

# Internal Marketing and Employee Empowerment: The Mediating Role of the Relationship Quality: Study on Commercial Banks in Sudan

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**Abstract:** *Employees play an integral role in achieving companies goals, employees are the most valuable organizational resources which lead to competitive advantage in the company, this study investigates the mediating role of relationship quality on the relationship between internal marketing and employee empowerment in commercial banks in Sudan. In order to fulfill the objective the study convenience sampling was used. A total of 380 questionnaires were distributed to the respondent's, the results showed a positive relationship between internal marketing and employee empowerment, in addition the study indentified positive relationship between relationship quality with employee empowerment, and the relationship quality mediates the relationship between effectiveness leadership, and pay motivation with employee empowerment.. The theoretical contribution and empirical data adds more insight on the previous literature in the field, for practitioners it can help bank's managers to understand the impact of internal marketing on bank's customer empowerment, and how relationship quality can influence leadership effectiveness.*

**Keyword:** Internal marketing, empowerment, trust, commitment

## 1. Introduction

Employees are the spine of any dealing success and so, they need to be knowledgeable, motivated, and maintained in organization at all cost to support the organization to be globally competitive, (Sita Mishra 2010).

Bouranta and G. Mavridoglou (2003) researchers have the same opinion that Internal Marketing could contribute in the improvement of quality provided from service business [George (1990), Berry and Parasuraman (1991), Piercy (1995)]. This justified the initial stance of Gummesson (1987) who wished-for the internal marketing as a solution for high quality of services provided to the customers in a continuous base. Greene et al, (1994) support that internal marketing is important to all industries but it is even more important to services.

Banking has habitually operated in a comparatively steady environment for decades. However, today the industry is operating under new; more complex atmosphere resulted from the major changes in the economic and political conditions, and the raid effects of the financial crisis which the whole world is still recovering from. All these factors have forced the banks to find a new basis for competition in order to build and protect their competitive understanding. Most key banks have realized that improving service quality and creating customer relationships that deliver value beyond the provided by the core creation itself is the key for combating competition and leading performance. (Ahmed & Nahla 2014).

The objective of internal marketing is to get motivated and customer conscious employees in order to achieve service merit. Motivated employees are crucial to a company's success, this has never been truer than today. (Sita Mishra, 2010).

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the significant role of internal marketing as a linkage between the organization's external marketing objectives and its internal capabilities, very few organizations use internal marketing in practice (Gounaris, 2006).

Specifically, the main problem of the paper can be stated as: "What is the impact of internal marketing on employee's empowerment among the commercial banks in Sudan? What is the relationship between internal marketing, relationship qualities, employee's empowerment? Does relationship quality mediate the relationship between internal marketing and employee's empowerment?"

## 2. Literature Review

### Internal Marketing

Internal marketing is a management process through which an organization enters into a dialogue with its various internal audiences. In order to achieve this, the organization develops, presents and evaluates a series of messages to identify target groups. (Ioanna, 2002).

Jilson Zimuto (2013). Internal marketing is form of marketing within an organization which focuses staff

attention on the internal activities that need to be changed in order to enhance external market place performance Ballantyne, Christopher and Payne, (1995). Gronroos (1990 in Varey, 2001 in Dubravka and Nina, 2007) internal marketing is a management philosophy that provides managers with an understanding and appreciation for the roles of employees in the corporation, requiring that they have a holistic view of their jobs.

### **Effectiveness Leadership**

The leadership research literature gained strong support from the notion of leadership theories, namely Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory and Bass's (1985) transformational leadership theory. Specifically, Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory highlights that mutual understanding between leaders and followers when managing organizational functions may increase their moralities. Micha and Ofra (2002) transformational leadership theory posits that the interaction between leaders and followers in managing organizational functions can inspire followers to go beyond their self-interests in supporting the organization's interests. Application of these theories in an organizational leadership framework show that followers' moralities and concern about organizational interests can be developed if leaders stimulate their followers' intellect and develop their potentials in managing organizational functions (Bass, 1990, 1994; Bycio et al., 1995; Dionne et al., 2003; Hartog et al., 1997). When such leadership styles are properly implemented this will increase followers' empowerment to perform job superior because they think that they can use their creativities and innovations to achieve difficult goals (Lashley, 1999; Locke & Latham, 1991; Pounder, 2002; Waldman, 1993). As a result, it may lead to improved service quality in organizations (Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Klidas et al., 2007).

