

Markets and the creation of competitive advantages in companies according to an internal marketing orientation



Fouzi Tahar Abderzag*

College of Sciences and Arts-AL-Namas, University of Bisha, Bisha, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 March 2021

Received in revised form

14 June 2021

Accepted 17 August 2021

Keywords:

Internal marketing orientation

Creating competitive advantages

Strategic internal marketing

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between internal marketing orientation and the creation of competitive advantages and determine whether this is useful in light of the continuous growth in competition. For modern companies, competitive advantage has become a necessary and inevitable prerequisite for their continued survival in the market. Internal marketing policies, which are an element of modern marketing, have, therefore, become a pillar for building and sustaining competitive advantages. However, there is insufficient focus on strategic internal marketing and its impact on a firm's competitiveness. Indeed, nuanced insights suggest that the competitive advantage of a company can actively increase its financial performance by maintaining and increasing its market share and distinguishing it from its competitors, which is especially useful during highly competitive periods. Finally, this research uses an updated approach to build on the current literature and provide managers with insights into the drivers and outcomes of strategic internal marketing. These insights about internal-marketing-driven competitive advantages suggest that internal marketing can help companies achieve diversification and stability.

© 2021 The Authors. Published by IASE. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to clarify the relationship between competitive advantage and an internal marketing approach and thus provide a number of theoretical and managerial contributions to the literature. And also reveals the need for a contemporary research framework with a strategic approach to the link between internal marketing and competitive advantage, and focused on marketing strategy and its relationship with firms' performance outcomes rather than their competitiveness. It seems that internal marketing and financial performance enjoy a positive relationship in companies, such that when there is a greater enthusiasm about a company's products, the more profitable the company becomes.

Algeria is a good example of this because of its rapid engagement with the globalization phenomenon. This should go some way toward

moderating the unresolved tension that managers, including those in Algeria, perceive between internal marketing and a firm's competitiveness, as there is tangible evidence to support the adoption of a holistic internal marketing orientation as a way of enhancing competitive advantage.

In order to better understand our empirical results, we show how the managers of companies define internal marketing and the value it has in their competitive strategies through a qualitative study of 1470 employees in different companies. The data obtained from this makes it possible to investigate the importance of internal marketing and the positive relationship it has with a competitive advantage, as well as identify the different paths followed by managers. The objective of this study

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

This study revolves around the problem of the extent to which economic institutions can create and develop competitive advantages by relying on internal marketing policies and practices. In light of the increasingly intense competition in Algeria, companies have generally come to face various difficulties that challenge their continued survival in

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: abderzagfouzi2018@gmail.com<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2021.10.011>

Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3352-5447>

2313-626X/© 2021 The Authors. Published by IASE.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

the market and limit the opportunities for maintaining or developing market share.

Marketing has traditionally focused on exchanges between companies and potential customers, but attention has turned to another form of exchange, namely between a company and its staff. Indeed, the role that workers play in a company determines levels of quality and customer satisfaction (Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017). Given the specific nature of services, the traditional external marketing practices are thought to be less effective when applied in the field of services as opposed to tangible goods, because the performance of service workers represents the product being sold to external customers, so improving this is a way to achieve distinction in the market. This can be achieved through an emergent modern marketing concept focused on the workers inside a company, namely internal marketing. The companies covered in this paper are currently operating within a dynamic, uncertain, and challenging environment. Among the most important characteristics of this context are continuous change and transformation in social and cultural situations, such as in ways of thinking, ideology, social values, and political, economic,

technological, and international situations. The environmental dynamics lead to firms needing to become more competitive and sensitive to customer satisfaction (Aghazadeh et al., 2007). In addition, some key findings in the literature indicate a relationship between pressure from stakeholders and marketing strategy, as well as a positive association between competitive advantage and internal marketing and process innovation.

Finally, the empirically tested conceptual framework will provide managers with tangible evidence for how competitive advantage can be enhanced by adopting a strategic internal marketing orientation, which should help moderate the unresolved tension that managers perceive between internal marketing and a firm's competitiveness. This study focuses on internal marketing from a company-wide perspective while also capturing the modern strategic and internal initiatives of a company to holistically develop a competitive advantage. To conceptualize how the different factors fit together and interrelate, a brief review of the extant literature is presented in the next subsection. Table 1 shows factors influencing destination competitiveness.

Table 1: Factors influencing destination competitiveness

Reference	Context/method	Factors/themes examined
Cano and Sams (2009)	Primary data were obtained through interviews and from a questionnaire administered to four hundred (400) respondents made up of customers.	The study examined holistic service marketing strategies concepts.
Vieira (2010)	In this paper, a Brazilian meta-analysis, aggregating a sample size of 4,537 in 27 papers was conducted. The findings suggest that the relationship.	Market orientation has emerged as a significant antecedent of organizational performance and is presumed to contribute to the long-term success of a firm.
de Farias (2010)	This theoretical paper reviews the IM literature and relates it to service excellence at the same time that presents some research propositions to the development of the knowledge in this marketing area.	The research contributes to the term internal marketing (IM) is used to describe the application of marketing internally within the organization.
McDonagh and Prothero (2014)	This paper provides a synthesis and critical assessment of the sustainability marketing literature, from the period 1998–2013, building on a previous assessment from 1971 to 1998.	This paper provides the Marketing is deemed complicit in the problem definition of, or impossibility of, achieving a sustainable future for us and our planet.
Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017)	Based on previous studies this paper analyzes: 1) the dominant definitions of Green Marketing (and related concepts) and their evolution over time, 2) the different steps to build a Green Marketing Strategy relevance of environmental sustainability.	This study provides an in-depth analysis and synthesis of the body of knowledge so far produced in the field of Green Marketing.
Papadas et al. (2019)	This study fills the gap by providing a comprehensive view of strategic green marketing and its impact on competitive advantage.	This paper seeks to clarify and refine the relationship between strategic and internal green marketing and firm competitiveness.
Lučić et al. (2020)	The purpose of this paper is to explore how sustainable marketing orientation (SMO) should be properly implemented in an organization built on the theoretical model of market-oriented sustainability.	The paper confirmed and further explored the framework of multidimensional SMO; the measurement tool captured the actual implementation of the construct in practice, allowing it to be investigated across industries.

2.1. Strategic internal marketing orientation

Internal marketing occurs when a business markets its products, services, and brand to its own employees. Instead of “selling” to consumers, like with external marketing, the business sells to its employees, treating them as a sort of internal consumer, which they are. Internal marketing is important because it leads to more employee engagement. It is one thing for an employee to work for a company in exchange for a paycheck, but it is another thing entirely for him or her to truly believe in your company and what it does. When the latter applies, Mitchell writes that employees are “motivated to work harder and their loyalty to the

company increases.” Engaged employees are also happier employees. The internal marketing concept was introduced in the mid-1970s, so companies could use it as a means to achieve consistent service quality. It has since become well known among the service-marketing sector. The aim was to improve the performance of employees who regularly deal with customers (Berry and Parasurman, 2000).

Although this concept began in service marketing, it has been expanded to other fields, and it has been adopted by many companies and organizations in other fields so that they can also use internal marketing to gain a competitive advantage.

