IM could help tourism and hospitality enterprises to influence employees' attitudes and behaviour through their selection, training, motivations, empowerment, retaining and development which all contributes significantly in improving hospitality services quality (Azzam, 2016).

Internal Marketing Dimensions and Organizational Commitment: Hypotheses Development

There is no unified and specific model that reflects what is included within internal marketing. Hogg, Carter, and Dunne (1998) revealed five dimensions of internal marketing: communication, staff training; appraisal and feedback; and customer consciousness. Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) divided

elements of internal marketing to employee motivation and satisfaction, customer orientation and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Chang and Chang (2007) identified five dimensions of internal marketing: incentives, training, staff empowerment, administrative support, and internal communication, while the study of Farzad, Nahavandi, and Caruana (2008) showed that internal marketing dimensions include diversification of tasks, incentives, job satisfaction, training, integration and coordination of hotel functions. Furthermore, Tsai and Tang (2008) noted that internal marketing dimensions involve procedures such as employee attraction, selection, empowerment and participation, training, and performance incentives. In addition Roberts-Lombard (2010) notes that retention policy, quality of incentives, trust between employees, and communication are the dimensions that have formed internal marketing. Therefore, internal marketing includes many dimensions of human resources and focus on marketing mix in hospitality and tourism organizations. This study is exploratory in nature as it adopted the dimensions frequently investigated in hospitality organizations, but never in travel agents sector. The dimensions adopted in this study are studied by Chang and Chang (2007) including incentives, training, staff empowerment, administrative support, and internal communication. A detailed description of dimensions is introduced in the following sections.

Incentives

Incentives are a force that enables an individual to act in the direction of a particular objective. Well-motivated people engage in discretionary behaviour. In the majority of roles, there is scope for individuals to decide how much effort to exert. Such people may be self-motivated, and as long as this is provided, it means they are going in the right direction to attain what they are there to achieve and this is the best form of motivation (Güllü, Çelîk, Güllü, & Bayram, 2017).

Good salary and job security will always include an element of feedback for work accomplished. In whichever sense of the word, employees are assumed to feel safer when they know "how they are doing". General feedback, both positive and negative, helps most employees feel a sense of safety and competency. Employees may consider salary to be a solid feedback concerning both their job and their abilities. Though many incentives are based on the job itself, self-actualization, and the feeling of succeeding in a job well done, tangible or verbal incentives may very well bestow a high level of satisfaction upon the knowledge worker (Filtvedt, 2016).

Incentives programs and competitions are necessary to change the behavior of employees in direct contact with customers. Such practices should be implemented to increase productivity, overcome the resistance in short time

or to motivate employees and improve their performances. In addition, incentives have also positive effects on organizational outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and etc.) and employee performance (Aykan & Sunmez, 2014). Therefore, the first hypothesis is developed:

H1. There is a significant impact of incentives on employees' organizational commitment.

Training

Training is a systematic development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by employees to perform adequately on a given task or job (Al-Hawary, Al-Qudah, Abutayeh, Abutayeh, & Al-Zyadat, 2013). Training and development strategy of a firm shapes the motivational level of training and development programs offered by the firm or any organization. The firm should understand the role that training and development programs play in the long-term performance. There are many causal factors including changing customer needs, human resources, corporate strategy and competitive strategy, level of technology, etc. in field of business. Preparation and placement of successful candidates according to these factors on the jobs to perform their duties effectively is a requirement for the employees. This means that training and development is vital factor for employees (Tuan, 2017).

Employee training and development programs have a basic role in increasing employee motivation in the service organizations (Güllü et al., 2017). Sustainable training and development programs may also increase the business performance in the organizations where production depends on employee service production capability. Therefore, a training and development programs can be seen as a key factor in achieving organizational aims, strategic goals, customer satisfaction and employees' commitment (Abo Eisheh & Salahudin, 2016; Güllü et al., 2017; Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016). Hence, the second hypothesis is formulated:

H2. Training positively contributes to employees' organizational commitment.

Empowerment

Empowerment has been described as a venue to enable employees make decisions and as a personal experience where individuals take responsibility for their own actions (Al-Hawary et al., 2013). Employees need to be empowered to accommodate customer requests, and respond appropriately to remedy situations when things go wrong. The effective part of employee development dwells on empowerment. Empowerment as an internal marketing dimension means authorizing and enabling employees to act, behave, think

and make decisions to get the job done. This enables employees to exercise their discretion in service delivery. It is when employers create favorable environments and equip employees with resources to boost their level of confidence that they are able to effectively take on new responsibilities (Brammah, 2016).

Empowerment means understanding the needs and capabilities of the employees as well as trust and to help maximize the achievement of organizational goals. The freedom in decision-making satisfies the employees so that they feel empowered in the workplace. The important component in the process of empowerment is to trust colleagues and partners which have significant influence on the behaviour of group members and organizational commitment effectiveness (Insan, Astuti, Raharjo, & Hamid, 2013). Build upon this, the third hypothesis is developed:

H3. Empowerment is positively affecting employees' organizational commitment.

