TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Business Administration

Temitope Joseph Ogunnaike

INTERNAL MARKETING IN THE NIGERIAN TELECOM INDUSTRY

Bachelor's thesis

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Supervisor: Kati Tillemann, M.Sc

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently

and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors

have been properly referenced and the same paper

has not been previously presented for grading.

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Temitope Joseph Ogunnaike ……………………………

                    (signature, date)

Student code: 184000TVTB

Student e-mail address: etjeph@gmail.com

Supervisor: Kati Tillemann, M.Sc:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

……………………………………………

(signature, date)

Co-supervisor:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

……………………………………………

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

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(name, signature, date)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study examines the awareness of and the benefits from internal marketing within the telecom industry in Nigeria. In a service-oriented industry where the quality of service is key to remaining competitive, effective implementation of internal marketing is a win-win approach. When organizations treat their employees as their internal customers (to be satisfied), external customer satisfaction tends to rise as well.

The study used a mixed method approach: a survey of industry employees (convenience sample N=132) and online interviews with six management team members. The questionnaire contains three sections namely the demographic, knowledge of the concept and measurement using an adopted IM-11 scale questions for measuring internal marketing having 5-Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

The result showed that the employees seek improvemnet of equity and fairness, look for a clear career growth path and employee engagement and the managers are aware of and implementing some internal marketing practices such as vision communication, reward and recognition and encouraging innovation.

Keywords: Internal marketing, internal customers, IM-11 scale, service-oriented industry

INTRODUCTION

To maintain a sustainable competitive edge, businesses must attract and retain consumers as well as employees. To meet this goal, organizations need to concentrate their energies on creating and maintaining an organizational culture that prioritizes employee satisfaction through successful internal marketing strategies. Employees play a pivotal role in attracting, developing, and sustaining external customer satisfaction. An understanding of employees' core position in the equation of success of an organization has developed the concept of internal marketing programmes which is strongly oriented towards employees' growth. Previous research has shown that internal marketing concept is a significant variable in employee job satisfaction, and not only that, it also has a positive correlation in sustaining high customer satisfaction for the external customers when it is properly implemented (Sarker & Ashrafi, 2018).

According to Kaur & Sharma (2015), Berry and his colleagues coined the word internal marketing in 1976, emphasizing the importance of communicating and achieving employees' expectations and job satisfaction for better customer service. They opine that the internal marketing concept is based on two key points, firstly, that it is important for organizations to meet the needs of internal customers before those of external customers and secondly, that marketing guidelines for the internal and external markets are identical. Thus, employees should no longer be viewed as a resource whose primary purpose is to produce products or provide services, rather employees satisfaction should be seen as crucial to the success of the organizations.

The telecom business ecosystem in Nigeria is changing continuously due to various competitors' reactions and in circumstances where quality of service is the only real competitive advantage between rivals for differentiating their brands and services; recruiting, keeping, and inspiring high-quality employees is critical (Adekunle *et al*., 2015: Yildiz & Kara, 2017). The choice of the topic is influenced by the fact that the author of the thesis has worked for the Nigerian telecom industry and studied marketing in TalTech. This research seeks to know if there is a knowledge gap regarding the concept of internal marketing and its effective implementation being a critical marketing strategy for an organization to succeed in a competitive market and be sustainable

especially in the era of pandemic. Thus, the research problem is, is there any significant knowledge of the concept of internal marketing in the Nigerian telecom industry with the understanding that the concept has propensity to make organizations attain competitive advantage and ensuring sustanability? The aim of this study is to highlight the significance of internal marketing as a critical marketing strategic tool and to bridge the knowledge gap about the concept of internal marketing.

The following research questions would be used to probe into the knowledge of the concept of internal marketing amongst the management team members in the industry and the employees as well. The questions are as follow:

RQ1. Are telecom managers in Nigeria aware of internal marketing?

RQ2. Are telecoms companies in Nigeria implementing internal marketing?

RQ3. What are the benefits of internal marketing?

The author uses qualitative research method to address RQ1 and RQ3 with the aid of interview to have better insight of the concept of internal marketing from the management point of view in the industry while RQ2 is accessed using quantitative method with the use of questionnaire to the employees in the industry by way of measuring the internal marketing concept. The outcome of the transcribed and analysed interview is compared to the statistical analysis from the survey.

This study consists of three chapters. The author describes the applicable theory of internal marketing for this research in chapter one by reviewing literature on background of internal marketing and then proceed to theory on internal marking. Chapter two comprises of the research methodology where the author describes the quantitative and qualitative analysis method, data gathering technique and the analysis of the data using descriptive statistics. The last chapter expresses the findings and discussions on the findings. The author draws conclusion on the study and comments on the limitations of the study. This is followed by list of references and appendix.

During the research work, appointment scheduling with the interviewees was a great challenge due to busy schedule of most of the management staff. Gratitude to colleagues who broker the meetings with the interviewees. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Kati Tillemann. She was there all the way throughout the stages of this research. Her timely response for reviews is the most valuable asset that kept me going throughout the period of the research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section the author reviews different literature on the concept of internal marketing, background, theory, evolution of the concept and the model relating to the concept of internal marketing.

1.1. Background

Consumer satisfaction is becoming a more important subject in many businesses and academic studies, and one of the key reasons for this is that it is thought to be linked to profitable customer behavior from a business standpoint (Söderlund, 1998). The concept of customer satisfaction is so relevant that it has gained a lot of attention by marketers and researchers. While various research are going on the concept of customer satisfaction, Berry et al, (1976) coined a marketing concept called internal marketing as a tool to promote customer satisfaction with a view to improve the brand image and increase profitability of organizations. Their argument was based on the delineation of the generic term customer into both internal and external customer, stating that internal marketing concept is "viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products that satisfy the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organization". (Berry, 1981:34 as referenced in Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000: Berry, *et al.,* 1976)

Yildiz & Kara (2017) argue that internal marketing remains a vital ingredient for organizations to fully achieve their objectives and goals profitably and to remain sustainably competitive. There is a need to effectively implement the internal marketing where organizations treat their employees as their internal customers, their job is positioned to them as products and their workplace that comprises of various departments is seen as their marketplace (Berry, *et al.,* 1976). Since employees are in direct contact with an organization's external publics, internal marketing is based on the belief that employees should be a primary focus for marketing efforts (Bailey at al., 2016). Despite the growing literature on the concept of internal marketing, its acceptance has been

hindered by the variety of meanings and definitions at the early stage, most notably, these issues generate conceptual inconsistencies in terms of identifying the exact domain of internal marketing, making empirical research into the concept more challenging (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). Nevertheless, various literature on the concept over the years show that it has gone through different developmental and evolutionary stages and they can be classified into three major categories namely "an employee satisfaction phase, a customer orientation phase and a strategic implementation or change management phase" (*ibid*). Furthermore, recent studies now have constructs and empirical data of the measures of the internal marketing concept in an organization.

1.2. Internal marketing theory

Internal marketing concept has been around in social science literature for over four decades (Gwinji et al., 2020). Berry defines internal marketing as organizations "viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products that satisfy the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organization" (Berry 1981, p. 34 as referenced in Yildiz & Kara, 2017). This definition focuses on the significance of the employees' job satisfaction being the internal customers as a precursor to the desired objective of the organization to achieve satisfaction of the external customers and at the same time remaining competitive and sustainable in the market. Internal marketing is becoming acceptable as a strategic marketing concept in recent years as businesses have begun to recognize the value of internal customers, recognizing them as been strategic in the company's ability to achieve its objectives. Though it was conceptualized in the late-70s, it is now gaining attention in the management and marketing areas (Voima, 2000, p. 238)

Internal marketing is viewed as a critical factor in fostering safe and effective intra-communication among front-line employees and other departmental units (Kadic-Maglajlic, *et al.*, 2018). According to Sahadevc & Paula (2018), it is a condition where a company sells and promotes itself to its workers. Thus, drawing from the traditional belief of organizations in investing their resources to sell their products and services to their external customers using mix marketing management, to enhance high customer satisfaction rating. The concept holds the logic that the same should be done to the internal customers-the employees so that organizations can achieve their goals and objective flawlessly.

Ballantyne *et al*. (1995), (as referenced in Ballantyne, 2000, p. 47) state that "internal marketing is any form of marketing within an organisation which focuses staff attention on the internal activities that need to be changed in order to enhance external marketplace performance". Apparently, the concept has attracted a lot of research works leading to numerous definitions, nevertheless, there exist a commonality amongst various definitions which show that they are all addressing the need for of organizations to seeing their employees as their internal customers, by establishing a robust communication channel and motivating them to enhance their satisfaction thereby extend this to the external customer to achieve high satisfaction which is the ultimate goal of the organizations.