Internal marketing focuses on achieving proper internal relations between employees at all levels of

a company. Therefore, a service-oriented, customer-oriented approach is promoted to employees during contact with customers (Gronroos, 2000). Internal marketing, therefore, acts as a comprehensive management process that integrates various functions of a company in two ways: First, all employees at all levels of the company come to understand internal marketing as a sort of philosophy for strategic management, one that ensures the attraction, development, motivation, and retention of valuable employees by creating a high-quality working environment that meets their needs. Internal marketing is a management tool for resolving issues related to the productivity of internal services, market orientation, and the successful execution of various business activities and processes in the environment (Jennings and Beaver, 1997). Second, internal marketing leads to all employees becoming enthusiastic in a service-oriented way (Gronroos, 2000). Cahill (1995) perceived appropriate programs and customer orientation (Gronroos, 2000). Hogg and Carter (2000) defined internal marketing as an integral part of a market orientation that requires marketing techniques to be applied inside a company in order to create value for the company. This plays an important role in achieving a competitive advantage for a company.

Gummesson (1991), meanwhile, saw internal marketing as a critical component of a marketing orientation. Therefore, internal marketing is critical for a company to create value for its customers, both internal and external and deal with the challenges of competition. Cahill (1995) believed that internal marketing is "a process of selecting and motivating qualified workers while retaining individuals who have skills and capabilities that satisfy the nature of work that satisfy their needs. Therefore, internal marketing is the philosophy of treating individuals working in the company as real customers." Paradoxically, Ballontyne et al. (1995) defined internal marketing as "one of the forms of marketing within the company that attracts the attention of employees to internal activities needing change to improve the performance and position of the company in the external market." Internal marketing can be viewed as aiming to provide all employees with a good understanding of a company's mission and goals through training, motivation, and evaluation to achieve the desired outcomes, and it does not involve merely choosing one method. Internal marketing can be considered a source of competitive advantage, but John et al. (1986) seen internal marketing as an effort to achieve service goals. Nevertheless, Kotler (2003) defined internal marketing as work done by a company to train and motivate its internal customers, especially those employees who deal directly with customers (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos, 2018).

Indeed, this process supports services by encouraging teamwork to achieve customer satisfaction. Finally, this approach can also be regarded as a form of human resource management,

one through which a company can increase the satisfaction of its external customers.

2.2. Corporate responsibility conceptualization and strategic internal marketing orientation

To achieve competitive advantages, companies must successfully manage the behaviors and performances of all their employees. One of the most difficult challenges facing managers is how to distinguish between good, average, and poor performers. Benefiting from employees' knowledge requires a management style that focuses on developing and empowering employees to take responsibility for products and services, and in return, they get to share the rewards, or losses, of the outcomes. For example, bonuses are typically used to energize, direct, or control employee behavior. Indeed, most employees compare their own pay with that of others, especially those in a comparable role. Many companies also now recognize that motivating employees requires a level of respect to existing between management and workers. This respect can take the form of involving employees in decisions that affect them, listening to them, and implementing their suggestions when appropriate. The implementation of an internal marketing strategy, therefore, ensures that motivation is at the forefront of management's priorities. It was indicated that there is no doubt that motivation is an important factor for improving the performance of employees, and many companies establish a systematic reward system to motivate their employees and consequently improve their service quality and delivery.

Every person is unique, however, and each has a motivational key that makes them work harder and give more. Motivation may therefore derive from financial and non-financial incentives. Both forms of motivation must be offered to employees according to their level of seniority, such as by paying bonuses and commissions or offering educational development through training courses.

The most important issue, however, is how to communicate motivational programs within a company. An effective way to create trust and commitment between employees and management is to hold team-building sessions. Management must arrange regular meetings with employees to listen to their needs, questions, complaints, and recommendations, so it can address the needs of each employee on an individual basis. It has become clear that successful marketing can only be achieved if a firm is involved not only in external but also in internal marketing. The internal marketing concept holds that a company's personnel are also its primary market. Previous research (Lefebvre, 2011) refers to the internal marketing strategy as a management concept that focuses on realizing a three-dimensional goal of finding, producing, and delivering sustainable solutions with a high added value for a company while maintaining the satisfaction of customers and other parties. The key

motivation behind the use of internal marketing within companies is a need to achieve attitudinal change among staff, with a shift toward service mindedness and customer focus, because this will enable companies to compete more successfully in the external marketplace. Based on the above explanation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Corporate responsibility is positively linked with finding innovative and proactive solutions through a strategic orientation toward internal marketing.

Nowadays, companies operate in a dynamic and challenging environment. One of the most important characteristics in this context is the continuous change and transformation that occurs in society, such as in people's thinking, ideology, and social values, as well as shifts in political, economic, technological, and international situations (Kenny, 2014). Environmental dynamics and increased competition mean that companies need to become more competitive and be sensitive to their customers' level of satisfaction. Past studies have also found that companies act according to their stakeholders, and one of the biggest factors in realizing their objectives, especially in service-based companies, is service quality. The quality of a service depends upon a variety of factors. One factor that may contribute to sustainably enhancing service quality and customer satisfaction involves the marketing strategy. Past studies have found that companies make different environmental responses based on which stakeholders they consider to be the most important. The internal management/marketing literature lists many different stakeholder groups that companies should consider before designing a green marketing strategy, such as employees, investors, suppliers, legislators, governmental agencies, shareholders, competitors, and the general public, as well as environmental groups, the media, and labor unions.

Internal marketing is a major activity when developing a customer-oriented company. The main objective of internal marketing is to promote knowledge about internal and external customers and remove any operational obstacles to delivering services based on value and organizational effectiveness. Internal marketing views employees and jobs as internal customers and internal products, respectively. In the market-oriented and strategic management literature, more attention has been paid to the external factors of a company, even though a balance should be achieved between external and internal factors because both are critical to a successful strategy (Lings, 1999). Foreman and Money (1995) stated that when a company has an internal supply chain of customers and suppliers, the company's management should view the company as a market. Indeed, meeting internal customer needs puts the company in a better position to provide high-quality services to its external customers (Foreman and Money, 1995). Internal marketing is, therefore, an important

activity in developing a customer-oriented organization because it focuses on establishing proper internal relationships among people at all levels of the company. Therefore, a service-oriented and customer-oriented approach should be promoted between employees who have regular contact with customers (Gronroos, 2000).

Internal marketing acts as a comprehensive management process, one that integrates the various functions of a company in two ways. First, it leads to all employees at all levels of the company coming to understand the various business activities and processes in the context of the environment. Second, it causes all employees to become prepared and enthusiastic in a service-oriented manner (Gronroos, 2000). Cahill (1995) perceived internal marketing as a sort of philosophy for strategic management, such that it ensures the recruitment, development, motivation, and retention of prominent employees by creating a high-quality working environment that meets these workers' needs. Internal marketing is a management technique for resolving issues related to the productivity of internal services, market orientation, the successful execution of appropriate programs, and customer satisfaction (Gronroos, 2000). Consequently, an internal marketing strategy for a company must tell a story that persuades the audience to take action, thereby having a positive impact on employees. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H2: Companies' responsibilities are positively associated with a strategic internal marketing orientation and employee engagement.