Administrative Support

Administrative support (also called organizational support) that a company receives can be interpreted as a valuable resource that has a positive effect on the company's performance. The management support delivered actually contributes to the company's success (Stubner, Wulf, & Hungenberg, 2007).

Organizational support is based on the humanized qualities of organizations in employees' eyes, manifested by culture, rewards and punishments system, benefits and payments of organizations. When employees become aware of their organizations' attention, admiration, support, and respect towards them, they show positive return to their organization too (Beheshtifar & Zare, 2012). According to organizational support theory, if employees perceive more support from the organization, they are more likely to develop more positive attitudes towards the organization. The support from the organization reduces absenteeism and increases citizenship behaviour and performance (Hussain & Asif, 2012).

A basic predictor of organizational commitment is organizational support. Employees receive administrative support appreciate their efforts to produce positive efforts towards the organization (Gündüz, 2014). Organizational support leads to an organizational commitment that helps to reduce the turnover intention among their employees. In addition this support is a valuable factor that enhances the organizational commitment in hospitality and tourism sector (Kalidass & Bahron, 2015). Hence, the fourth hypothesis is formed:

H4. Administrative support has a positive relationship on employees' organizational commitment.

Internal Communication

Communication within the organization has become an essential prerequisite for the well-functioning of internal activities and job satisfaction (Brammah, 2016). Without people being able or prepared to communicate with each other, there will be no inter-departmental or inter functional co-ordination (Al-Hawary et al., 2013). It has been defined by (Dwyer, 2005) as the process whereby people within an organization give and receive message in order to enhance knowledge, skills and awareness of issues related to their jobs. The means through which information is conveyed from one party to the other is referred to as communication. Dramatically, the importance to disseminate relevant information to all employees in an organization is crucial so as to have common goals and values. Proper communication facilitates coordination of efforts towards achieving a common goal (Alshurideh, Alhadeed, & Barween, 2015).

Furthermore, when employees feel they are good contributors to their organization, they will be encouraged to involve and participate more for the sake of the business. When manager communicates effectively with the employees, listens to their complaints, answering their questions and provide for them ways to communicate effectively, they will be encouraged to enhance their work and feel satisfied about their jobs (Al-Hawary et al., 2013). The management can bring the employee commitment to organization by improving the quality of communication and receiving effective response to the fulfillment of employee expectations as a way to increase their engagement (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013). Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is developed:

H5. Internal communication is a predictor of employees' commitment

Organizational Commitment and Research Conceptual Model

The concept of organizational commitment has emerged in the 1970's and 1980's as a key factor of the relationship between individuals and organizations. The commitment is the state of intellectual and emotional adherence to some political, social or religious theory or action or practice (Omar, 2010). Loyal and committed manpower is one of superiority indicators of one organization than another. Research has shown that organizational commitment has a positive relationship with outcomes such as job satisfaction, over social organizational behaviour and job performance and negatively associated with leaving job. Organizational commitment is an important variable in understanding employee behavior that with impact on employee performance is caused to increase productivity, improve service delivery and increase the quality of it (Gooshki et al., 2016).

While internal marketing helps employee feeling that management consider their needs and have responsibility about them, it contributes to employees' positive view relative to their job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment (Omar, 2010; Shekary, Moghadam, Adaryany, & Moghadam, 2012). There are three types of organizational commitment, affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement with the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so. It implies an emotional attachment of employees to the organization, and especially their susceptibility to occupational experiences, such as organizational support (Griffin & Hepburn, 2005). Also, this emotional reaction is defined as an interface between individual identity and the identity of the organization and as well as the amount of attachment to the organization because of itself is independent of its instrumental value and it has happened in situations in which employees are willing to continue the relationship with the organization (Sokachae & Moghaddam, 2014). It shows individual's affective dependence to organization.

Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so. It is related to willing to stay in organization for expenses of its leave and compensation due to stay in organization. This kind of commitment is created when a person would believe that his abilities are not affordable in the market, or that they lack necessary skills to compete in the areas of interest. Such employees feel a kind of dependency on their existent organization (Shekary et al., 2012).

This commitment includes two infrastructures: one of them is based on what people lose after leaving the organization, and the other is based on the recognition of persons about access to available alternatives, if they had decided to leave the organization, which usually referred to as the marginal costs. Thus, it is a kind of emotional and fanatical attachment to the values and goals of an organization; in fact, this dependence on the individual's role in relation to the values and goals of the organization is due to the organization itself apart from its instrumental values (Sokachae & Moghaddam, 2014).