According to Cooper & Cronin (2000), employees in the services sector have long been regarded as the most crucial component. Berry *et al*., (1991) support this view by saying "Internal marketing, which includes the use of marketing concepts to recruit, train, inspire, and retain high-quality workers to sell and perform services, is becoming more important as employee performance becomes more important in services marketing". Bearing in mind that internal marketing does not simply include finding ways to use employees to provide services to external clients, but it will inevitably happen as a result of successful implementation of effective internal marketing concept (Cooper & Cronin, 2000).

Lau and May (1998) opine that internal marketing is a solution stemmed out of a win-win paradigm. They describe this paradigm as a situation where employees tend to align their interests with the interests of the organization when companies have a satisfying work atmosphere, and thereby create a mutually beneficial environment that benefits all the stakeholders. They believe, employee satisfaction was mostly driven by the internal quality of the working environment as measured by the feelings employees had toward their jobs, colleagues, and companies.
When employees' needs and desires are met, they are expected to become more customer-focused, thereby paving way for the company to become more customer-centric (Wagenheim & Anderson, 2008). In corollary, failing to take a customer-centric approach to employees would result in disgruntled employees, dissatisfied customers, and decreased marketing success due to negative word-of-mouth (Cooper & Cronin, 2000).

It is imperative to note that internal marketing is gaining acceptance and becoming important in the realm of academics and organization as it plays significant roles in achieving a sustainable

competitive advantage through effective implementation as a marketing strategy and tool within the organization (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). Nevertheless, some critics argue that the concept is merely a modified name for human resources function in an organization. A literature reviewed addresses this criticism by describing the credit accrued to Rafiq and Ahmed (1993) (as referenced in Kaur & Sharma, 2015) for their significant attempt to differentiate internal marketing from human resource management functions by developing the internal marketing mix using the 4Ps of marketing (price, product, place and promotion). Gwinji *et al*., 2020) debunk this criticism also saying "successful companies attach great importance to human resource management and internal communications because they are aware of the value of those activities and the strategic advantage they can bring to the organization. Also, these successful companies are encouraged to fully embrace the internal marketing philosophy if they seek to offer quality products and services to both markets: internal and external". This shows that human resource function is completely different from internal marketing. Even though they look similar, it is clear from the reviewed literature that HR functions contain tools to be used in internal marketing while internal marketing is responsible for providing implementation guidance. Hence, they complement each other.

1.3. Model of internal marketing

This study reviews various models of internal marketing raging from Berry's model to Grosnoos' and workable research model.

Berry's model posits that treating employees as internal customers and presenting the job to them as a product, in combination with the use of marketing techniques within the organization, will lead to employee satisfaction, which is the main goal of internal marketing, thus when employees are satisfied, it would lead to better outcomes, that are positively reflective in the satisfaction level of the external customers, as well as higher quality.

Grönroos's amended model on the other hand holds that "an organisation's internal market of employees can be influenced most effectively and hence motivated to customer-consciousness, market orientation and sales-mindedness by a marketing-like internal approach and by applying marketing-like activities internally". (Grönroos, 1985: 42 as referenced in Lewis & Varey, 2000)

According to Lewis and Varey (*ibid*), the two models have similar objective but their approach to achieving the objective are different. They argue that Berry's model lack mechanism to motivate the employees while the initial Grönroos's model does not include marketing approach. Hence, to have a working and robust model, there is a need to have a combination of the two models.

The internal marketing model for service in Fig.1 reflects the extant literature review on internal marketing concept. Rafiq & Ahmed (2000), justifies the model as it shows the dimension of interrelationship that exists between the critical components of internal marketing as they link the components to the prevailing element of the three phases of evolution of the concept of internal marketing. The model recognizes customer orientation as the focal point that is achievable through marketing-like approach to bring about employees' motivation thereby fostering inter-functional coordination thus leading to customer satisfaction and achieving organizational goals and objectives (ibid).
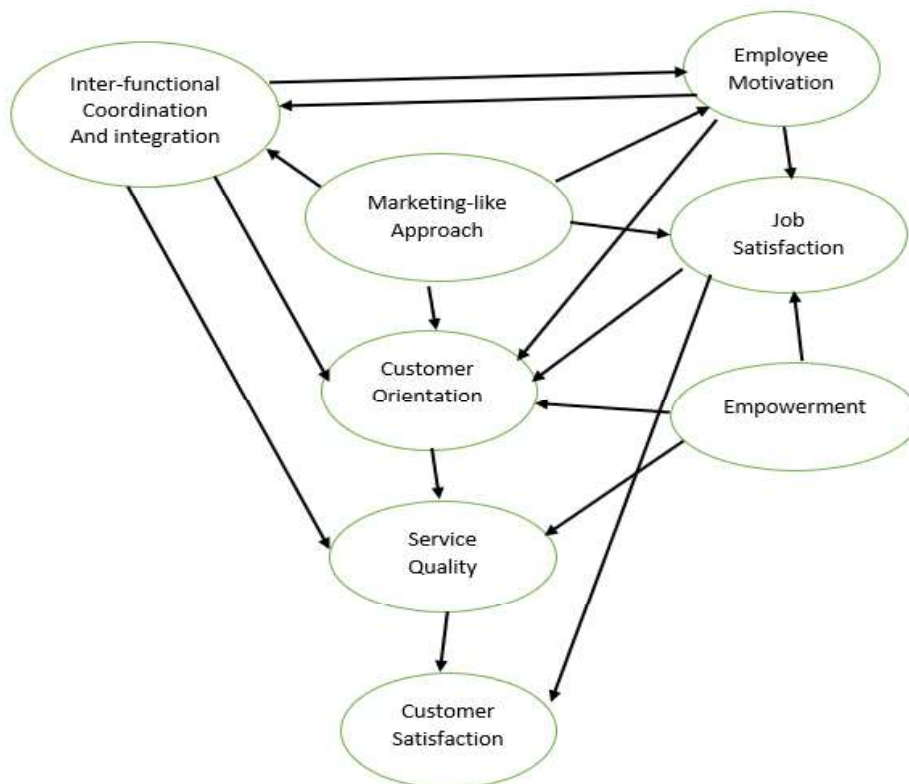

Fig1. Internal marketing model for service

Source: (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000, p. 455)

1.4 Overview of the Nigerian telecom industry

As of the time of this study, it is observed that the telecommunication industry in Nigeria has witnessed phases of developmental growth after the full deregulation in 1999. Prior to this time, the industry could not sustain itself talk less of contributing to economic growth of the nation due to poor management, debt and loses coupled with abuse of monopoly because it was classified as one of the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), an umbrella that the Federal Government of Nigeria is primarily responsible for the provision of capital and management of all the business units in it (Chidozie, *et al*., 2015). The then Nigerian Telecommunication (NITEL), the only national carrier was the major player in the industry with barely 450,000 lines to serve over 100million population, being a monopolist with no incentive to improve the quality of service at a lower price unlike what firms playing in a competitive environment would do (Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012).

 Although, the Nigerian Communication Council (NCC), the regulatory body for the industry, that was commissioned by the military administration in 1992 had licenced 7 private telecommunication operators (PTOs) to provide fixed wireless lines and analogue mobile services, 35 internet service providers and a lot of VSAT service providers to compensate for the poor teledensity (teledensity is the number of telephone connections for every 100 individuals living within an area of the country) which was just 0.5% then (Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012).

In 1999, Nigerian government led by Olusegun Obasanjo deregulated the industry completely, and in 2001 the NCC sold licenses to 3 operators to provide a global system for mobile communications (GSM) service (Chidozie, *et al*., 2015; Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012). This changed the dynamics of the market to competitive - the teledensity of the nation grew from 1.89 in 2002 to 102.72 in 2021, with the industry contributing 0.62% to the nation's GDP in 2001 to 12.84% in the fourth quarter of 2020 and the subscriber base increasing 2 million in 2002 to 196 million in 2021 (NCC, 2014 as cited in Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012; NCC, 2021).

All of these developments brought stiff competition within the players in the industry are not without a challenge posed to the managers of having a right blend of marketing management mix to satisfy the customers outside and especially the internal customers due to competition and innovation being introduced by each company to win the market share (Chidozie, Odunayo, & Olutosin, 2015). (Ayanda & Tunbosun, 2012) state that "the Nigerian telecom industry is entering

its maturity phase, with reducing average profit". The implication of this is that organizations need to continue to finetune their marketing management strategies to remain sustainable and competitive in the industry. At this state of saturation in the business life cycle of the industry, it is only natural for the players to begin to fine tune their product and service delivery. Thus, smart and forward-looking players are already going the route of offering innovative services to B2B (business to business) by collaborating with corporate organizations such as banks, insurance and even government to provide other services (NCC, 2021). Not only that, the growing trend of online presence, social media, online contents have made consumers to begin to demand for more and more products and innovative services.