2.3. Strategic internal marketing orientation and job performance

A marketing tool is also a management tool, and internal marketing has been the subject of considerable research in recent years. With it mostly falling within the field of human resource management, it aims to improve organizational efficiency through greater employee involvement in a single objective. It is directly linked to employee satisfaction at work, and different methods are employed to develop a customer focus at all levels of the organization, thus creating cohesion among a company's employees. Internal marketing is a necessary step in a company's strategic approach if it is to achieve its external marketing objectives because it supports the company in maintaining and developing its brand. Indeed, companies mainly focus on their internal customers in order to ensure the satisfaction of their external ones. Persuading and engaging employees in business goals sums up the reasons why internal marketing exists. This results in greater employee loyalty.

Any organization needs to commit to tackling important issues and developing innovative practices. The promotion of social responsibility is also considered important in determining the level and quality of the convictions present in a business. The concept of internal marketing, along with the

identification of any problems that impede the application of internal marketing, helps to build an actual partnership between employees and company management. Previous research has shown that internal marketing acts as a policy for making employees love their company and its products and services, so in a way, they act as a form of promotion to customers (Park et al., 2012). In this way, employees enjoy their jobs, make suggestions for improving services or products, help their colleagues, and even take risks for the company.

But how can a company succeed with its internal marketing policy? The path to carrying out such a policy starts by surveying a sample of company employees to investigate what they think about the company's administration. This helps to better define a good internal marketing strategy. In addition, a company must have the courage to give responsibilities to its employees (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos, 2018). As such, the previous literature affirms the existence of this idea behind the concept of internal marketing strategy, confirming the need to make employees feel appreciated and cared for. This in turn makes it easier for companies to achieve a competitive advantage. A successfully implemented internal marketing strategy results in employees having more positive attitudes toward their work, along with organizational commitment, job motivation, and job satisfaction (Podnar and Golob, 2007). On the other hand, a lack of employee engagement is detrimental to the company due to the poor performance it causes, which in turn leads to a lower quality of service and increased costs for the company. Hogg and Carter (2000) suggested that internal marketing is one solution for increasing employee commitment. Prior research has also confirmed a correlation between internal marketing, job satisfaction, and company performance, and this link helps in terms of the completion of work tasks, a significant level of flexibility, and the achievement of competitive advantage for the company.

H3a: A strategic internal marketing orientation has a positive effect in terms of achieving a competitive advantage.

The role of marketing in maintaining competitiveness is recognized today, even though in small businesses it may be considered marginal or even non-existent. The implementation of a marketing strategy can be argued regardless of the size of a company because even the smallest companies cannot afford to ignore this marketing concept. A competitive advantage occupies an important position in strategic management because this is the most effective way for a company to achieve superiority over its competitors and attract customers by increasing the value they perceive and the level of satisfaction they experience. Previous research (Lefebvre, 2011) also indicates that an internal marketing strategy demonstrates relationships in its dimensions (e.g., training,

empowerment, teamwork, marketing information, and administrative support), leading to achieving a competitive advantage in the company. This also reflects the basic idea behind this study, namely that it is in the interests of a company to train employees and ensure their satisfaction because this helps develop a competitive advantage for the company (Karim and Altaswiq, 2017).

A competitive advantage is what distinguishes a company from its competitors. A good market positioning is achieved through one or more competitive advantages, which are things that add value to a company or its products and services and thus make them more desirable than those of its competitors. The aim is to attract new customers and increase market share. Competitive advantage does not always persist over time, however, so a company must strive to ensure the sustainability of anything that sets it apart from competing companies. Previous studies have also considered internal marketing to be relevant when audiences can have a positive impact on an organization's performance (Lings, 1999). Inbound marketing can be a successful alternative to quality-improvement programs, and they allow any company to gain a competitive advantage. The concept of internal marketing officially appeared at the end of the 1970s as a tool to help improve quality in companies and therefore achieve a competitive advantage.

H3b: A strategic internal marketing orientation positively affects financial performance through competitive advantage.

2.4. The moderating role of an internal marketing orientation

When developing an internal marketing strategy, corporate executives must send a message to establish an employee culture that supports the internal marketing approach. This message should resonate with the employees and encourage them to help the company achieve its specific business aspirations. Corporate officials should be keen to share their strategy with all employees, so everyone can help in the effort to gain a competitive advantage (Park et al., 2012). Employees are the means for achieving competitive advantages, and interventions like employee training can promote an awareness of the competitive environment inside the company. In summary, we could say that internal marketing aims to encourage employees to love the company's brands and mission, so they will find it easier to convince customers. In other words, internal communication is not just a tool for informing employees but also convincing, mobilizing, and retaining them.

Disseminating knowledge and establishing an environmental culture throughout an entire organization will encourage employees to develop skills and abilities for implementing successful internal marketing strategies (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014). Internal marketing orientation is

certainly relevant when it comes to an audience that can influence the performance of the company, so it is likely to be related to HR goals. Based on the resource-based theoretical view, an enhanced corporate culture can be viewed as a key resource for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Marketing can be involved as a major or minor source of competitive advantage, depending on the perception of the organization and the sort of competitive advantage a company desires in order to become successful. In a way, it is the one-to-one relationship between the capacity of the company and the microenvironment that a manager builds that sets the conditions for a strategic marketing process. If the environment makes a decisive contribution to the emergence of a capacity, a company leader will adopt a marketing orientation, as conveyed in the general literature. In addition, if a company guides the establishment of an environment that is conducive to translating this into a competitive advantage (Park et al., 2012), it will become possible to consider marketing through other means. Through perception, a manager defines the environment (i.e., competitive or non-competitive), so he or she chooses whichever capacity best “fits” with the environment. The choice to value the company’s resources and skills is motivated by his or her personal goals. Thus, the goals and perceptions of this leader are the origins of a competitive advantage, which is later expressed in terms of performance. This is not an irreversible

victory over the competition, but it is a way to survive by consolidating the strategic cohesion (Porter, 1999) perceived by the manager. Like with a competitive advantage, the concept of marketing cannot always retain its intrinsic definition. Some elements may become questionable as the concept is defined by a manager to increase its usefulness. The nature of competitive advantage is characterized by the components of the distinct capacity. Its power is linked to the performance criteria used to assess the competitive advantage. For example, it may be distinguished based on financial performance (e.g., revenues, profitability, etc.), competitive performance (e.g., customer loyalty and satisfaction, market share, etc.), or organizational performance (e.g., organizational climate, administrative cohesion, culture, etc.). We, therefore, hypothesize that:

H4: The positive effect of strategic marketing on competitive advantage becomes more pronounced when leaders have a greater orientation toward the internal market approach.

The analyses indicate that internal market orientation has a positive effect on business performance in the studied companies.

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, which comprises four major parts: antecedents (i.e. CR and IECR), SIMO, performance outcomes (i.e., CA and FP), and IMO as a moderator.