Finally, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization. This type of commitment, expressing the belief of the employees that based on it, employees believe that they have to stay and grow with the organization, because the social experience insists on loyalty of employee to employer. Persons who have high degree of normative commitment feel that they are bound to continue

their work (job) in the organization. Normative commitment shows employee's belief relative to their responsibility in relation to organization and it directs employee to stay in the organization (Shekary et al., 2012).

Omar (2010) states that employee willingness to contribute to organizational effectiveness is influenced by the nature of commitment they experience. Employees who want to

belong to the organization (affective commitment) might be more likely than those who need to belong (continuance commitment) or feel obliged to belong (normative commitment) to make an effort on behalf of the organization. Based on the above discussions of the relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment, Figure (1) shows the proposed conceptual framework of the research and the developed hypotheses.

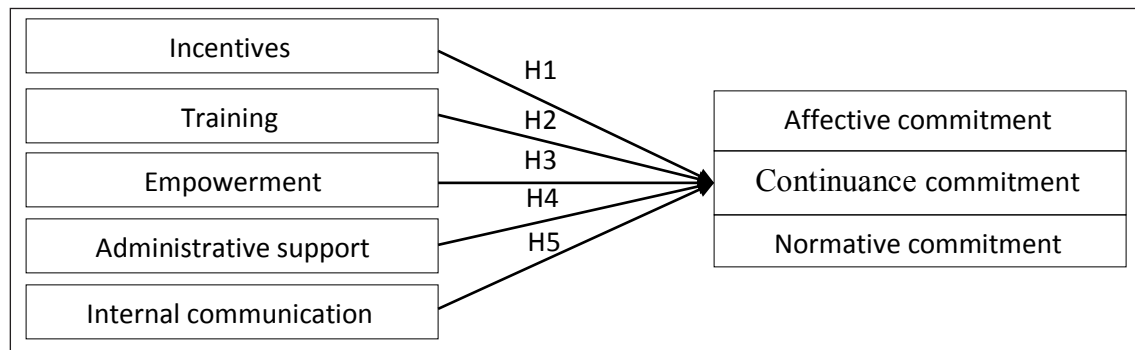


Fig. 1: Proposed Research Model

From Figure (1), it is clear that the organizational commitment should be predicted by five factors: incentives (Hypothesis 1), training (H2), empowerment (H3), administrative support (H4), and internal communication (H5).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts the quantitative method to test the hypothesized research model. It uses a self-administered structured questionnaire to collect required data from employees of travel agencies category (A) in Cairo. The questionnaire is originally designed in English and translated into Arabic, the mother language of respondents. The back translation technique is used to translate the Arabic version into English to ensure the translation validity. After that, the questionnaire is piloted on 50 random employees of travel agencies to check its construct validity. Items of the questionnaire were found reliable and valid.

The questionnaire includes the six independent constructs of the study which are studied by Chang and Chang (2007), namely (Incentives (measured by 5 items), training (4 items), empowerment (3 items), administrative support (4 items), and internal communication (4 items)) in addition to the dependent construct: organizational commitment. Organizational commitment (the dependent variable) is divided to three sub-constructs, affective commitment (measured by 4 items), continuance commitment (3 items), and normative commitment (3 items). All statements of the questionnaire were built using 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

Questionnaire was addressed to 255 employees of travel

agencies category (A) in Cairo which deliver all tourism services. Travel agencies were selected using random sample technique. 200 forms were returned back and data checked for analysis purposes. Data were entered in SPSS software, and descriptive statistics were computed including frequencies, mean, and standard deviation. WarpPLS version (6) was used as a structural equation modelling software to test the hypotheses of the study. Two structured models were presented in the current study. The first deals with organizational commitment as one variable (second-order model), and the second deals with organizational commitment as three sub-constructs: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (first-order model). Standardized loadings, construct validity (discriminant and convergent), and reliability (internal consistency and composite reliability) are introduced.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Table (1) shows that 65% of participants are female and 35% are male reflecting the majority of women working in travel agencies sector in Egypt, 44% of respondents are between 30 and 39 years, 32.5% of them are between 23 and 29 years, 62% of respondents are married, 31% are single, 3.% are widows and 3% are divorced. 45.5% of participants have between 5 to 10 years of experience in travel and tourism sector, 30.5% have between 2 and 5 years, 17% have between 10 and 15 years, and 7% have more than 15 years of experience.

Table 1: Personal Data Analysis of Participants

Variable		Percent
Gender	Male	35.0
	Female	65.0
Age	23-29	32.5
	30-39	44.0
	40-49	16.0
	More than 50 years	7.5
Social Status	Single	31.0
	Married	62.5
	Divorced	3.0
	Widow	3.5
Experience (years)	2-5	30.5
	5- 10	45.5
	10-15	17.0
	More than 15	7.0

Table (2) introduces the mean and standard deviation values for the eight variables of the study: incentives, training, empowerment, administrative support, internal communication, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. It is revealed that incentives have the highest mean value (3.61 is close to 'agree' option), followed by training (3.59), affective commitment (3.53), and internal communication (3.51). However, respondents have 'neutral' opinions on continuance commitment (3.49), administrative support (3.36), normative commitment (3.32), and empowerment (3.26).