As of 2021, Nigeria was rated the largest market in Africa with a population estimate of 206 million people (Varrella, 2020). It also had the largest amount of mobile number subscribers (Mudzingwa, 2020). While the industry needs to satisfy the external customers, it would also benefit from looking at internal customer (employee) satisfaction in order to best achieve the goals and objectives of the organization

2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA GATHERING

In this chapter, the researcher introduces the research methodologies and the approach to the research work, the methods, the procedure for data gathering and analysis. The reliability of the sampling method was commented on and the researcher presents the final findings followed by discussion. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods otherwise known as mixed method. The qualitative study was conducted with interviews for six members of the management team in the Nigerian telecom industry across in order to have a deep insight of the concept while the quantitative method was conducted with the aid of online survey that targets specifically the employees in the industry. The data are analysed using SPSS and descriptive statistic approach. Secondary data used were taken from both literature and the Nigeria Communication Council (NCC) portal, being the agency responsible for regulating the telecom industry in Nigeria. The author discusses the findings, highlights the limitations of the study for future research purpose and concludes the study.

2.1. Research design

This study uses mixed method approach. The choice of this method is predicated on the direction of the research questions for this study. Through this study, the author seeks to dig deep into the concept of internal marketing from the perspective of the members of the management team in the Nigerian telecom industry regarding the awareness of the concept and the benefits that come with its effective implementation while using online survey as an instrument to administer questionnaire to the employees in the industry to have a balanced perspective of the outcome of the study. The author understands that though the questionnaire has the intrinsic attribute to analyse concepts empirically with closed ended data gathering approach though with its own limitation, therefore seeks to engage relevant interviewees in the industry to unravel the knowledge and benefits of the concept using the interview method.

Since research into mixed methods still evolves, the discussion of definitions of mixed methods needs to be kept open (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the author considers these two definitions from the previous research reviewed which states that "mixed method research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research), it recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results" (Johnson *et al*., 2007) and "a research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry". (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007)

Basically, the rationale behind the mixed method approach is simply pragmatism, a situation where both theoretical and practical knowledge is sought using different media while engaging the fundamentals of qualitative and quantitative methods, though it is not a new method, rather it is just a new movement that is gathering momentum and drawing strength from the earlier duo methods-quantitative and qualitative research methods (Johnson *et al*., 2007).

In this current study, the researcher introduces the mixed method right from the development of the research questions using both quantitative and qualitive approach, the sampling procedure using convenience and purposeful sampling methods while using online survey and online video interview as the mode for data collection. The data analysis engages descriptive statistics and thematic approaches and of course the findings and the concluding parts rely on objective view from the statistics and the subjective view based on the themes.

2.1.1. Quantitative study design (study 1)

In conducting the quantitative part of the mixed method, an online survey was generated using google form to be filled by the respondents. The survey is divided into three major sections. The first section contains questions on the demography of the respondents while the second section asks about the awareness of the concept of internal marketing as seen by the respondents. The last part tests the agreeable and disagreeable level of the respondents with respect to the questions containing internal marketing activities using the Likert scale with a scale of 1 to 5 where strongly agree has the weight of 5, neutral is 3 and strongly disagree is 1 on all the adopted IM-11 scale

(Yildiz & Kara, 2017), being a set of eleven questions on internal marketing. It is imperative to note that there has not been a concrete agreed measuring scale on internal marketing, nevertheless, the author relies on the modified IM-11 scale (Appendix 1) generated from the existing scales drawn from previous research by Yildiz and Kara (2017) to measure internal marketing in an education industry.

The author combines convenience and purposeful sampling method to reach out to the employees specifically in the telecom industry in Nigeria through online survey been the main target population. The sampling method was chosen because as at the time of this study, the author is a student of Taltech and resides in Tallinn hence convenience method becomes appropriate to reach out to the target population. The survey was opened for the duration of 3weeks, and it was answered with 132 respondents. The primary data collected from the online survey were coded and analysed with the SPSS 26 application.

RQ2 state that are telecoms companies in Nigeria implementing internal marketing? is addressed from the agreeable level of the respondent on the 11-IM scale internal marketing questions that were asked in the survey. The descriptive statistics shows the mean value of each of the questions, and from the perspective of Likert scale values that were used as scale and weight for the agreeable and disagreeable level of the respondents having strongly agree as scale of 5, neutral as 3 and strongly disagree as 1. The mean value of each of the questions shows the direction on the scale of 1 to 5, where if the mean falls below 3 that is the neutral point on the scale, then it implies the respondents show a level of disagreeableness and any mean value above the neutral also depicts the degree of agreeableness of the respondents on the question. In the same vein, the aggregate mean of the eleven questions shows the degree of the respondents on the concept of internal marketing.

2.1.2. Qualitative study design (study 2)

To ensure reliability and validity of this study the author uses triangulation approach to source for data from different sources such as previous research, interviews and primary data from respondents. Previous study on the use of triangulation states that "triangulation involves the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals, groups, families, and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data". (Carter *et al.,* 2014)

To answer the first and the last research questions of this study, the author conducted interview for some of the management team members in the telecom industry in Nigeria. Semi-structured interview questions were drawn for the purpose of the interview. The author drew from the pool of questions used for interview in a similar study carried out in Egypt to interview the management team members to collect primary data from them (Appendix 2).

The author relies on previous colleagues and contacts in Nigeria to reach out to management team members in various telecom organizations in the industry to book appointment to conduct online interview over zoom meeting for the purpose of this study. Upon agreement to participate in the interview, the consent of the interviewees was sought to record the interview and they were assured of compliance to anonymity of their data in line with the European Union GDPR. The researcher planned to interview at least ten management team members, but it was not achievable because of the inability to secure appointment time that falls within the timeframe of this study. Hence, the author proceeded with the primary data that were collected from the six volunteered interviewees.

The prepared semi-structured interview questions were used to dig deep into the awareness of the concept at the management level and the benefits of internal marketing. Questions ranging from the knowledge of the concept, aim and objective, its implementations, challenges that surround its implementation, benefit and ways to improve on it were asked. The author followed the trend of the conversation while maintaining the focus of the interview. The interviewees were enjoined to freely express themselves and not to hold anything back. After the whole interview, the recorded interviews were retrieved and the audio part transcribed (Appendix 3). The author analysed the content of the transcription and came up with finding.

2.2. Sampling material

In this section the author uses descriptive statistics and charts to show the analysis of the data gathered from the field through the survey. The outcome of the quantitative part is first discussed and then proceeds to discuss the analysis of the qualitative data.

2.2.1. Sample for study 1 (quantitative)

The sample material were taken from the employees currently working in different telecom organizations within the industry. Male and female gender status were considered. The years of experience of the respondents within the industry and the years of operation of the their organzations ranging from less than 5years to more than 11 years categories were also considered for both respondents and the organizations within the industry. The academic status of the respondents were classified into College/OND, HND/Bachelor's and then Master's and above. The status of the respondents in their various workplaces too were considered ranging from admn/operation staff, this includes both technical and non technical staff, team leaders and supervisors, managers and lastly the directors. The introductory part of the survey introduced the research aim to the respondents alongside with the ethics of research. 132 respondents filled the questionnaire and they are all Nigerians living in Nigeria. See Table 1.

Table 1. Sample 1 materials from the survey

Gender	Years of work experience (years)	Years of operations of organization (years)	Status in organization	Educational status
Male	< 5	< 5	admin/operations staff	college/ond
Female	6-10	6-10	team lead/supervisor	hnd/bachelor's
	> 11	> 11	manager	master's and above
			director	

Source: Ogunnaike (2021), author's calculation

2.2.2. Sample for study 2 (qualiitative)

This section gives insight of the concept of internal marketing from the perspective of the management team through thematic analysis of the interview. To start with, two of the intervewees have adequate knowledge of the definition of the concept while two admitted lack of knowledge at first and other two answthered with vague definition the term when asked about their knowledge of the concept (See Table 2).

Table 2. Sample 2 from the interview

	Interview channel	Interviewee status	Duration(mins)
Interviewee 1	zoom meeting	senior network manager	26
Interviewee 2	zoom meeting	chief operating officer	42
Interviewee 3	zoom meeting	senior rf optimization manager	33
Interviewee 4	zoom meeting	senior power manager	34
Interviewee 5	zoom meeting	senior network manager	17
Interviewee 6	zoom meeting	regional network manager	23

Source: Ogunnaike (2021)

2.3. Analysis methods

In this section the author describes the method used to carry out the analyses of the primary data gathered from both studies. For the study 1 which is a quantitative approach, the author used descriptive statistics analysis while for the study 2, thematic analysis was used.