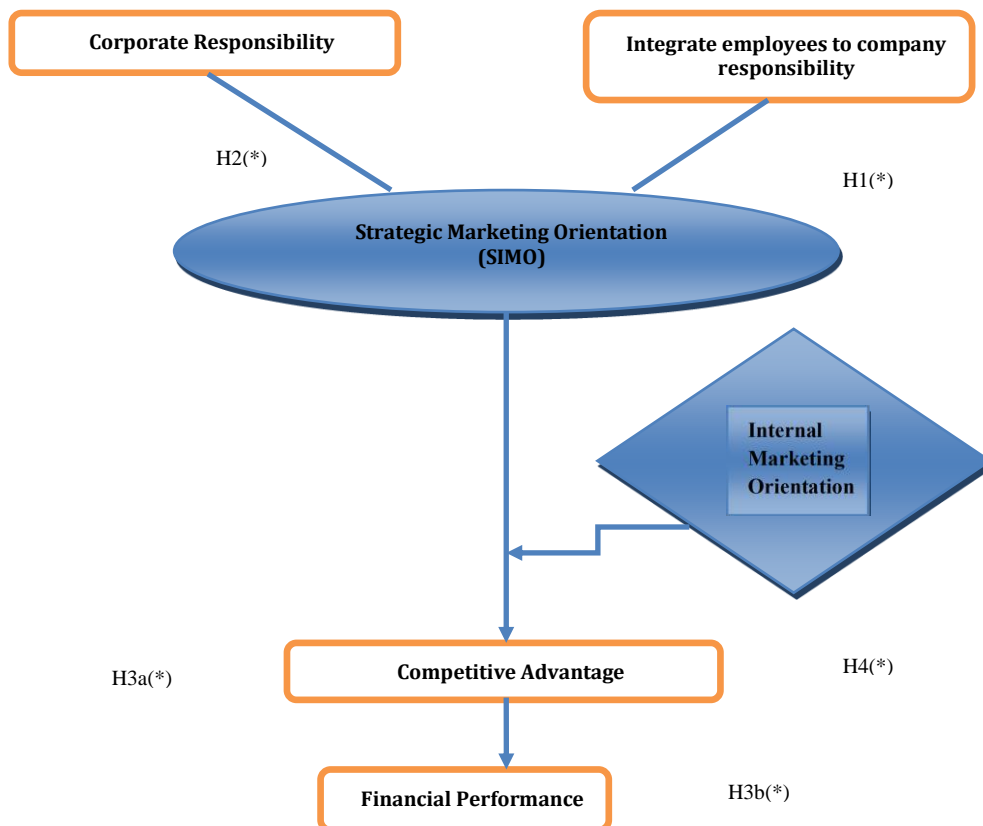


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

3. Methods

3.1. Setting

Algerian companies were chosen as the context of this study for two main reasons:

- Firstly, gaining competitive advantages has become a necessary and inevitable requirement for these companies' continued survival in the market, and internal marketing policies are an approach in modern marketing for achieving sustainable competitive advantages. Many Algerian companies seek this on a national level (Kenny, 2014). In light of growing competition, organizations experience diverse challenges to their continuing presence in the market and preserving and developing their market share.
- Secondly, many domestic companies in Algeria are increasingly adopting marketing strategies and internal marketing practices. We have focused on five different industrial groups for general portability purposes, such as fast-moving consumer-based industries, industrial projects, service provision, remanufacturing, the building-materials industry, and so on due to their prevalence throughout Algeria.

3.2. The survey

3.2.1. Sample and data collection

Next, we pre-tested the questionnaire by distributing it to marketing professionals attending a local university's graduate program. Finally, we conducted a large-scale quantitative study to test our hypotheses. It was desirable to obtain a representative sample of all companies in the various sectors referred to above, so to meet our criteria, we used a list of 1470 companies from the database of a Gallup subsidiary in Greece as the basis for our sample. Based on our systematic literature review, we created a draft questionnaire with the help of personal interviews with ten professionals and three researchers with extensive experience in the field of marketing strategies. A stratified sample of 677 companies was selected from the list of companies. An online survey procedure was used to collect data, and questionnaires were distributed to the CEOs, marketing managers, and corporate officers of the selected companies. The names of the participants and their contact details were obtained through a phone call with the relevant companies. A formal cover letter was then sent to participants' email addresses, and this provided a brief introduction to the study and a general explanation of it.

3.2.2. Measures

Multiple-choice measures with a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly

agree) were used to assess the degree of corporate responsibility in achieving competitive advantages by applying a marketing strategy that includes internal marketing, its impact on the industry, and the contribution it makes to the studied companies. We were interested in the effect that internal marketing policies have in the companies' industries in terms of developing competitive advantages and how these are positively reflected in terms of levels of performance, profitability, and the achievement of goals. This was measured by Turker (2009) through seven items, while a six-item scale was used by Sarkis et al. (2010) to measure IECR. SIMO, meanwhile, was measured with a nine-item scale by Papadas et al. (2017). According to some arguments, competitive advantage can be measured using subjective data, so this study measured it using the six questions in Table 2. Finally, perceived financial performance was measured using five items in Table 2 relative to the firms' stated objectives (Park et al., 2012).

3.2.3. Non-response bias

Possible non-response bias was investigated using the method recommended by Armstrong and Overton (1977). The data set was divided into two halves based on the median return date, and the answers of early and late respondents were compared. The rationale for this procedure is that late respondents may more resemble the non-respondents than the early respondents. Based on t-test analyses, however, no significant differences were found between early and late respondents in terms of the key measures of the study. Thus, non-response bias does not seem to be a concern.

3.2.4. Common method bias

We used Harman's one-factor test to investigate the issue of common method variance. The basic assumption of this technique is that if a substantial degree of common method variance is present, either a single factor will emerge from the factor analysis or one general factor will account for most covariance among the measures. After applying this test in our study, common method variance did not appear to be a problem, since the first factor did not account for the majority of variance (it was only 31.17%).

3.2.5. Social-desirability bias

Questionnaire-based research is often subject to socially desirable responses (SDR), which reflects participants' tendencies to provide responses with respect to accepted norms. Today, an internal-marketing-oriented company might be perceived as desirable, and therefore SDR may potentially affect answers to a questionnaire like ours. To investigate any potential confounding effects, we correlated the SDR scale with the SIMO, CA, and FP scales using the

same methodology used by, for example, Riefler et al. (2012). Extremely low, non-significant correlations were found for SDR with both the overall SIMO score ($r=0.04$, $p>0.05$) and the individual SIMO items, with correlations ranging from 0.02 to 0.13 with $p>0.05$. Similar results were found in correlations for SDR with both the overall CA score ($r=0.8$, $p>0.05$) and the individual CA items, with correlations ranging from -0.01 to 0.15 and $p>0.05$. Regarding the correlations of SDR with FP, while some of them were significant, all were relatively low, both for the overall FP score ($r=0.16$, $p<0.05$) and the individual FP items, with correlations ranging from 0.09 ($p>0.1$) to 0.19 ($p<0.05$).