Leadership effectiveness requires paying attention to a four-dimensional field of behavior. In adding together to paying awareness to direct reports, according to Bowers and James Fenimore (1961), a leader needs to pay attention to three further dimensions: (1) maintaining managerial goal emphasis and clarity; (2) having the ability to provide the necessary support for individuals to do their work and achieve their objectives; and (3) facilitating followers' (subordinates') interaction with one another to create efficiencies, good feelings, and teamwork. These dimensions are recognized as part of the leadership section of the Baldrige Criteria, (2003) award, which a national business award is given to the organizations that best exemplify quality business performance.

### **Communication**

Kenan (2013) communication is transfer of information from sender to receiver, implying that the receiver understands the message. Communication is also sending and receiving of messages by means of symbols. In this context, organizational communication is a key element of organizational climate Drenth et al, (1998). Finally, organizational communication is the process by which

individuals stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals by means of verbal or nonverbal messages (Drenth et al, 1998)

According to Raveena Singh the in order development of the concepts of internal marketing, employee relations and internal communication show burly evidence of a shift from basic instructional and top-down managerial communication to participative management, internal integration and today to primary stakeholder status. Until recently employees were considered mainly as staff hired and trained to serve the customer well. Current thinking espouses that employees, in their own right, must now be perceived as an equally important target group in the stakeholder network of any organization. Carney (1998) believes that the key to employee retention is quite simple: Communicate.

Michael (1999) Communication with the employees be obliged to begin early on in the relationship. He believes that the imprinting period of a new employee is probably less than two weeks. Employers must engage the employee early on by sharing how important the job they do is. (Carney, 1998). Lynn (1997) follows this up by stating that early on an atmosphere of fairness and openness must be created by clearly laying out company policies.

Taylor and Consenza (1997) point to that it is significant to communicate the values of the organization to its employees in order to increase their level of consent, participation, and motivation.

### **Reward and Motivation**

Guay et al., (2010) Motivation refers to reasons that underlie behavior that is characterized by willingness and volition. Intrinsic motivation is motivation that is active by personal pleasure, interest, or delight. Torrington et al, 2009 in Carolina Mikander, 2010). Argues "Motivation is the desire to achieve beyond expectations, being driven by internal rather than external factors, and to be involved in a continuous striving for improvement".

### **Employee empowerment**

Melhem (2004) pointed that the empowerment literature shows diverse meanings and definitions of empowerment. However, most definitions indicate that empowerment implies giving employees more right and prudence in performing employment odd jobs and giving them autonomy to solve all issues related to their work. To summarize, in spite of a diversity of definitions of empowerment, this concept means giving power to subordinates at a lower level to make them able to make their own decisions when serving customers.

Empowerment has turn out to be an important matter within contemporary organizations there is real supports and encouragement to give the freedom to get a job done and the ability to realize organizational goals. Recently, the usefulness of empowerment has started to become recognized in the different environment of project management. Rutland discusses its importance both

between companies, leading towards an increase in structures such as partnering (which implies a level of trust between the companies). (Amir & Amen, 2014)

### Relationship Quality

The idea of relationship quality has arise from theory and research in the playing field of relationship marketing (Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh 1987) in which the final goal is to strengthen already strong relationships and to convert indifferent customers into loyal ones (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

Quality is an overall assessment of the strength of a relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectation of the parties based on a history of successful or unsuccessful or events Crosby et al, (1990).

Relationship quality is conceptualized as a merged construct capturing the different but related facets of a relationship Palmatier et al. (2006). Researchers have traditionally conceived relationship quality as a high order construct although they differ in which components are included Crosby et al. (1990); Kumar et al. (1995); (Lages et al ,2005).

### Trust

The idea of trust is explain in different conduct by different disciplines. The economists define it as trusting the institution and their financial account while the psychologists clarify it with the reliable and unreliable behavior of the individual and the sociologists use it as the reliable, fair and moral behavior in interpersonal relations (Milligan, 2003). It is defined as expectations and attitudes that eventually are forming between pretence in a relationship. Trust is frequently defined as a willingness to take risk Mayer et al (1995) and a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Ik-Whan G. Kwon, 2005).

### Commitment

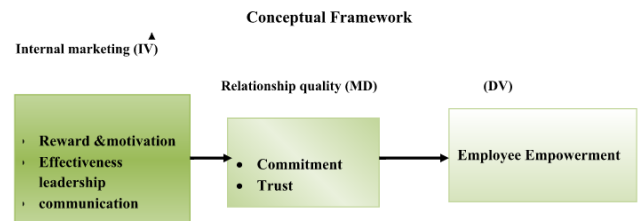
According to the (Meyer and Allen, 1997 in Varsha and Monika, 2012) commitment “is a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization and has implication for the decision to continue membership in the organization.