2.3.1. Analysis method of study 1 (quantitative)

The primary data gathered from the survey was coded and then uploaded into the SPSS version 26 application for analysis. The author performed various analysis ranging from frequency range, mean values, standard deviations and also carried out validity and relability tests on the 11-IM scale question that were used to measure the internal marketing level within the industry. Distrubtion of the demograpy was also analysed based on their frequencies.

Majority of the respondents are male with 76.5% out of 132 respondents that participated in the survey (see Table 2). About 40% of the respondents who have been working in their current organizations withing 6-10 years category while not less than 33% of the respondents have been working for more than 11years in their organizations. 78% of the employees attest to the fact that their organizations have been in operation for at least 11years. The table further shows that there about 32% of the respondents working as administrative or operational staff while team leaders/supervisor and managers oscillates within 33% and 30% respectively, and the remaining 5% of the population comprises of the directors. Half of the respondents are holds at least master's degree, while bachelor's or HND degree holders are 47%. All the respondents are locals and reside in Nigeria (Appendix 1).

2.3.2. Analysis method of study 2 (qualitative)

Thematic analysis is decribed as the most common and simplest form of qualitative analysis (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Braun & Clarke (2006), refer to thematic analysis as a way to identify, analyze and report patterns within the data in a rich manner and in themes. The author used this method to analyse the trascribed data from the zoom interview. The choice of this approach is borne out of the flexibility that the method has to analyse data without a need for a specialized skill.

At the start of the analysis, the author familarises with the data by reading through all the transcribed interviews. Then follows with the assigning of predefiend codes derived from the questions. The codes were reviewed, fine-tunned and trimmed and then grouped in themes. The themes are then grouped and also fine tuned process of analysis requires that all the transcibed data be coded first. Thereafter, the codes were fine tunned and trimmed for similarities and structured for definition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the author analyses primary data for the survey and the interview and then use the findings to answer the RQ1 to 3.

3.1. Findings from survey (study 1)

Table 3 shows the mean of the 11-IM scale questions ranges between 2.69 and 3.52, having 3.12 as the aggregate mean value for all the all. Reliability test conducted on the data gives Cronbach's alpha index to be 0.964, while Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO-MSA) and Bartlett's test were conducted.

Table 3. Mean of the 11-IM Scale and factor loading with KMO-Bartlett test result

11-IM Scale questions	Mean	Std. dev	IM Factor Loading
Physical State	3.52	1.32	0.833
Primary need	3.36	1.39	0.840
Employee empowerment	3.17	1.26	0.905
Right workload and support	3.11	1.37	0.884
Vision	3.28	1.34	0.928
Training	3.08	1.37	0.874
Career growth	2.97	1.27	0.856
Equity	2.92	1.31	0.845
Effective communication	3.05	1.30	0.878
Employee's engagement	2.69	1.18	0.766
Reward	3.22	1.35	0.839
Mean	3.12		
Std deviation		1.31	
KMO and Bartlett's Test			
KMO Measure of sampling adequacy		0.953	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Sq. (p<0.001)	1503.315	

Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

The outcome was excellent with KMO values of 0.953 and Bartlett's test result is 1503.315 at $p<.001$. The factor loading test of the 11-IMscale ranges between 0.766 and 0.925. Thus, the set of questions that were asked in this survey are adequate and sufficient.

The charts below show distribution of the respondents in terms of their knowledge about the concept and the extent of agreeableness of the respondents on internal marketing as seen by the employees in the industry. This could be a reference point for organizations in the industry to see from the perspective of the employees perceive the management activities in respect of internal marketing. This is necessary because the response gives a rough estimate of the awareness level of the respondent. It is also necessary because it serves as a starting point to this study to know whether internal marketing only exists within the academic parlance or a concept in the marketing management.

This second section of the survey asked a moment of truth question on the knowledge of internal marketing. The chart in the figure below shows the distribution of the respondents that got the definition right and those that got it wrong with those that did not answer the question at all using three different demographic variables such as status in workplace, gender and educational qualification (see Figure 2).

It appears most of the respondents could not define the concept correctly. Perhaps the name sounds more like a marketing activity or an academic term and once they are not in marketing department or not in academics or not in the middle management level the tendency to be familiar with the name of the concept seems low. Across all the respondents, at least more than 50% did not get the definition correctly. Another interesting thing from the chart is that the respondents from the categories with the educational status of college/OND holders did not get it right at all and the same goes for the few respondents that attempted to answer amongst the administrative and operational staff. Meanwhile the categories that got it right are managers and the master's and higher degree holders. Nevertheless, this will not serve as a complete measure for the concept because, internal marketing practice contains many activities that casual definition cannot explain.

Moving to the third section in the survey where IM-11scale questions were used to check the agreeable and disagreeable levels of the respondents. The figure below shows that about 60% of the respondents agree that their working environment and the tools required to carry out their tasks are adequate (Figure 3). While about 26% claim they do not agree with the working environment.
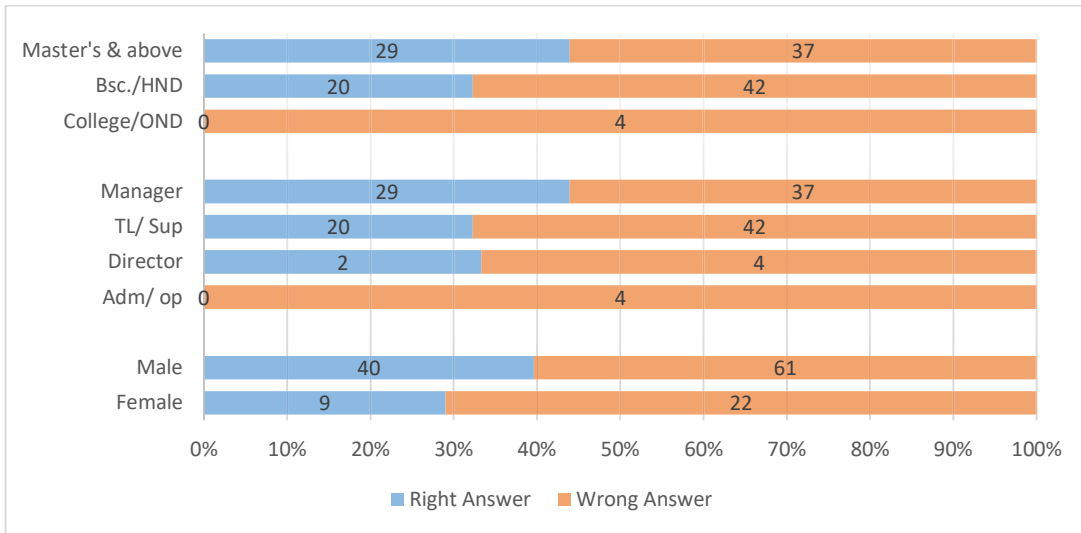
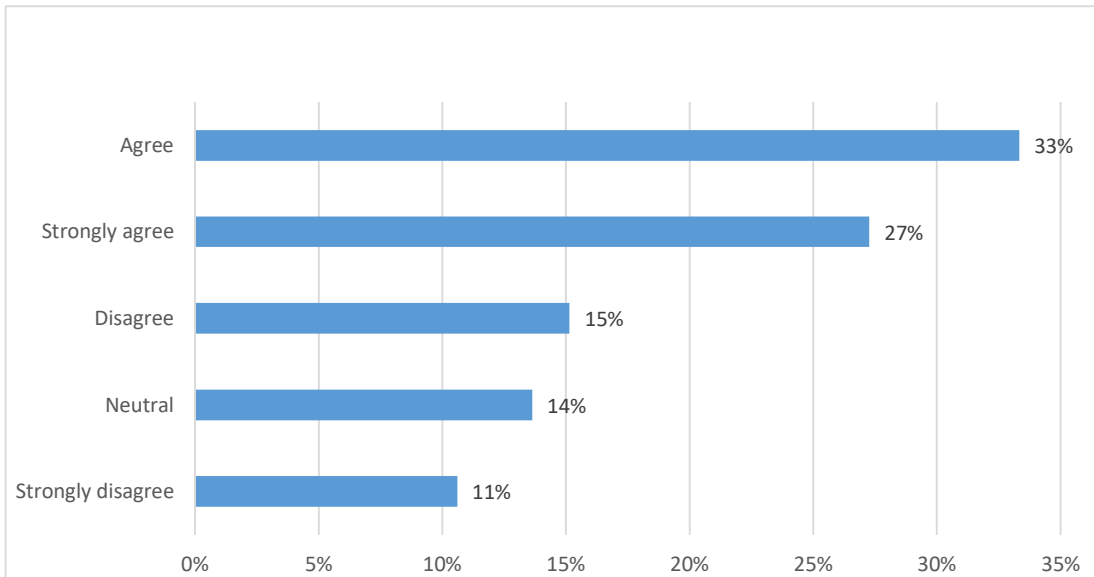Figure 2. Please give your definition of internal marketing n=132