We also performed a partial correlation analysis between the relevant composite variables to further investigate the issue, and we found that the correlation pattern did not change (it remained almost identical) after controlling for SDR. The results indicated that a company's environment plays a role in the respondents' assessments, further reducing the possibility of bias within a company's internal environment. We carefully avoided direct questions about the consequences of corporate internal marketing practices on the employees. In summary, there is no evidence to support that social desirability bias is an issue in our results.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model assessment

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the psychometric properties of all latent construct measures. The measurement model fits the data well ($\chi^2=1466.739$, $df=725$, $p<0.001$, $RMSEA=0.070$, $CFI=0.949$, $SRMR=0.059$). Construct validity and reliability were also established, as indicated by (a) high Cronbach's alpha coefficients (0.866–0.939), (b) satisfactory indicator reliabilities (0.456–0.917) and item-to-construct loadings (0.610–0.912), and (c) good composite reliabilities (0.870–0.939) and average variance extracted values (0.531–0.751) that exceeded the conventional threshold levels. In addition, discriminant validity for all constructs was also established, as demonstrated by AVE values that exceeded the corresponding squared correlations for all construct pairs. Table 2 provides an overview of the measurement model results, while Table 3 shows the scales' relevant means, standard deviations, and inter-construct correlations.

As demonstrated by AVE values exceeding corresponding squared correlations for all construct pairs. Table 2 provides an overview of the measurement model results, while Table 3 shows the scales' relevant means, standard deviations, and inter construct correlations.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

A structural model reflecting the conceptual framework shown in Fig. 1 was estimated with

AMOS 23. We developed the interaction term needed to test the moderating hypothesis (H4) using residual centering (Lance, 1988). More specifically, we (a) constructed the product of the composites of SIMO with IMA (SIMO \times IMO), (b) orthogonalized this product term by retaining the residuals that were estimated after regressing it based on the original variables used to construct it, and (c) used these residuals as the interaction term in the structural model after fixing the error variances at levels determined by the original variables' reliabilities (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos, 2017). This approach ensured unbiased estimates of the unique interactive effects, and it did not adversely affect the estimation of first-order effects, thus eliminating multicollinearity concerns (Little et al., 2006).

The estimated structural model fits the data well ($\chi^2=1213.233$, $df=469$, $p<0.001$, $RMSEA=0.070$, $CFI=0.956$, $SRMR=0.065$). Individual path estimates corroborate the findings of prior research into the strategic internal marketing orientation. More specifically, CR has a strong positive effect on SIMO ($\beta=0.835$, $t=12.892$, $p<0.001$), so does IECR ($\beta=0.123$, $t=2.044$, $p<0.05$). Our findings also support previous research into competitiveness, because CA has a positive effect on FP ($\beta=0.378$, $t=4.856$, $p<0.001$). Focusing on the main construct of our study, SIMO exerts a significant effect on CA ($\beta=0.220$, $t=3.190$, $p<0.001$), and it has an indirect positive effect on FP through CA ($\beta_{SGMO\rightarrow CA\rightarrow FP}=0.083$, $p<0.05$). Given that the direct effect of SIMO on FP is not significant ($p=0.690$), we can infer that CA mediates the impact of SIMO on FP. In addition to the (expected) positive influences of SIMO, the results also support the moderating hypothesis by generating significant estimates in the expected direction for the SIMO \times IMO interaction term on CA. More specifically, IMO intensifies the positive effect of SIMO on competitiveness ($\beta_{SGMO\times IGMO\rightarrow CA}=0.168$, $t=2.123$, $p<0.05$).

Significantly, these estimates were obtained after applying three types of statistical controls on the performance outcomes (CA and FP) in the model in order to rule out alternative explanations and minimize sources of variance in the dependent variables that may be attributable to firm characteristics. Specifically, we included measures of (a) company age (in years) and (b) company size (number of employees), as well as a dummy variable for (c) firm sector to account for industry-related differences. An overview of the model's estimation results is presented in Table 4. Although the structural model's estimation supports all our hypotheses, we also conducted a conditional process analysis using bootstrap estimation (Hayes, 2013; PROCESS Model 1 and 4; 5000 resamples) to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals for the hypothesized effects and to probe the hypothesized interaction at different levels of moderation.

After finding support for our moderation hypothesis (i.e., the interaction effect was significant and in the expected direction) when using this

alternative estimation approach (PROCESS Model 1), proposed by Johnson and Neyman (1936), namely we probed the interaction using the analysis “floodlight” analysis (Spiller et al., 2013).

Table 2: Measurement model; the arithmetic mean related to the contribution of internal marketing policies in gaining competitive advantages

N°	Phrases	Standard loadings(λ)	Average Arithmetic	Standard Deviation
Company Responsibility (CR)				
1	Many companies today recognize that motivating employees also requires a level of respect between management and workers	0.877	4.89	1.69
2	Environmental dynamics and increasing competition lead companies to become more competitive and to be sensitive about customer's satisfaction	0.853	4.39	1.93
3	Our company is investing in better employee life programs.	0.776	3.94	2.01
4	Our company engages in activities aimed at protecting and improving product quality.	0.714	4.56	1.85
5	Our company encourages its employees to participate in volunteer activities.	0.669	4.44	1.93
6	Our company is investing in better employee life programs.	0.796	4.59	1.94
7	Our company participates in educating employees about the importance of the company continuing in the market	0.863	4.82	1.86
Strategic Internal Marketing Orientation (SIMO)				
01	I well understand the tasks required to be done and the expected performance level to achieve	0.809	4.41	0.521
02	The institution concerned with staff training and skills development	0.879	4,11	0.8590
03	The Salary I get in the institution is commensurate with the volume of work that I do	0.778	3.78	1.067
04	Workers who make an outstanding effort to perform their jobs are rewarded	0.798	3.82	1.076
05	If I have a problem with my job, I can easily contact my immediate boss	0.807	4.44	0.6190
06	There is a general feeling that work in the institution is carried out according to the spirit of the one team	0.879	4.03	1.092
07	I feel satisfied at work because the position I am currently holding matches my qualifications and experience	0.897	4.34	.7870
08	The institution periodically publishes marketing information among employees	0.801	3.46	1.022
Competitive Advantage (CA)				
01	The company has a great ability to control its total costs thanks to the training programs available to workers.	0.789	3.77	0.985
02	The ease of communication between the president and subordinates in the institution has clearly contributed to solving the problems facing the company in a timely manner.	0.887	4.54	0.743
03	The spirit of the one team that workers feel is an important factor that contributed to the development of the company's performance.	0.876	4.33	.9750
04	The institution's dissemination of all marketing information among employees greatly improved the level of their performance.	0.789	3.89	1.089
05	The great level of interaction between the company's workers and customers is clearly reflected in the company's distinction.	0.803	3.92	1.003
06	Employees holding positions commensurate with their qualifications and experience have positively reflected on the institution's ability to excel.	0.873	4.07	0901
Financial Performance (FP)				
01	Company's profitability	0.909	4.19	1.35
02	Sales growth	0.869	4.31	1.38
03	Company's economic results	0.958	4.32	1.42
04	Profit before tax	0.886	4.23	1.41
05	Market share	0.667	4.63	1.28
General mean			4.08	.949

Notes: All items were measured on 7-point scales, anchored at 1=“strongly disagree” and 7=“strongly agree” (apart from FP that was anchored at 1=“much worse” and 7=“much better”). α: Cronbach's alpha, CR: Composite reliability, AVE: Average variance extracted