(Cook and Emerson 1978), (Thompson and Spanier 1983),Meyer and Allen 1984 in Robert,1994),define relationship commitment as an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely.

## 3. Conceptual Framework

The aim of this study is to examine the Impact of internal marketing (effectiveness Leadership, communication, reward and Motivation) on employee empowerment on the one hand beside relationship quality (trust, commitment)

as mediator. The integrative model offered in figure considers the influence of the independent variables on employee empowerment, through mediating variables relationship quality. Based on previous studies on internal marketing and employee empowerment, which showed a gap in this respect, hence this Conceptual Framework is thought to develop a model to fill such a gap. The succeeding section discusses the hypotheses development that is backed by the theoretical justifications.



Prepared by researchers according to literature review, (2014)

## 4. Research Hypothesis

In this study, four main hypotheses were developed to test the relationship between internal marketing variables (effectiveness leadership, reward and motivation) and employee empowerment variable. Lastly, test to the relationship between the mediator variables relationship quality factors (trust and commitment) and employee empowerment variable. Study on the employee organization relationship has drawn upon social exchange Blau, (1964) and the inducements-contributions model (March & Simon, (1958) to provide the theoretical foundation to understanding the employee and employer perspectives to the exchange. Although different views of social exchange exist, there is consensus amongst theorists that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations to reciprocate. (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

### 1. Relationship between Internal Marketing and Employees empowerment.

Preston and Steel (2002) in Edward (2014). Addressed issues linked to internal marketing. They commented that recruiting; training, developing and motivating employees is an integrated system of internal marketing (empowerment). According to the studies that mentioned above this study developed the first hypothesis to be as following:

#### H1.Internal Marketing Positively Related to the Employees Empowerment

### 2. Relationship between Internal Marketing and Relationship Quality.

According to Berry, 1981 in Ahmed and Nahla (2014) the rationale behind internal marketing is the belief that by satisfying internal customers (employees) the organizations will strengthen its human capital and will be better positioned to satisfy the requirements of its external customers this is based on the assumption that fulfilling

employees' needs will increase their motivation and commitment, and enhance their performance.

Previous researches proposed that building high-quality buyer-seller relationships offers advantages to both the supplier and customer (Berry, 1995). In addition, having these high-quality relationships typically results in increased communication levels between the buyer and salesperson (Crosby et al., 1990). Perspective of internal marketing: (employees as sellers, organizations as buyer). Based to the studies that mentioned above this study developed the second hypothesis to be as following:

## **H2. Internal Marketing Positively Related to the Relationship Quality.**

### **3. Relationship between Relationship Quality and Employees Empowerment.**

According to (Porter et al., 1979; Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979): in Isaiah (2006) employees empowerment would be related to affective organizational commitment, defined as an employee's desire to remain attached to an organization and work to help accomplish its goal. According to the studies that mentioned above this study developed the third hypothesis to be as following:

### **H3. Relationship Quality Positively Related to the Employees Empowerment.**

### **4. Relationship Quality Mediating the Relation between Internal Marketing and Employee Empowerment.**

Gafar et al (2014) study indicated that internal marketing was an important element that played a significant role in explaining employees' perceptions of organizational commitment and service quality. Besides, the outcome of the study showed that organizational commitment plays a mediating role between internal marketing and service quality. The authors thus opined that internal marketing had a great influence on both organizational commitment and service quality. The hypothesis test relationship quality mediating the relation between internal marketing and employee empowerment, were formed as follows:

### **H4. Relationship Quality Mediating the Relation between Internal Marketing and Employee Empowerment.**

## **5. Methodology**

The purpose of this paper is to establish and test the relationship between the internal marketing variables as determinants factors, and employee empowerment, where a questionnaire will be used in order together data concerning the variables of this paper the study conducted employee's commercial banks in Sudan. The population of this study consists of all 8672 employees of Commercial banks in Sudan. (Sudan Banks Union, Issue, 36, 2013).

Non-probability sampling provides a range of alternative techniques to select samples based on your subjective sentence (Saunders, Lewis & Thomhill, 2009). The

researcher used convenience sampling of non-probability sampling because the researcher cannot obtain the list of the total employees of commercial banks in Sudan. Therefore, data was collect from those people who were conveniently available and willing to co-operate. Convenience sampling is most likely the most common of all sampling techniques.