Source: Author

Figure 3. Q1 My organization provides attractive physical conditions n=132

Source: Author's generated (2021)

The responses in Figure 4 addresses the compensation plans for the employees. The chart shows that not less than 50% of the respondents agree with the compensation plan. Though it is natural for employees to want to ask for more. Meanwhile, the flip side shows about 30% that are not satisfied. Perhaps 16% of respondents in the neutral category are satisfied but looking for more.
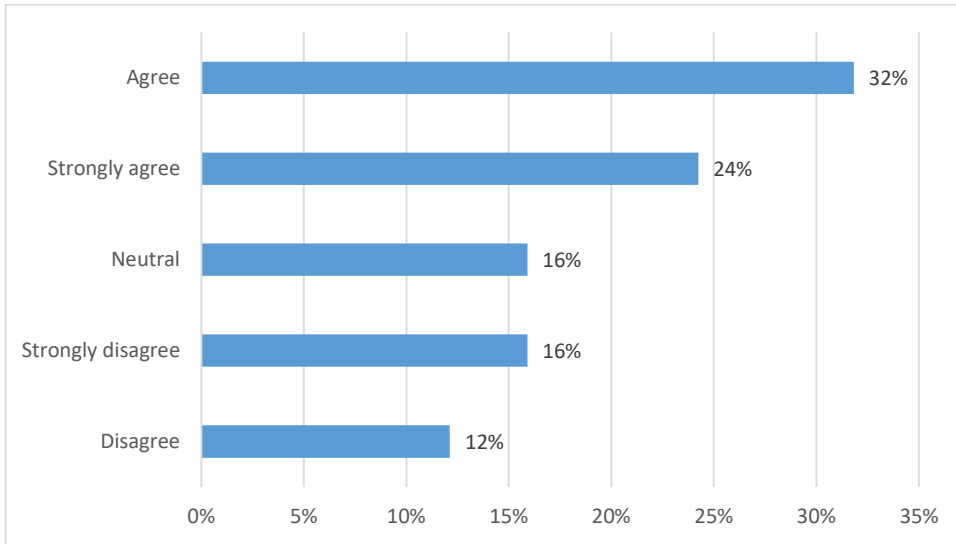
Figure 4. Q2 My organization fulfils the fundamental needs of employees n=132

Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

According to Figure 5 more respondents in the region of 30% are neutral about empowerment of the employees, while 28% agree that they are empowered. When an organization practices internal marketing, engaging employees should be one of the approaches of getting them to willingly give their services to contribute to the success of their organization through innovation.
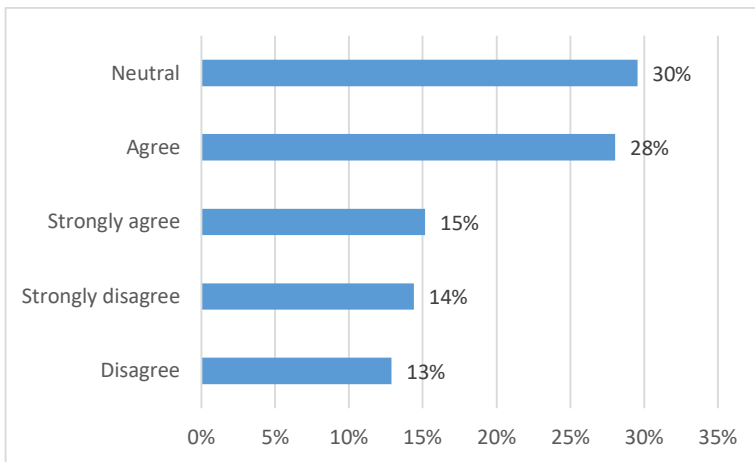

Figure 5: Q3 Employees are strengthened through appropriate direction, empowerment, and participation n=132

Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

Figure 6 shows that about 50% of the respondents agree with the workload distribution and job responsibility matrixes assigned to them in the industry. Although 17% are neutral while the remaining disagree with this view.
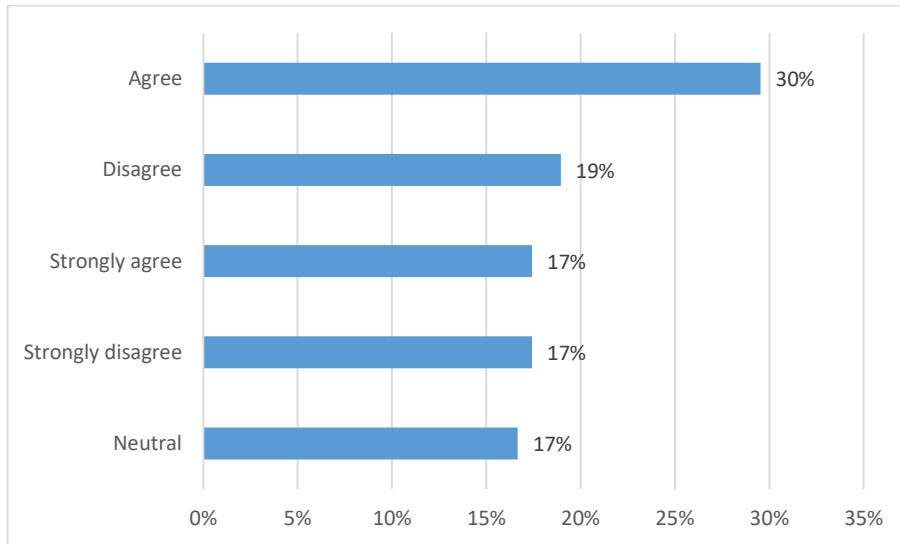

Figure 6. Q4 My organization provides appropriate workload and support
Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

A larger proportion of the employees in this industry agree that their organizations set achievable visions for them. According to Figure 7 with a total of 53% respondents agree with this, it implies that the players in the industry are not taking this aspect with their internal customers lightly. Even though about 30% disagree while 17% of the respondents are neutral. Nevertheless, when employees are clear about the vison of the organization, they are able to algin their potentials and skills to achieve the collective vision.

Despite the fact that the telecom industry is a service industry, it is imperative to state that its operation is enhanced through innovative technologies and in the era of constant evolution of technology, any player that is not catching up with the trend may be found disadvantaged and uncompetitive. 53% of the employees in the industry agree that they are regularly provided with training and development opportunities. In the same vein, employers should not relent to get more employees into this category (Figure 8).
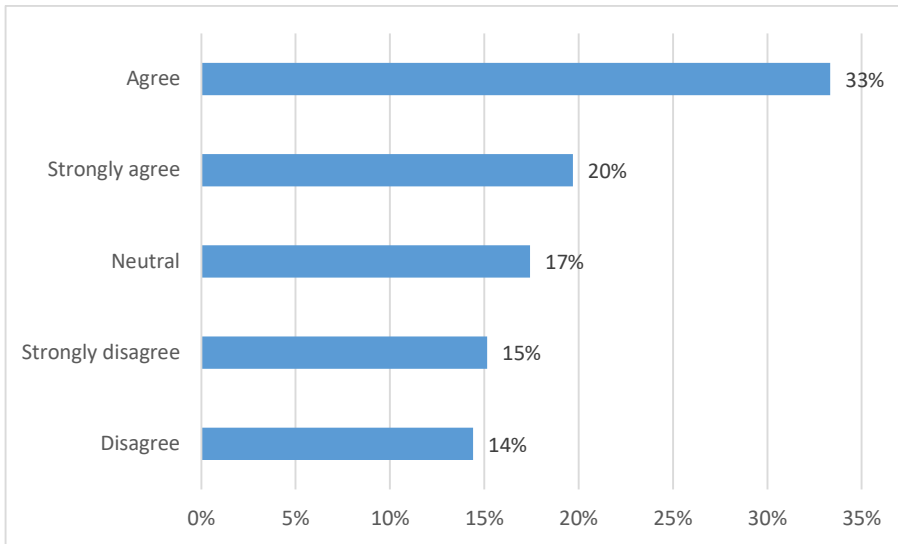
Figure 7. Q5 My organization provides an achievable vision to its employees (n=132)