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CR	4.51	1.589	<i>0.899</i>					
2. IECR	4.43	1.241	0.716	<i>0.725</i>				
3. SIMO	3.97	1.600	0.729	0.721	<i>0.787</i>			
4. CA	5.02	1.199	0.440	0.324	0.395	<i>0.750</i>		
5. FP	4.31	1.217	0.208	0.203	0.216	0.405	<i>0.863</i>	
6. IMO	3.29	1.487	0.680	0.651	0.722	0.412	0.172	<i>0.783</i>

Italics on the diagonal refer to the square root of the average variance extracted from the respective construct. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4: Model estimation results

Structural relationships		Path estimate		t-value	Hypothesis	Result
Hypothesized paths CR → SIMO		0.835		12.892***	H1 (+)	Support
SIMO → CA	IECR → SIMO	0.123	2.044**		H2 (+)	Support
	H3a (+)	Support	SIMO → FP (<i>direct effect</i>)	0.026	0.399	H3b (+)
			0.378	4.856***		
		SIMO → CA → FP (<i>indirect effect</i>)		0.083	p < 0.05	
		SIMO × IMO → CA	0.168	2.123**	H4 (+)	Support
Controls						
	Company's Size → CA	0.011	0.151			
	Company's Size → FP	0.253	3.676***			
	Company's Age → CA	0.095	1.323			
	Company's Age → FP	-0.122	-1.786			
Sector (reference: Construction-Remaking)						
	FMCI → CA	0.166	1.672			
	FMCI → FP	0.014	0.143			
	Services → CA	0.079	0.828			
	Services → FP	0.069	0.758			
	Industrial Products → CA	-0.071	-0.770			
	Industrial Products → FP	0.024	0.275			
	Wholesaler/Retailer → CA	0.160	1.811			
	Wholesaler/Retailer → FP	0.009	0.102			
Model fit						
χ ² = 1213.233, df = 469, RMSEA = 0.070, CFI = 0.956, SRMR = 0.065						

Notes: The significance of the indirect effect was estimated with bootstrapping 95% confidence interval based on 5000 bootstrap samples (e.g., Hayes, 2009). Although the indirect effect size is small, it can be considered important given its statistical significance, the fact that it is essentially the product of two effects (Kenny, 2014) and is obtained on top of a series of controls on the dependent variable. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.05

Given that our moderator (IMA) is a continuous “arbitrary” variable, we used the Johnson–Neyman technique for identifying regions in the range of the moderator where the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is and is not significant (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos, 2018; Hayes and Matthes, 2009). The border between these two regions is known as the Johnson–Neyman point. As shown in Table 5, the Johnson–Neyman point for p<0.05 (t=1.97) for the IMA moderator occurs at a value of 2.97 (i.e., in the range of the 1–7 scale).

This indicates that higher SIMO levels result in significantly higher CA outcomes than lower SIMO levels for all IMA values above 2.97, but not for values below this point. This is further illustrated in the graph of Fig. 2 (Panel A), where the different lines depict the association between IMA and CA at different levels of SIMO. We can see how the slopes are positive and become steeper at higher levels of SIMO as the level increases.

Indicating once more the significant moderating effect of IMO in the SIMO→CA relationship. The result is also illustrated in Fig 2 (Panel B), where the 95% bootstrapping CIs for the effect include only positive values above the Johnson–Neyman point.

We also received support for our mediation hypothesis through this alternative estimation approach (PROCESS Model 4). SIMO has a significant total effect on FP (c=0.159, t-value=3.323). On introducing.

We also received support for our mediation hypothesis through this alternative estimation approach (PROCESS Model 4). SIMO has a significant total effect on FP (c=0.159, t-value=3.323). On introducing.

CA as a mediator, then the effect of SIMO on FP turns non-significant (c’=0.057, t-value=1.171), while its indirect effect via CA achieves a point

estimate of 0.102 (a*b). Since its confidence interval contains no zeros, the indirect effect is significant and CA mediates the influence of SIMO on FP (Table 6).

Table 5: Conditional effects and bootstrapping 95% confidence intervals

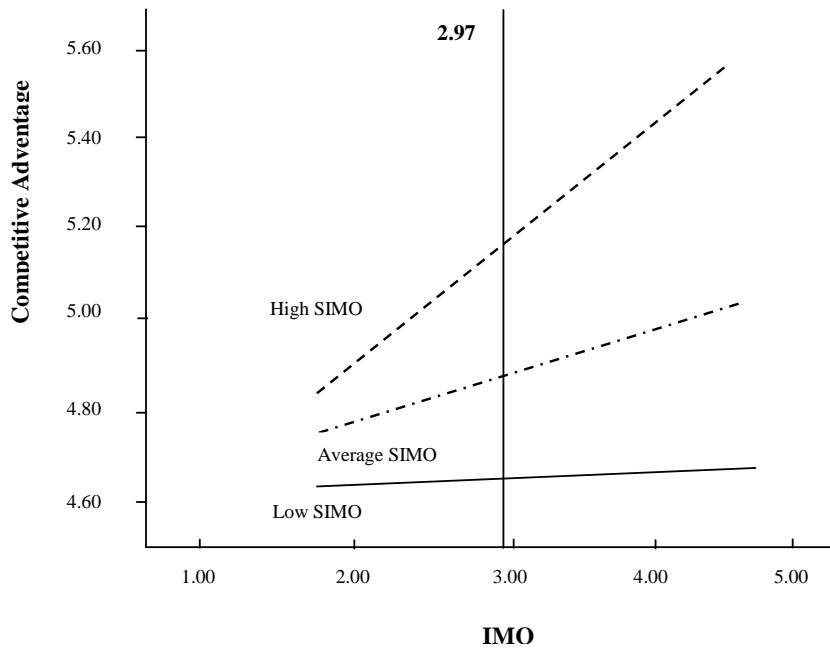
IMO	Conditional effect of SIMO on CA	
	β _{SIMO→CA}	p [LLCI: ULCI]
1.00	0.01	0.88 [-0.16: 0.19]
1.29	0.32	0.70 [-0.13: 0.19]
1.57	0.05	0.53 [-0.10: 0.20]
1.85	0.07	0.37 [-0.08: 0.21]
2.14	0.09	0.24 [-0.06: 0.22]
2.42	0.10	0.14 [-0.04: 0.24]
2.71	0.12	0.08 [-0.02: 0.26]
2.97	0.14	0.05 [0.00: 0.27]
3.00	0.14	p < 0.05 [0.01: 0.28]
3.28	0.16	p < 0.05 [0.02: 0.29]
3.57	0.17	p < 0.05 [0.03: 0.31]
3.85	0.19	p < 0.05 [0.04: 0.34]
4.14	0.21	p < 0.01 [0.05: 0.37]
4.42	0.23	p < 0.01 [0.06: 0.39]
4.71	0.24	p < 0.01 [0.07: 0.42]
5.00	0.26	p < 0.01 [0.07: 0.45]
5.28	0.28	p < 0.01 [0.08: 0.48]
5.57	0.29	p < 0.01 [0.09: 0.51]
5.85	0.32	p < 0.01 [0.09: 0.54]
6.14	0.33	p < 0.01 [0.09: 0.57]
6.43	0.35	p < 0.01 [0.10: 0.60]
6.71	0.37	p < 0.01 [0.10: 0.64]