Validity is the success of the scale in measuring what is meant to be measured Ram (2009). The researchers made content validity index to assure the valid of the questionnaire and also was consulted with experts to check and review the questionnaire, therefore no bias will make the result valid. A great effort and skills was exercised by the researcher in the collection and analysis in order to reduce mistakes so this will increase the reliability of the results.

**Table 1:** Reliability Test of the Pilot Study (Cronbach's alpha)

Variables	Test	Re-test
Effectiveness leadership	.88	.83
Communication	.80	.81
Trust	.86	.86
Commitment	.75	.79
Reward and motivation	.79	.79
Empowerment	.87	.88

Source: prepared by researchers, (2014).

## 6. Factor Analysis for Internal Marketing Variables

**Table 2:** Rotated Factor Loading for Internal Marketing Variables

		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
<b>Pay Motivation:</b>						
X11.2	The rewards match my work effort.	<b>.803</b>	.093	.270	.114	.120
X11.1	The rewards are distributed rightfully.	<b>.785</b>	.156	.109	.155	.033
X11.4	I am satisfied with the quality/quantity of the rewards.	<b>.755</b>	.111	.314	.159	.039
<b>Effectiveness Leadership:</b>						
X8.3	Leader behaves in an ethical manner and encourages ethical behavior in the work	.049	<b>.808</b>	.179	.131	.131
X8.1	The leader encourages employees to be creative about their work.	.114	<b>.801</b>	.204	.068	.102

Continue Table 2

X8.4	The leader manages the time in the work very efficiently.	.023	<b>.752</b>	.284	.147	.068
X8.2	The leader is the one who gives subordinates complete freedom to solve problems	.247	<b>.716</b>	.025	.013	.079
<b>Communication</b>						
X9.2	When there is a change in the policy, or any other relevant issue, the employee in the bank communicates to me in time	.293	.184	<b>.747</b>	.168	.121
X9.1	My bank provides timely and trustworthy information.	.333	.217	<b>.706</b>	.175	-.043
X9.4	Information provided by my bank is accurate for all my questions.	-.040	.273	<b>.682</b>	.075	.199
X9.3	I can show my discontent towards the employee in the organization through Communication.	.347	.117	<b>.661</b>	.269	-.040
<b>Emotional Motivation:</b>						
X11.7	The rewards motivate me to perform well in my job.	-.107	.159	.087	.026	<b>.805</b>
X11.6	The rewards have a positive effect on the work atmosphere.	.021	.192	-.019	.082	<b>.802</b>
X11.3	I am ready to increase my work efforts in order to gain the reward.	.328	-.045	.129	.004	<b>.668</b>
	Eigenvalues	<b>6.17</b>	<b>2.19</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.18</b>
	Percentage of Variance Explain	<b>16.11</b>	<b>15.07</b>	13.80	<b>13.15</b>	<b>10.34</b>
	Total Variance Explained (%)	<b>68.47</b>				
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	<b>.861</b>				
	Bartlett's Test of Sphercity	<b>2710.46</b>				

Source: prepared by researchers, (2014). \* Variables loaded significantly on factor with Coefficient of at least 0.5, \* Items deleted due to high cross loading



**Table 3:** Rotated Factor Loading for Relationship Quality

Items no:		F1	F2
<b>Relationship Quality</b>			
X13.3	The bank committed to achieve employee needs	.821	-.019
X12.3	My bank is consistent in providing quality services.	.813	.080
X13.2	My bank offers personalized services to meet employee's needs.	.796	-.202
X12.4	I believe my management has high integrity.	.782	.157
X12.2	My bank words and promises are reliable.	.747	.017
X13.4	It is really difficult to leave my bank.	.710	.154
	Eigenvalues	3.99	1.04
	Percentage of Variance Explain	49.92	13.81
	Total Variance Explained (%)	63.73	
		.857	
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	1102.21	
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		

Source: prepared by researchers, (2014). \* Variables loaded significantly on factor with Coefficient of at least 0.5, \* Items deleted due to high cross loading.

**Table 4:** Rotated Factor Loading for Employees Empowerment

<b>Employees Empowerment</b>		
X16.1	I have the authority to correct customer problems when they occur.	.881
X16.2	I am encouraged to handle customer problems by myself.	.870
X16.3	I do not have to get management's approval before I handle customer problems.	.782
X16.4	I am involved in making decisions that affect my work.	.626
	Eigenvalues	1.70
	Percentage of Variance Explain	27.47
	Total Variance Explained (%)	70.76
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	.847
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1933.02

Source: prepared by researchers, (2014). \* Variables loaded significantly on factor with Coefficient of at least 0.5, \* Items deleted due to high cross loading.