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Research Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation
Incentives	3.61	1.01
Training	3.59	1.02
Empowerment	3.26	1.09
Administrative support	3.36	1.08
Internal communication	3.51	1.03
Affective commitment	3.53	0.99
Continuance commitment	3.49	1.07
Normative commitment	3.32	0.98

Table 3: Measurement Model

Construct	indicators	Loadings	AVE	C. alpha	CR	√AVE
Incentives	The salary I get is suitable to the amount of work I do	0.793	0.584	0.818	0.874	0.764
	The company has a system for rewards	0.750				
	Rewarding system encourages staff to work together	0.816				
	The company provides good financial incentive	0.843				
	When I do something extraordinary I know that I will reward-ed	0.596				

MEASUREMENT MODEL

Measurement model looks at the relationship between latent variables (constructs) and indicators (sub-construct items). The aim of the measurement model is the emphasis on the validity and reliability of the used scale and the relationship between research's constructs. In the current study, two measurement models were revealed; the first-order model and the second-order model. The first-order model looks measures organizational commitment as three sub-constructs; affective, continuance and normative commitment while the second-order model deals with organizational commitment as one main construct. Table (3) depicts the loadings, average variance extracted (AVEs), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability for each construct of the research model.

The fit indices for the first-order model show good model fit: Average path coefficient (APC)=0.189, P=0.002, Average R-squared (ARS)=0.629, P<0.001, Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)=0.619, P<0.001, Average block VIF (AVIF)=1.702, Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)=2.232, Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)=0.641, Sympton's paradox ratio (SPR)=0.867, R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)=0.999, Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)=1.000, and Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)=1.000. The second-order model also shows a good fit: APC=0.203, P<0.001, ARS=0.768, P<0.001, AARS=0.762, P<0.001, AVIF=1.709, AFVIF=2.050, GoF=0.716, SPR=0.800, RSCR=0.997, SSR=1.000 and NLBCDR=1.000.

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for constructs in both models exceed the threshold of 0.7 indicating reliable results (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). AVEs in both models exceed 0.5, which is evidence of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and square root of AVEs exceeds correlation among constructs, which is an indicator to discriminant validity existence (Kock, 2015) (Table 3). Therefore, the measurement model is valid and reliable.

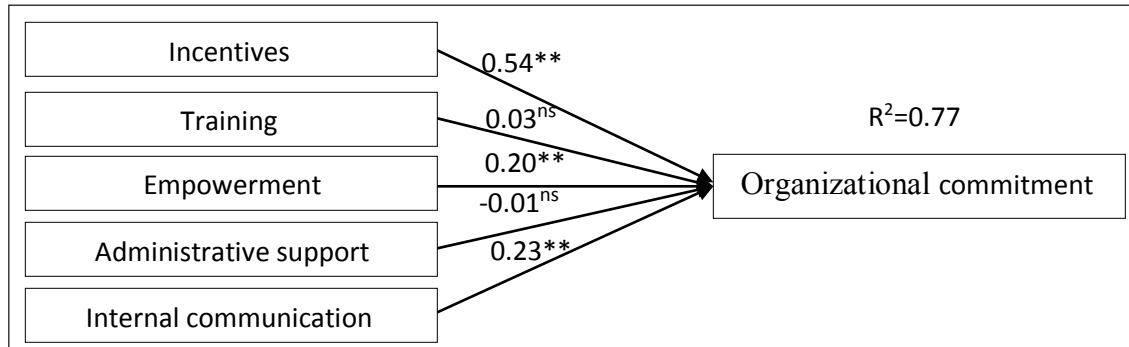
Construct	indicators	Loadings	AVE	C. alpha	CR	\sqrt{AVE}
Training	The company provides training programs to develop my skills	0.787	0.630	0.804	0.872	0.794
	The training programmes provided fit with the nature of my work	0.813				
	Training employees is a concern of the company management	0.759				
	Training programmes provided have increased my work efficiency	0.815				
Empowerment	My supervisor empowers me to use my own judgment in solving problems	0.889	0.824	0.893	0.934	0.908
	I am empowered to make decisions to quickly respond to customer needs	0.908				
	The management allows me to express my opinion in problem solving	0.927				
Administrative support	Management provides a stimulating working environment for employees	0.688	0.602	0.778	0.857	0.776
	The management help strengthening human relations at work	0.760				
	The company deals with employees as partners committed to achieving a firm goals	0.815				
	Management involves staff in making decisions relevant to the organization's future	0.833				
Internal communication	Work colleagues do not hesitate to provide help if I need	0.801	0.582	0.759	0.847	0.763
	Management keeps me informed of any company policy change	0.716				
	I can easily and directly contact my supervisor for any problems	0.812				
	My company has a good communication system that supports information flow	0.717				
Organizational commitment: affective *	I enjoy talking about my work with my friends outside of my work	0.819	0.641	0.813	0.877	0.800
	I feel self-motivated in my work	0.784				
	I keep the details of my work away from other organizations	0.819				
	I consider myself a highly committed person to my work	0.778				
Organizational commitment: continuance*	Leaving my job would cause me several problems (personal-psychological-economic-social)	0.822	0.663	0.744	0.855	0.814
	Jobs available in other organizations are not appropriate for me	0.750				
	I prefer to continue in my current job	0.866				
Organizational commitment: normative *	I think that leaving my current job without justification is immoral	0.834	0.700	0.786	0.875	0.837
	I feel that moral commitment is the most important reason why I continue in my job	0.821				
	I prefer to continue work in the same company than moving to another company	0.855				
Organizational commitment**	Affective commitment	0.918	0.782	0.860	0.915	0.884
	Continuance commitment	0.879				
	Normative commitment	0.854				