Bootstrapping confidence intervals estimated with 5000 resamples. Effects based on normal theory tests (two-tailed)

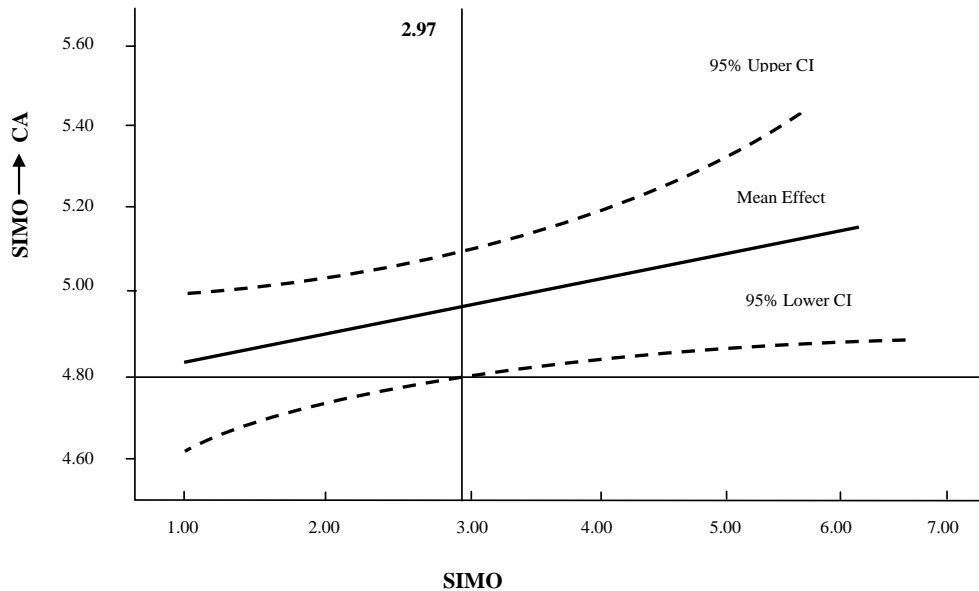
Table 6: Mediation effect and bootstrapping 95% confidence intervals

Direct and Indirect effects of SIMO and CA on FP			
	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
SIMO	0.057 [-0.039:0.156]	0.102* [0.058:0.165]	0.159** [0.062:0.257]
CA	0.410*** [0.272:0.557]	- 0.410*** [0.272:0.557]	

Notes: bootstrapping confidence intervals estimated with 5000 resamples. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05



(a)



(b)

Fig. 2: A: Regression Lines with Johnson Neyman Point B: Estimated Effect with Confidence Bands

5. Discussion

Given the importance of sustainability in today’s competitive marketplace, this research makes a three-fold contribution: 1) it introduces a rigorous research methodology that demonstrates for the first time that the application of a strategic approach for internal marketing has a positive relationship with competitive advantage; 2) by incorporating prior research in the field, it provides a contemporary framework for strategic internal marketing based on real-life business practices and builds upon earlier studies about its drivers and outcomes; and 3) in testing the IMO scale as a moderator of the SIMO–CA relationship, we revealed the moderating role that people play in the development of sustained

competitive advantage. These results lead us to a series of useful theoretical and managerial implications.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Since this study represents a novel attempt to a) examine the meaning of strategic internal marketing for competitiveness and b) empirically test this relationship under the prism of internal marketing actions, this work makes a significant contribution to developments in the field of external/internal marketing. Overall, our results offer four main propositions for theoretical advancement. First, our study extends the findings of earlier studies into the drivers of strategic internal marketing. In addition,

by examining the impact of IECR on SIMO, this study provides additional support for the strategic role that company employees play in creating a long-term marketing strategy.

Second, our results build on previous studies into the internal marketing and competitiveness relationship by providing an updated and comprehensive investigation into the performance implications of a marketing strategy and the role of company employees. Importantly, since past empirical studies have relied on the performance implications of activities related to the internal marketing mix, our study goes beyond this stream of research to reveal, for the first time, the impact that a holistic internal marketing approach has on competitive advantage, thus addressing a critical gap in the research literature.

Third, the confirmation of the mediating effect of SIMO on financial performance through CA provides support for previous related studies (Baker and Sinkula, 2005) about the impact of such strategies on performance outcomes. Our study also goes a step further by emphasizing the dual positive effect that strategic internal marketing has on both competitiveness and FP. In other words, our findings build upon internal marketing theory by highlighting the importance of strategically spreading the company's internal marketing culture among employees if a company is to achieve a competitive advantage, better financial performance, and higher sales to increase profitability.

Fourth, based on these findings, we explored the moderating effect of IMO on the SIMO-CA relationship. Although there is prior research about the positive relationship between corporate marketing strategies and competitiveness, the interplay between strategic internal marketing and competitiveness has not been studied in the past. Considering that a contemporary marketing strategy should encompass the whole company at every level, our findings further reinforce this view by exposing the moderating role of IM. Notably, our study sheds some light on the value of examining the impact of different elements of an internal marketing strategy on competitiveness. While the research in this domain is limited to a specific aspect of an internal marketing strategy and its marketing/financial implications, our results suggest that each of the two dimensions of an internal marketing orientation can have a joint positive impact on competitive advantage and financial performance (Fig. 2).

5.2. Managerial implications

Encouraging employees to embrace internal marketing, given its positive relationship with achieving a competitive advantage and greater profitability for the company, can be employed as a strategic business tool. For example, offering initiatives to employees, such as providing training and qualifications to distinguished employees results in a skilled workforce who is loyal to the company.

Our results also show that the decision-makers in a company may be an antecedent to an internal marketing strategy, although the latter requires a different approach to be taken because it involves tasks related to strategic marketing and the creation of competitive advantages. In practice, this means that a policy may be insufficient for the design and implementation of an internal marketing strategy.

Concerning company management, major pressure for changing marketing practices may come from different groups. For instance, the staff may consider the commitments and characteristics of a company and question whether it meets its social responsibilities. Our findings suggest that it is in the interests of corporate officials to drive the adoption of strategic internal marketing practices because they positively affect performance. As such, managers should transform these pressures into win-win opportunities for their companies, because job satisfaction and internal marketing support career excellence.

Third, our empirically tested conceptual framework provides managers with a comprehensive view of how internal marketing initiatives can achieve competitive advantages that differentiate a company. More specifically, since an internal marketing strategy may not be easily engendered, based on our results, strategic internal marketing activities, such as developing employee performance and maximizing the cost-effectiveness of their jobs, need to be based on a modern marketing vision for performance, job satisfaction, internal marketing, organizational culture, internal interaction, motivation, and training. Personnel should be trained and qualified to increase retention rates and motivated through initiatives. The company environment should also encourage communication. In this sense, internal marketing can be considered an element of modern marketing, and it has become a real source for achieving sustainable competitive advantages. This finding has implications for executives seeking to catalyze change within their corporate strategy. Companies that embrace sustainability need to make drastic changes in their strategic marketing practices in order to develop an internal marketing orientation and ultimately achieve business excellence and superior performance.