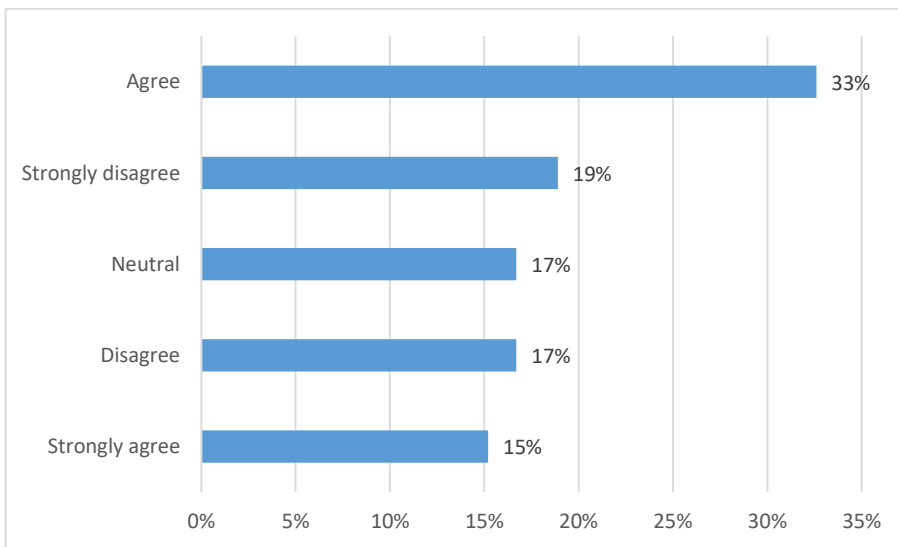Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

Figure 8. Q6 My organization provides training/development programs (n=132)

Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

There seem to be a divergent view between training and career growth opportunity. Even though the previous chart in Figure 8 affirms that more employees agree that they are being trained, Figure 9 shows that equal amount of 36% agree and disagree that there is clear path for career growth opportunity while 28% are neutral. Employers need to pay attention to this because a smart player may explore this opportunity to win a well-trained and seasoned employee to their side with status and career growth opportunity.
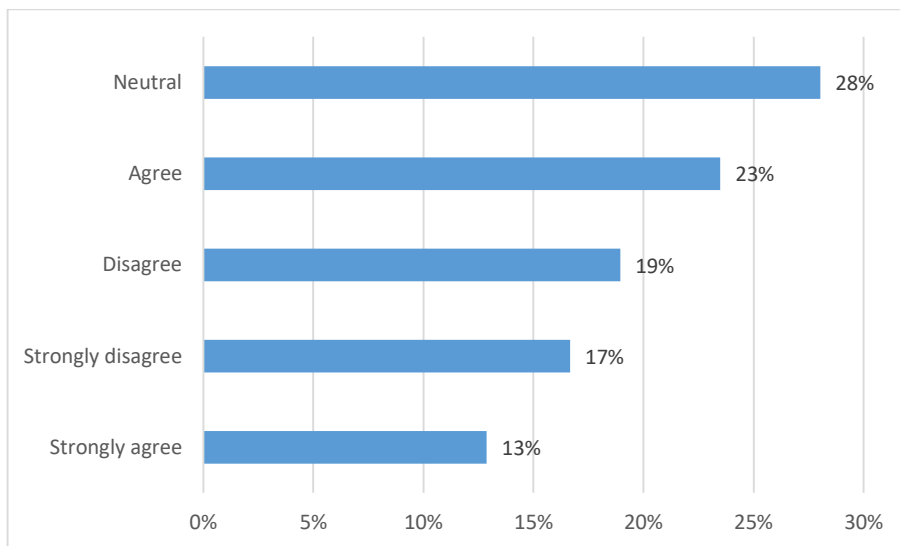

Figure 9. Q7 My organization provides career advancement opportunities to its employees n=132
Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

According to Figure 10, 40% of the respondents disagree that there is fairness and equity in the industry, 34% agree that equity and fairness exist, while 26% show neutrality. When employees sense fairness and equity in workplaces, good morals are promoted, because everyone is clear about the consequences of actions performed without prejudice. The industry players need to also pay attention to this area and do more.

About 40% of the respondents agree that effective and transparent communication exist within the industry, while 36% disagree with this view. Logically, being telecom industry with all forms of communication channels, one would believe that there should be more agreeableness than 40%, nevertheless, managers in the industry could be more explicit in disseminating relevant information to the employees for clarity purposes (See Figure 11). This will build trust and

confidence in the employees while performing their tasks and there will not be any form of ambiguity.
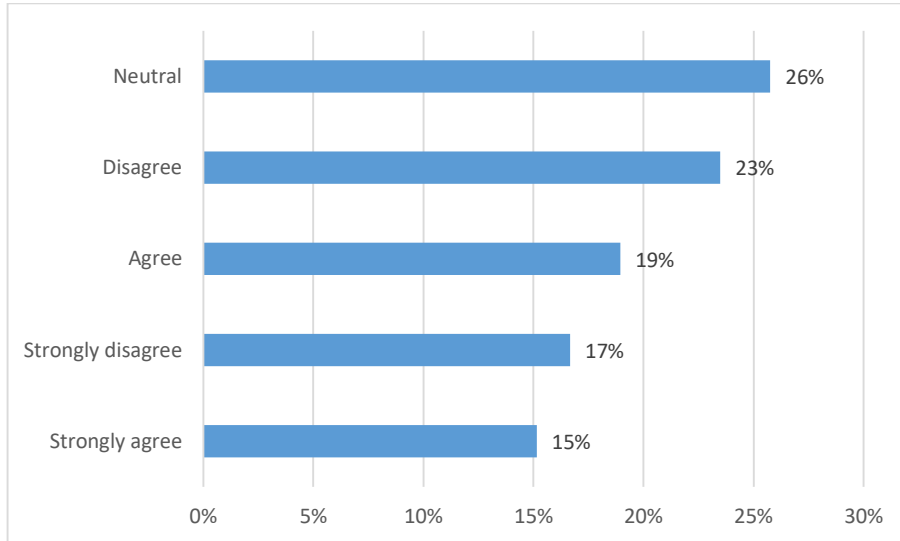

Figure 10. Q8. My organization treats its employees equally and fairly   n=132

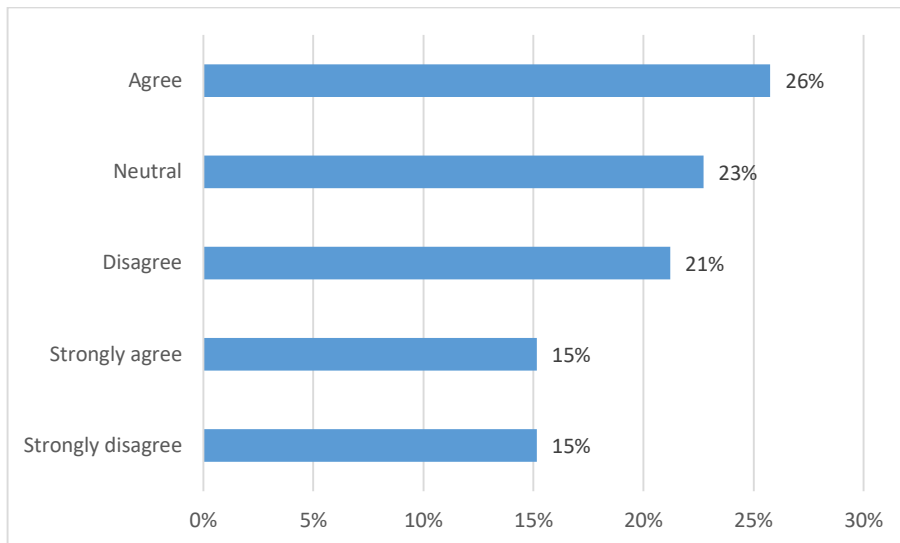Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

Figure 11. Q9 My organization provides open and transparent communication channels to its employees (n=132)

Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

The chart in Figure 12 shows that not less than 50% of the respondents disagree that their organizations involve them in their decision-making process. While just a handful of about 30% agree otherwise. Managers in the playing industry should do more to involve their employees in the decision making because it would make employees feel more valuable and that alone gives satisfaction thereby making them to be willing to go extra mile in providing their services within the organization. Thus, when employees feel their contributions and views are recognized, it promotes healthy relationship and enhances teamwork and team bonding.
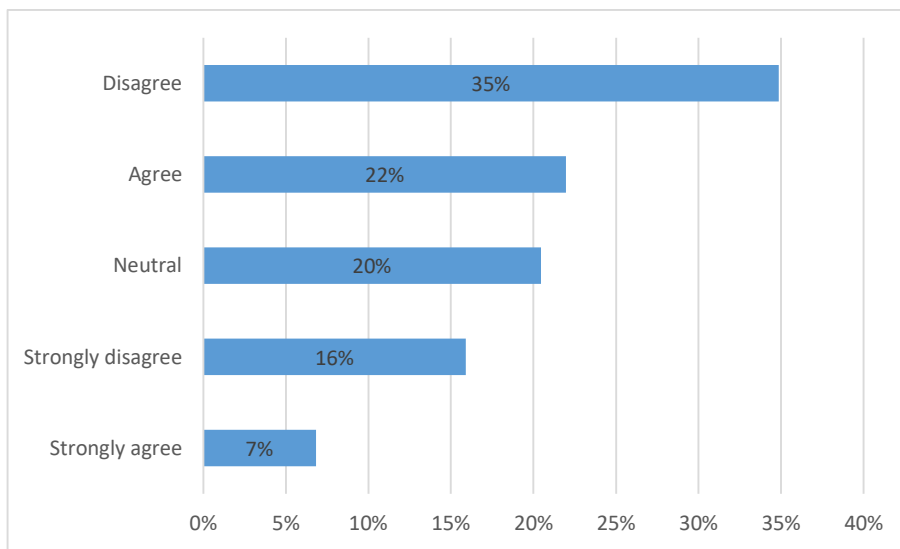
Figure 12. Q10 My organization involves their employees in the decision-making process (n=132)
Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