Note: * refers to organizational commitment in the first-order model while ** refers to it in the second-order model, AVE: average-variance extracted, C. alpha: Cronbach's alpha, CR: composite reliability, and \sqrt{AVE} : the square root of AVE.

Structural Model

The structural model looks at the regression weights of independent variables and dependent ones. In the current study, the structural models measure the relationship between internal marketing dimensions and organizational commitment of travel agents' employees. The present study reveals two structural models: the second-order

model dealing with organizational commitment as one main construct and the first-order model dealing with organizational commitment as three sub-constructs namely affective, continuance and normative commitment. Starting with the second-order model (Fig. 2), it is revealed that some constructs of the study have significant effects on employee organizational commitment.



Note: ns: not significant, and ** is significant at 0.01

Fig. 2: Second-Order Structural Model of Organizational Commitment

Hypotheses Testing

H1. Incentives have a Positive Effect on Employee Organizational Commitment

The SEM results appearing in Figure (2) depict that incentives have the greatest effect on employee organizational commitment ($\beta=0.54$, $P<0.01$) and therefore the first hypothesis is supported. This results show that respondents have highly scored in incentives (mean=3.61). Furthermore, it is revealed that incentives have the highest regression weights on organizational commitment dimensions (Affective: $\beta=0.59$, Continuance: $\beta=0.51$, and Normative: $\beta=0.34$) as shown in Figure (3)

H2. Training has a Significant Impact on Employee Organizational Commitment

SEM findings revealed that training has insignificant impact on employee organizational commitment ($\beta=0.03$, $P>0.05$) and therefore the second hypothesis is not supported as shown in Figure (2). This is explained by regression weights revealed in Figure (3) where training has the lowest insignificant regression coefficient values on organizational commitment dimensions (Affective: $\beta=-0.003$, Continuance: $\beta=0.02$, and Normative: $\beta=0.10$).

H3. Empowerment has a Significant Effect on Employee Organizational Commitment

Findings revealed that empowerment has significantly affected organizational commitment ($\beta=0.20$, $P<0.01$) (Figure 2) and therefore the third hypothesis is supported and

empowerment is ranked third in its effect on organizational commitment after incentives and internal communication. In addition, Figure (3) has clarified that effect in details where it is revealed that empowerment has a positive and significant effect on employee organizational commitment dimensions (Affective: $\beta=0.13$, Continuance: $\beta=0.17$, and Normative: $\beta=0.25$).

H4. Administrative Support has a Significant Impact on Employee Organizational Commitment

Findings revealed that administrative support is insignificantly affecting employee organizational commitment ($\beta=-0.01$, $P>0.05$) (Figure 2) and therefore the fourth hypothesis is not supported. Additionally, Figure (3) illustrated that administrative support has low insignificant regression weights on organizational commitment (Affective: $\beta=0.04$, Continuance: $\beta=-0.01$, and Normative: $\beta=0.06$).

H5. Internal Communication has a Significant Impact on Employee Organizational Commitment

Findings revealed that internal communication is ranked second after incentives in the effect weight on employee organizational commitment ($\beta=0.23$, $P<0.01$) (Figure 2) and therefore, the fifth hypothesis is supported. This result is supported in details in Figure (3) where internal commitment was found significantly affecting the three dimensions of organizational commitment (Affective: $\beta=0.17$, Continuance: $\beta=0.27$, and Normative, $\beta=0.18$).