**Table 5:** Descriptive Analysis for All Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
pay motivation	3.958	0.778
Effectiveness leadership	3.608	0.942
communication	3.68	0.909
Emotional motivation	3.13	0.647
relationship quality	3.76	0.755
empowerment	3.73	0.87

Source: prepared by researchers, (2014). Note: All variables used a 5-point likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree).

**Table 6:** Person's Correlation Coefficient for All variables

Variable	IV.1	IV.2	IV.3	IV.4	media	DV
<b>Pay Motivation (IV.1)</b>	<b>1.00</b>					
<b>Effectiveness leadership (IV.2)</b>	<b>.329**</b>	<b>1.00</b>				
<b>communication (IV.3)</b>	<b>.323**</b>	<b>.542**</b>	<b>1.00</b>			
<b>Emotional motivation(IV.4)</b>	<b>.275**</b>	<b>.217**</b>	<b>.168**</b>	<b>1.00</b>		
<b>Relationship quality (media)</b>	<b>.556**</b>	<b>.685**</b>	<b>.555**</b>	<b>.193**</b>	<b>1.00</b>	
<b>Empowerment (DV)</b>	<b>.438**</b>	<b>.522**</b>	<b>.460**</b>	<b>.142*</b>	<b>.622**</b>	<b>1.00</b>

Source: prepared by researchers, (2014). \*\* p < .01 \* p < .05

## 7. Discussion

This study is aimed to examine the impact of internal marketing in its four dimensions; effectiveness leadership, pay motivation, communication and emotional motivation, on employees empowerment, relationship quality as mediator in the commercial bank in Sudan. Pay motivation is positively related to employee's empowerment. Many researchers are studying extensively the effect of pay motivation and emotional motivation as one dimension under named of reward and motivation, in this paper, reward and motivation is divided into two parts, pay motivation and emotional motivation. Effectiveness leadership is positively related to employee's empowerment.

The finding of this research demonstrates that the four forms of internal marketing namely; (pay motivation, Effectiveness leadership, Communication and emotional motivation) have a positive relationship with employee's empowerment. This signifies that enhancing employee growth and empowerment directly in commercial banks in Sudan. This agrees with the outcomes of (Set Csr 2003).

The mediating impacts of relationship quality on the relationship between internal marketing and employee empowerment, the outcomes do support the mediating impact of internal marketing on employee empowerment. However, the outcomes of this research provide evidence that relationship quality partial mediate the relationship between internal marketing and empowerment, full mediate between effectiveness leadership and empowerment and Partial mediate between employee training and empowerment.

This result aligned with Sheng-Hsiung Tsaur et al (2003), the results indicate that the more empowerment the employees perceive, the better service quality customers perceive. In addition, the findings reveal that the relationship between employee empowerment and service quality exert a mediating effect.

## 8. Implications of the Study

This research also contributes towards management practice in all levels. Three management levels that concerning internal marketing can gain benefits or advantages from information taken out within these findings: Successful development of the employee empowerment should provide for: strategic decision making. To these owners and managers, internal marketing provides external environment and market-related information along with the analytical tools needed for strategic decision support (top level). At the tactical or middle level is middle management, which is interested in the database of employee's information, such as that related to empowerment?

Instituted on the findings of this research, internal marketing as a resource or a system can enable commercial banks in Sudan to develop key innovation. Specifically, the finding of this research has proven that pay motivation, communication have significant positive relationship on empowerment. This point outs that as commercial banks become more involved in activities related to competition.

## 9. Limitation and Directions for Future Researches

The study is not without limitations, which, however, future research can address. This study used four dimensions of internal marketing, future study can adopt more and different dimensions such as; satisfaction, training, and many more dimensions that might affect the employee's empowerment. The paper was based on a small sample. Future research should apply the study's model on larger population. The sample also included only the commercial banks in Sudan, so all the respondents of the questionnaire were only from one culture, but it would be a great accomplishment if a future a study tested respondents whom belonged to different cultures and included all the all banks sector of Sudan. The study was exclusive to one type of banks (commercial), so it is recommended to use different bank types banks or

different sectors such as the educational sector, also it is recommended to turn this research into a basic research by making the population the commercial banks throughout Sudan, so its findings can be generalized, and to be subjected to different culture.

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