Aside from salary and other compensation schemes, reward for outstanding or innovative performances go a long way to boost the satisfaction of the employees within an organization. About 50% of the respondents agree that they experience performance reward while barely one third of the respondents disagree and about 20% are simply neutral (See Figure 13). Reward and recognition are tools used to boost employee's motivation simultaneously. Reward comes motivates with cash while recognition motivates psychologically. Hence, it would go a long way if the players in the industry could sustain these activities.
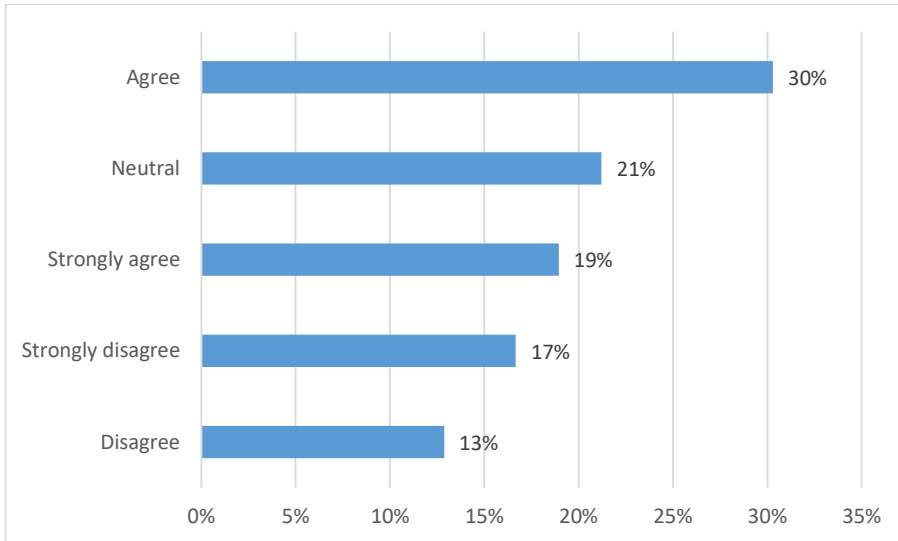
Figure 13. Q11 My organization provides rewards to high performing employees (n=132)
Source: Ogunnaike (2021) author's calculation

In general term from this study, the employees in the telecom industry in Nigeria responded fairly above average in their responses to all the 11IM-Scale questions used as a measure of the concept of internal marketing in the telecom industry in Nigeria. While reflecting on the data outcome from Table 2, career growth opportunity, equity and fairness and employee engagement in decision making are critical areas that fall short of the mean value of the distribution of the responses of the employees. This implies that managers in the industry need to address these areas of concern for the employees. Doing these will further enable them to satisfy their internal customers and in turn get the external customers satisfied as well.

3.2. Findings from interview (study 2)

When asked whether they implement internal marketing in their organizations and the kind of activities they do in implementing it. All the interviewees mentioned that they have specific strategic programmes to implement some of the activities embedded in internal marketing. In this current study, the author deliberatly refrain from highlighting the specific nomenclature mentioned during the interview in those organizations to prevent exposure of company's secret and in accordance with the ethics of research.

Nevertheless, some of the programmes mentioned contain effective communication channel, forstering relationship between departments, performance recognition, reward system, conducive workplace, regular staff survey analysis among others. Four of the interviewees mentioned that their organization use every means to communicate the vision, work place culteure and value system of their organizations to their staff right from the point of on-boarding. For example, reorientating the employees' pyschie by introducing the benefits of working in a global brand organization, thereby the employees walk in that consciosness, thus identified with the brand of the organization at the subconscious level.

When asked about the relationship between the employees and the management staff. All the interviewees mentioned that there are structured communication channels that are clear and well known to the employees. On the other hand, an interviewee stated that their comuncation channel is designed to allow the least employees to reach the management effectively. Nevertheless, one of the interviewees mentioned that all employees have opportunities to sit in a large meeting with the apex boss of their organization at least once in a quarter of the year. The interviewee stressed that such gesture brings the employees closer to the mangement and gives them the feeling that they are not just wokers rather, they are significant stakeholders.Futhermeore, it allows the management to feel the pulse of the employees directly.

"The CEO also has these C-level meetings where the CEO doesn't talk to the directors but talks to the people reporting to other direct reports and the lower-level people where you sit down with the CEO and then say, look, my department, this is the kind of thing I feel I can do. And so the CEO tried to hear from them directly. Not really what, you know, your bosses are saying and the management team, but I think the CEO does that maybe like quarterly thereabouts, you know, so that's also provide a lot of feedback". (Interviewee 2, 2021)

31

All the interviewees see challenges in implementing activities in internal marketing from different perspectives ranging from cost implication, getting employees to buy the vision of the organization, time constrain, fostering departments working in silo to cooperate with others. An interviewee described the challenge tagged "an externality" faced in managing the expectations of employees in respect of mandatory non-cash benefits (such as health insurance, national housing fund, penssion fund scheme) that organizations are committed to on all employees as stipulated within the regulatory framework of the industry. Another interviewee talked about the need to continually refine job responsibility matrix within the employees as a solution that was adopted to address conflicts when two employees were having crisis caused uneven workload distribution.

All the interviewees highlighted the benefits that are embedded in internal marketing concept when implemented. They all mentioned that it promotes high employee retention rate. Three of them cited that it is a rare occurrence for their staff to leave for their competitors, rather most of the staff that left often relocated abroad. They said the implementation allows for career growth and development as they put programmes in place to develop their staff. They also mentioned that it increases employee's loyalty to the organzation. Previous study have shown that there is an association between employees' loyatly and employees job satisfaction.

When asked about the relevance of the concept to service or product based industry, they were all quick to respond that it is more appropriate for a service based industry but they all turned round to concluded that it is appropriate for both industry because they describe their intangible services as products that is packaged for their customers. Most of them agree that there are rooms room for improvement on what would make internal customers to be satisfied so that organizations will remain competive and sustainable. Those that have no knowledge and vague idea of the conept at the inception of the interview then admitted that there is a need to explore all the benefits of implementing the concept in the telecom industry in Nigeria.

3.3. Discussion

It is imperative to state that when the atmosphere of workplace is designed such that it allows for effective communication and innovation to thrive, employees tend to be more engaged and motivated to going extra mile in performing their tasks or role to support the vision and the objectives of their organizations. The resultant effect of this is the transference of this good behaviour to the external customers which will make customer satisfaction attainable especially in the service industry. On the other hand, when the atmosphere is not conducive, employees tend to be unsatisfied hence such employees may not be favourably disposed to go extra mile in performing the assigned tasks. Thus, managers should endeavour to create an atmosphere that fosters innovation.

The author embarks on this study to find out if there is knowledge gap about the concept of internal marketing in the telecom industry in Nigeria. The result of the research from the chart shows the awareness level of the concept amongst the employees and the interview with the management team unearthed the awareness level and the benefits they attribute to the implementation of the concept. Looking at the outcome of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, we are able to find answers to the questions asked from the beginning of this study.

RQ1 states that "are telecom managers in Nigeria aware of internal marketing?". The interview conducted with the six management team members have a lot to answer this. From the responses of all the interviewees, they all show different awareness level. While some were completely aware of it, some have little knowledge of it and some are not aware of it at all. Suffice to say, even those who claimed they are not aware of it displayed the knowledge of the concept in their daily routine during the course of the interview. All of them confirmed the presence of one programme of the or the other in their various organization that is put in place to ensure the job satisfaction of the employees and at the same time ensuring satisfaction of the customers out there so that the organizations can remain competitive and sustainable. Intuitively, one might tend to see it in another perspective, perhaps the generic name of the concept makes it to be perceived as something that is purely academics or something that is purely a marketing department thing within an organization. Putting it in perspective, the managers in Nigeria telecom industry are aware of the activities that make up internal marketing.

In answering the RQ2 that says are telecoms companies in Nigeria implementing internal marketing? This question is answered by looking at the various degree of agreeableness of the respondents on the 11-IMScale question that were answered in the survey. The reliability test conducted on Likert question came out to be excellent and the factor loading was good with Cronbach's alpha index to be 0.964.