To sum up, it is found that incentives, empowerment, and internal communication have significant affected on employee organizational commitment and these three

constructs explain 77% of the variance in organizational commitment ($R^2=0.77$) (Figure 2). In addition, findings and normative commitment ($R^2=0.51$) as shown in figure (3).

found that continuance commitment is highly predicted by incentives, empowerment, and internal communications ($R^2=0.71$) than affective commitment ($R^2=0.66$),

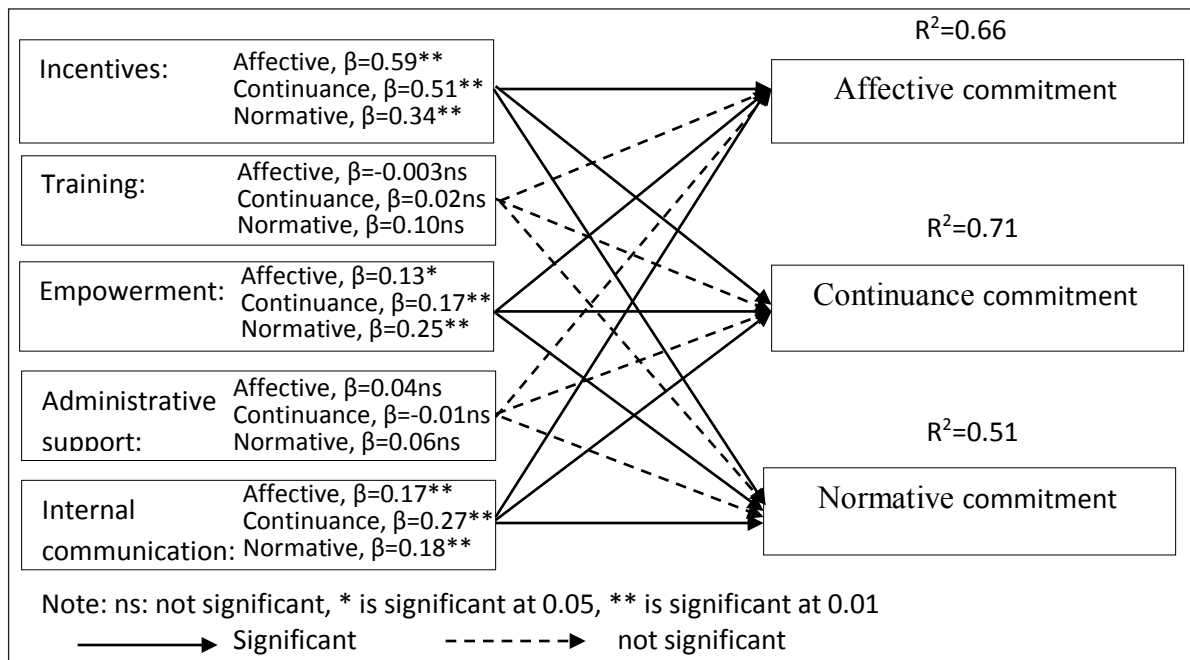


Fig. 3: First-Order Structural Model of Organizational Commitment

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Internal marketing helps management of organizations to enhance their commitment to their jobs and workplace. Internal marketing is a valuable tool that increases employees' awareness about the organization, its goals and policy. It leads to an engagement of employees in the organizational operations, increases their satisfaction about their work, and creates a positive attitude towards their organization. Organizations have effective internal marketing practices means they have low turnover and high loyal and committed employees. The findings of the current study revealed that there is a positive relationship between some internal marketing dimensions and organizational commitment of travel agents' employees.

Starting with incentives, findings revealed that incentives have the highest effect on employees' organizational commitment. This implies that rewarding employees on their performance would increase their commitment to the workplace. Incentives take various forms; this could be an appreciation on a good performance, ideas or behaviour which touches the psychological aspect of employees. It could be bonuses to reward employees on their achievement of relevant tasks. Incentives increase the employee's self-

confidence and provide the feeling of success and leads to self-motivated employees. In addition, incentives support the satisfaction level of employees to their organizations. This finding is in line with Güllü et al. (2017) who claim that incentives are a catalyst of self-motivated employees, and Filtvedt (2016) who found that incentives are a feature that employee is in the right direction towards success, and Aykan and Sunmez (2014) who revealed that incentives have a positive impact on employee organizational commitment.

Furthermore, findings revealed that internal communication is positively affecting the level of employee organizational commitment. Internal communication is one of the core dimensions of internal marketing. It facilitates the transformation of management objectives to employees and converts employees to internal customers for the organization. Internal communication contributes to dissemination of information within the organization, unifies employees to work towards the organization goals and decreases the probability of mistakes. Organizations with a good internal communication system have well-functioning of tasks. These communications help to involve employees in tasks and encourage them to contribute to their organization. The feeling of employees as contributors to their organization leads to job satisfaction and commitment. This finding is concurrent with Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013) who claim that the good internal communications increase employee engagement and commitment.

Empowerment is the third factor that findings revealed it has a significant effect on employees' organizational commitment. Empowerment implies that the organization management trust employees and empower them to make or participate in decision making process. It is again a source of confidence to employees and the ability of taking on responsibilities. Employees who are empowered by their management understand the goals of the organization and make decisions that contribute to achieving these goals. Empowering employees means that they are also responsible for their decisions' consequences and that leads to improve their performance. Empowering employees is a process that once of its outputs is effective organizational commitment as found by Insan et al. (2013).

Although training could help employees to effectively achieve their tasks, understand the goals of the organization and develop their skills in order to improve their performance, the present study revealed unexpected result that there is no significant relationship between training and employees' commitment. The interpretation of this finding could be the lack of efficient and sufficient training programmes offered to employees of travel agents or the offered programmes are not relevant or do not fit the nature of travel agencies operations. Furthermore, the current study found that administrative support does not significantly affecting employees' organizational commitment. This unexpected finding also could be due to the weak support provided by the top management to their employees. This is definitely true because the mean value of employees' response on this construct is 'neutral' which implies that employees do not feel enough support from management in training areas or developing their skills needed for better performance. Therefore, these two areas, training and administrative support, are two defects highlighted in travel agencies sector which if well-developed could increase the organizational commitment of employees.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study is exploratory in nature. It aims to explore the effect of internal marketing dimensions on travel agents' employee organizational commitment. Findings revealed that incentives, internal communication, and empowerment as internal marketing dimensions could help increase the organizational commitment of travel agencies' employees. However, it is revealed that the other dimensions of internal marketing which are training and administrative support have insignificant contribution to employees' organizational commitment in travel agencies sector in Egypt.

This study contributes to knowledge and practices. The study is an added value to the extant literature on organizational commitment particularly in travel agencies sector although some few studies were conducted in hospitality sector.

Understanding the topic of organizational commitment and how it is affected by good internal marketing practices, in addition to its importance in well-functioning of organization's operations and goals achievement could enrich the extant knowledge in tourism sector. Developing a research model and testing it through an advanced multivariate technique, structural equation modelling, is useful to scholars and academics who need to deeply investigate this topic in travel and tourism sector.

Although exploratory in nature, this study presents useful highlights to management of travel agencies. Although positive effect of incentives, internal communication, and empowerment on employees' organizational commitment in travel agencies, the effect coefficient of both internal communication and empowerment should be supported as to be similar to the weight of incentives' role in increasing employee commitment. In addition, in a sector that employees have direct contact with customers such as travel agents, employees should be equipped by negotiation and communication skills in order to better achievement of their functions. Employees are the internal marketers of the agency programmes and packages, and therefore relevant, effective, and enough training programmes should be planned and provided based on needs analysis survey. The analysis of training needs should be continuously conducted to identify the training programmes required to develop the performance of employees. An evaluation of these training programmes should also be conducted to measure the effectiveness of such programmes. Furthermore, the management of travel agencies should increase their support to their employees and dealing with them as partners participate in achieving the organization goals. Training and administrative support are two areas that need more attention from travel agents' managers. In terms of administrative support, the managers of travel agents should build fair relationships with their employees and pay a significant attention of these relationships impact on employee organizational commitment to their agencies. Supporting employees' needs, encourage and guide them through their managers could be a push factor that improves their performance and has a significant reflection on their commitment.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND VENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study has revealed unexpected findings regarding training and administrative support. The exploration of cause of insignificant contribution of those two areas to employees' organizational commitment would have been investigated well via interviews with both employees and managers. This limitation could be a venue for further research. A further development of research model could be done and deep

investigation of the organizational commitment could be further studied.