The author relies on a previous research with similar outcomes to draw inference where IM-11scale was used (Yildiz & Kara, 2017) to measure internal marketing though within an academic industry and having fulfilled the reliability and validity tests regarding the variables that are used for this study which are found to be excellent (Table 2).

Looking at the mean of each activity, the mean of the question on employee engagement and that of career growth are below 3. The neutral point on our 5 Likert point scale is 3. The respondents see this as critical to their performance and satisfaction and perhaps they are not getting as much as they expect from their employers in terms of career growth. Management needs to begin to see how clear career path and growth would be incorporated into workplace. Meanwhile, all other questions that were asked in the survey have their mean values to be slightly above 3. This is also an indication that even though the management team believes they are doing so much to put internal marketing in place, the employees are not experiencing it in full scale, hence they just barely agree that it exists.

The aggregate mean of the measuring scale is 3.12 which is a little above the neutral point. It appears that there is an emerging agreeable level of the concept of internal marketing in the telecom industry in Nigeria amongst the employees. This outcome suggests that despite the low knowledge that is displayed in the responses of the respondent regarding the knowledge of IM in section two of the survey, this suggest that even when employees do not know the name of the concept, their daily experience with their jobs and workplace leave footprints of the concept on them in terms of the activities that are contained in the internal marketing such as understanding of the vison of the organization, employee engagement, effective communication, transparency and equity, adequate compensation and reward system, right job matrix, healthy relationship.

On the part of the management team, it is apparent that they are putting so much in place to remain competitive in their industry through implementation of various programmes that have flavour of internal marketing. However, it appears there is a need to be more holistic about the implementation especially in the area of employee engagement, career growth and development,

fairness and equity. These three areas show reasonable level of disagreement perhaps the management team will need to see how to be more transparent in their policy making and implementation, engage the employees by creating an enabling environment to be innovative such as treating employees with fairness and equity, not lording tasks on them with unrealistic deadlines rather setting achievable task and creating appraisal model that is not one sided.

The managers attest to the benefits that they derive through the deployment of various programmes on ground that have flavour of internal marketing. The top on the list is the employee turnover rate that is kept low, job satisfaction and employee loyalty, above all internal and external customer satisfaction.

Considering how big the telecom industry is today, employees are not just valuable assets, but they should be treasured to get the best out of them especially in service industry where innovation plays a key role. Organizations tend to profit the more when they begin to implement internal marketing concept by critically placing similar effort on satisfying their employees.

3.4. Limitations

This study has been very inspiring and informative to the author, though few things are observed that could be done better for future research. There could focus on a particular organization within an industry, this will reduce variability in the outcome of the research data. Challenges that come with convenience method can be avoided by using probability sampling method thereby the outcome of the result can be more representative. The lack of agreed model for measuring the concept of internal of internal marketing makes everyone interested in the study IM to be more challenging.

CONCLUSIONS

In today's dynamic and competive business landscape, the influence of intangible assets can never be overemphasized especially in a service industry. Since these assets are proprietary and localised, the risk of imitation is very low, hence, a proper management of these allow organizations to be competive and sustainable. One major intangible asset is human capital, that is, the employees who are the internal customers. When an organization implements internal marketing effectively, the employees in turn become valuable assets in terms of skill acquisiton, deep knowledge base and positive attitudes leading to satisfied employees. Hence, going with the philosophy of intertnal marketing, attaining organizational goals and objectives become easier because when the internal customers are satisfied it will enhance their performance and productivity and this would rub on their transactional relationship in providing quality services to external customers for better customer experience.

It is therefore expedient for the managers of organizations in the Nigerian telecom industry to treat internal marketing concept not only a managerial idea rather a process flow that cuts across the entire organziation so that every employee would have a deeper understanding of the purpose, connects to it and perhaps put a structure in place to keep managers on track in implementing it.

The author in this study has been able to investigate the knowledge of internal marketing in the Nigerian telecom industry from the perspective of the awareness level of the management team and the perception of the employees in the industry coupled with the benefits that come with the concept through deep analyses of primary data gathered through both questionnaire and interviews in answering the research questions aim and objective of the study.

The three research questions are fully answered through the instruments of survey and the interview conducted. The answer to RQ1 that "are telecoms companies in Nigeria implementing internal marketing?" can be said to be answered in the responses of the interviewees, From the analyses, There seem to be a reasonable knowledge of the implementation of the concept looking from the aggregate mean value of the 11-IM Scale questions used to measure internal marketing.

Regarding the RQ2 which states that "are telecom companies in Nigeria implementing internal marketing?". The outcome of the quantitative analysis shows that there seems to be a reasonable understanding of the implementation of internal marketing, this conclusion is drwn form the outcome of the aggregate mean value of the 11-IM scale answers which is 3.12 which is above 3 the neutral scale. Lastly, the RQ3 that seeks to know understand the benefits of the concept also is fully addressed as all managers suggested that internal marketing increases employee job satisfaction, staff retention rate, achievement of organizational goals and objectives, leading to a competitive advantage.

Nigerian telecom industry is the largest market in Africa and has grown tremendously in the last 20years after the full deregulation, now perhaps reaching maturity, the management teams of the organizations in the industry need to pay keen attention to the behaviour that characterises the maturity state of an industry of which market saturation and stiff competition are inclusive. Meanwhile, since machines/technology do not seem to be able to replace human service skills, internal marketing is a vital marketing tool for the service industry if it wishes to remain competitive and sustainable.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The survey instrument and result

Hello, I am Temitope, a final year student of International Business Administration Department in Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia. As part of the requirement for my graduate thesis, I am conducting research on the internal marketing in telecom industry in Nigeria.

I hope you can spare about 10 minutes of your precious time to help me get an overview of internal marketing in your industry. The survey is anonymous, the results are confidential and solely used for this research. If you have any questions, please email me at teogun@ttu.ee

Thank you in advance!

Gender: a. Male   b. Female

Nationality: Nigerian, others…

Marital Status: a. Single b. Married

Educational level: a. College Diploma, b. Degree c. Master's & higher

How long have you been working in this organization?

Less than 5 years

6 -10 years

11 & above

How long has your organization been in operation?

Less than 5 years

6 -10 years

11 & above

Status in the organization:

Administrative or Operation staff

Team lead/Supervisor

Manager

Director

Country of residence: Nigeria, Others….

Do you know what internal marketing is?

Definitely Yes

Rather Yes

Don't Know

Rather No

Definitely Not

Please give your definition of INTERNAL MARKETING……….

Kindly answer the following questions

Likert scale questions

strongly disagree-1, disagree -2, neutral-3, agree-4, strongly agree-5

1.My organization provides attractive physical conditions (office, tools and equipment) to its employees.

2. My organization fulfils the fundamental needs (pay, insurance, job security) of its employees.

3. My organization strengthens its employees through appropriate direction, empowerment and participation.

4. My organization provides appropriate workload and support to its employees.

5. My organization provides an achievable vision to its employees.

6. My organization provides training/development programs to improve knowledge and skills of

its employees.

7. My organization provides career advancement opportunities to its employees.

8. My organization treats its employees equally and fairly.

9. My organization provides open and transparent communication channels to its employees.

10. My organization involves their employees in the decision-making process.

11. My organization provides rewards to high performing employees.

Source: (Yildiz & Kara, 2017)

Thank you for your time.

Kindly find below the link for the result of the questionnaire.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Q6ccVT1aE34Sn7iZGDLFmX0JGzX5fKd5?usp=sharing

Appendix 2. Semi-structured interview instrument

Semi-structured Qualitative Research Interview Questions on Internal Marketing In The Nigeria Telecom Industry

Introduction of Interviewee and Interviewer: My name is Temitope Ogunnaike…. And you?

Ground rule and consent: Please note, this interview would be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of this research only. It is voluntary, you are at liberty to freely express yourself and if you are not comfortable to respond to any question, you are free to express your view. Do I have your consent to record?

Opening Question:
Considering your position as a member of the management team in your organization let me start by asking you this question…

Are you familiar with the term internal marketing?

Is IM implemented in your organization? How if yes, then activities…?

Why implementing internal marketing?

Fundamental aims & objectives of internal marketing in your organization.

Key benefits.

Challenges in implementation.

Effectiveness of internal marketing.

Relevance to product-oriented or service-oriented industries.

How easy it is for lower-level employees to communicate with top management?

Suggestion to improve internal marketing.

Conclusion: *Thank you for your time to grant this interview, do you have anything you would like to add before we round up?*

Appendix 3. Audio interview files and their transcriptions

These files can be found in the author's google drive, kindly follow the link below:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AlidVzKP4NnwbGGaMhmkwZMzEwJPdQ98?usp=sharing

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