REFERENCES

- Abra, A. (2012). *The effect of internal marketing on job satisfaction and employee commitment: A study of electricity company of Ghana Volta regional office.* (Masters of Business Administration), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, The Institute of Distance Learning Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Al-Hawary, S., Al-Qudah, A., Abutayeh, P., Abutayeh, M., & Al-Zyadat, D. Y. (2013). The impact of internal marketing on employee's job satisfaction of commercial banks in Jordan. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(9), 811-826
- Alshurideh, M., Alhadeed, A. Y., & Barween, A. (2015). The effect of internal marketing on organizational citizenship behavior an applicable study on the University of Jordan employees. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 7(1), 138.
- Aykan, E., & Sunmez, E. (2014). Mediating role of perceived organizational justice between internal marketing practices and employee task and contextual performance: A shopping center implication. *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research*, 2(7), 1-15.
- Azzam, Z. (2016). Internal marketing as a tool for maintaining high quality services provided by services firms: A case of hospitality industry in Jordan. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 4(4), 380-393.
- Balakrishnan, C., & Masthan, D. (2013). Impact of internal communication on employee engagement: A Study at Delhi international airport. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 3(8), 1-13.
- Beheshtifar, M., & Zare, E. (2012). Effect perceived organizational support on employees' attitudes toward work. *Science Series Data Report*, 4(9), 28-34.
- Braimah, M. (2016). Internal marketing and employee commitment in the hospitality industry. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 5(2), 1-22
- Chang, C.-S., & Chang, H.-H. (2007). Effects of internal marketing on nurse job satisfaction and organizational commitment: Example of medical centers in southern Taiwan. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 15(4), 265-274.
- Davis, J. (2005). *The effects of internal marketing on service quality within collegiate recreational sport: A quantitative approach.* (PhD thesis), The Ohio State University.
- Dwyer, L. (2005). Relevance of triple bottom line reporting to achievement of sustainable tourism: A scoping study. *Tourism Review International*, 9(1), 79-938.
- Eisheh, A. A., & Salahudin, S. N. (2016). Effect of organizational commitment as a mediator in both training and job performance in Syrian private universities. *Journal of Islamic and Human Advanced Research*, 6(4), 1-18.
- Farzad, A., Nahavandi, N., & Caruana, A. (2008). The effect of internal marketing on organizational commitment in Iranian banks. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 5(11), 1480-1486.
- Filtvedt, R. E. (2016). *Motivation and job satisfaction: does Herzberg's "two-factor" theory apply to knowledge workers of today?* (Masters thesis), Norwegian University of Life Sciences.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 39-50.
- Gooshki, S. S., Jazvanaghi, M., Kermani, M., & Eskandari, H. (2016). The effect of internal marketing, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors on market orientation (case study: employees of Tehran chain stores). *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* (April), 82-100.
- Griffin, M. L., & Hepburn, J. R. (2005). Side-bets and reciprocity as determinants of organizational commitment among correctional officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 33(6), 611-625
- Güllü, K., Çelîk, O., Güllü, T., & Bayram, H. (2017). A research on internal marketing and motivation: Employee evaluation of training and development programmes in banking sector. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, 5(1), 162-173.
- Gündüz, Y. (2014). The effect of organizational support on organizational commitment. *Anthropologist*, 18(3), 1041-1057.
- Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, B., & Anderson, R. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective* (7th ed.): Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Hogg, G., Carter, S., & Dunne, A. (1998). Investing in people: Internal marketing and corporate culture. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 14(8), 879-895
- Huang, Y.-T., & Rundle-Thiele, S. (2014). The moderating effect of cultural congruence on the internal marketing practice and employee satisfaction relationship: An empirical examination of Australian and Taiwanese born tourism employees. *Tourism Management*, 42, 196-206.
- Hussain, T., & Asif, S. (2012). Is employees' turnover intention driven by organizational commitment and perceived organizational support. *Journal of Quality and Technology Management*, 8(2), 1-10.
- Insan, A., Astuti, E., Raharjo, K., & Hamid, D. (2013). The effect of empowerment of the organizational

- commitment and the job satisfaction of the employees of the national electricity company (Ltd.) in South Sulawesi province Indonesia. *Asian Transactions on Basic & Applied Sciences*, 3(4), 13-23.
- Ishaque, A., & Shahzad, K. (2016). Impact of internal marketing on employee behaviors: Mediating role of employee job satisfaction. *Abasyn University Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(1), 233-250.
- Kalidass, A., & Bahron, A. (2015). The relationship between perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, organizational commitment and employee turnover intention. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 6(5), 82-89.
- Kock, N. (2015). *WarpPLS 5.0 user manual*. Laredo, Texas: ScriptWarp Systems.
- Omar, A. (2010). *The effect of international marketing on organizational commitment in multinational commercial banks in Kenya*. (Masters of Business Administration), University of Nairobi.
- Rafiq, M., & Ahmed, P. K. (2000). Advances in the internal marketing concept: definition, synthesis and extension. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14(6), 449-462.
- Roberts-Lombard, M. (2010). Employees as customers-An internal marketing study of the Avis car rental group in South Africa. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(4), 362-372.
- Shekary, G. A., Moghadam, S. K., Adaryany, N. R., & Moghadam, I. H. (2012). The impact of internal marketing on organizational commitment in banking industry through structural equation modeling. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 3(9), 18-28.
- Sihombing, S. O., & Gustam, M. (2007). The effect of internal marketing on job satisfaction and organizational commitment: An empirical study in a university setting. *1st PPM National Conference on Management Research, Jakarta, Indonesia*.
- Sokachae, E., & Moghaddam, F. (2014). Investigation of internal marketing as regards job satisfaction and organizational commitment in economic agencies. *International Journal of Business and Marketing*, 2(1), 1-17.
- Stubner, S., Wulf, T., & Hungenberg, H. (2007). Management support and the performance of entrepreneurial start-ups- An empirical analysis of newly founded companies in Germany. *Schmalenbach Business Review*, 59, 138-159.
- Tsai, Y., & Tang, T.-W. (2008). How to improve service quality: Internal marketing as a determining factor. *Total Quality Management*, 19(11), 1117-1126.
- Tuan, L. (2017). Activating tourists' citizenship behavior for the environment: the roles of CSR and frontline employees' citizenship behavior for the environment. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1-26. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1330337>,