Human capital can be considered one of the most important intangible assets, including the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of employees. Consequently, the managers of this capital need to act competitively. One major approach to this is internal marketing, which treats the employees of a company as customers whose needs should be met. Managers must understand that their employees' satisfaction is sometimes more important than that of their external customers. The philosophy behind internal marketing asserts that the employees of an organization represent an internal market, so a value chain exists inside the company, and this is important to meeting the needs of both the internal and external customers. When the internal

customers of a company are satisfied, they perform better and have better interactions with external customers. Internal marketing and the role it plays in companies has not attracted much interest in Algeria to date. The authors, therefore, recommend that the influence of internal marketing on the quality of services, customer satisfaction, and the achievement of competitive advantage be further studied, because the quality of services is highly dependent upon the relationship between employees and customers.

6. Conclusions

Our results should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. First, internal marketing practices are increasingly recognized as being context-specific. In Algeria, companies have their own unique characteristics (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014). Marketing capability has an insignificant effect on marketing performance, and this finding differs from those of previous studies that have concluded otherwise. For example, the success of corporate marketing performance is determined by marketing capabilities and marketing resources. Our findings also differ from those of previous studies that found that companies seek to adopt specific strategies that lead to achieving predefined goals. Our research also suggests that marketing capability has a significant effect on gaining a competitive advantage, which is in line with the previous research of Cohen and Kaimenakis (2007), who found that intangible resources have far greater value for the company than tangible assets. Intangible resources represent a crucial concept within a business, and companies need to manage them well to achieve a competitive advantage.

Further research could investigate other drivers of CA and their significance in relation to strategic internal marketing. In addition, further research could focus on investigating the costs involved in pursuing an internal marketing strategy (e.g., the cost of motivating employees) and the effect it has on corporate performance. This will help companies to achieve competitive advantages at a minimal cost. Furthermore, the relationship that SIMO has with CA offers evidence to companies about ways to achieve CA, although this is by no means definitive. CA and other general performance outcomes are affected by several factors, and they cannot be fully captured in a single study. Further research could investigate other drivers of CA and their relative significance.

From a methodological perspective, we specified the IECR scale as a reflective measurement model relying on the specific Jarvis criteria (i.e., commonly shared themes, possibly similar antecedents and consequences, and important and significant inter-item correlations) (Jarvis et al., 2003). Our decision was also based on examples of how previous researchers have specified their scales in comparable research contexts (Sarkis et al., 2010). However, given that the IECR scale could be also viewed as meeting some criteria for formative measurement model specification, it would be

worthwhile for future research efforts to thoroughly investigate what might be the best model specification for this construct. Based on previous studies, we suggest that a lack of resources could be a potential driver for both SIMO and IMO since investment in employees is often considered a useful expenditure with a long-term payback.

The findings of this research highlight the importance of a company creating a spirit of responsibility in order to increase revenues and achieve competitive advantages by caring for employees through motivational and educational processes and encouraging employees to believe in the company's products and services. This research demonstrates that marketing capabilities should be aimed at enhancing competitive advantages by creating additional value for customers and employees.

Finally, given that the overarching aim of any company is to achieve competitive advantages and improve financial performance, future studies should also strive to develop a standard objective measure of performance for determining the extent of a company's financial improvement, such as by analyzing the relationship between internal and external marketing and their impacts on employee performance within the company. This could help identify where a marketing strategy has the most substantive impacts and allow comparisons of the importance of internal marketing for achieving competitive advantages. Researchers may also be interested in discovering whether internal marketing is important to achieving competitive advantages and whether it pays off in terms of a company's financial performance.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Aghazadeh H, Estiri M, and Osanlou B (2007). Competitiveness of Iranian enterprises. *The Economic Research*, 7(3): 38-58.
- Armstrong JS and Overton TS (1977). Estimating nonresponse bias in mail surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(3): 396-402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224377701400320>
- Baker WE and Sinkula JM (2005). Market orientation and the new product paradox. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 22(6): 483-502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2005.00145.x>
- Ballantyne D, Christopher M, and Payne A (1995). Improving the quality of services marketing: Service (re) design is the critical link. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 11(1-3): 7-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.1995.9964326>
- Berry L and Parasurman A (2000). Service marketing starts from within. In: Varey RJ and Lewis BR (Eds.), *Internal marketing: directions for management*: 176-177. Routledge, London, UK. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203207352.ch11>
PMCID:PMC17257

- Cahill DJ (1995). The managerial implications of the learning organization: A new tool for internal marketing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 9(4): 43-51. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876049510094513>
- Cano CR and Sams D (2009). The importance of an internal marketing orientation in social services. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 14(3): 285-295. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.357>
- Cohen S and Kaimenakis N (2007). Intellectual capital and corporate performance in knowledge-intensive SMEs. *The Learning Organization*, 14(3): 241-262. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09696470710739417>
- Dangelico RM and Vocalelli D (2017). "Green Marketing": An analysis of definitions, strategy steps, and tools through a systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 165: 1263-1279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.07.184>
- Davvetas V and Diamantopoulos A (2017). "Regretting your brand-self?" The moderating role of consumer-brand identification on consumer responses to purchase regret. *Journal of Business Research*, 80: 218-227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.04.008>
- Davvetas V and Diamantopoulos A (2018). "Should have I bought the other one?" Experiencing regret in global versus local brand purchase decisions. *Journal of International Marketing*, 26(2): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jim.17.0040>
- de Farias SA (2010). Internal marketing (IM): A literature review and research propositions for service excellence. *Brazilian Business Review*, Fucape Business School, 7(2): 99-115. <https://doi.org/10.15728/bbr.2010.7.2.6>
- Foreman SK and Money AH (1995). Internal marketing: Concepts, measurement and application. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 11(8): 755-768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.1995.9964388>
- Gronroos C (2000). *Service management and marketing: A customer relationship management approach*. John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, USA.
- Gummesson E (1991). Marketing-orientation revisited: The crucial role of the part-time marketer. *European Journal of Marketing*, 25(2): 60-75. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569110139166>
- Hayes AF (2009). Beyond Baron and Kenny: Statistical mediation analysis in the new millennium. *Communication Monographs*, 76(4): 408-420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750903310360>
- Hayes AF (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford Press, New York, USA.
- Hayes AF and Matthes J (2009). Computational procedures for probing interactions in OLS and logistic regression: SPSS and SAS implementations. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41(3): 924-936. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.3.924> PMID:19587209
- Hogg G and Carter S (2000). Employee attitudes and responses to internal marketing. In: Varey RJ and Lewis BR (Eds.), *Internal marketing: Directions for management*: 109-123. Routledge, London, UK. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203207352.ch7>
- Jarvis CB, MacKenzie SB, and Podsakoff PM (2003). A critical review of construct indicators and measurement model misspecification in marketing and consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(2): 199-218. <https://doi.org/10.1086/376806>
- Jennings P and Beaver G (1997). The performance and competitive advantage of small firms: A management perspective. *International Small Business Journal*, 15(2): 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242697152004>
- Johnson PO and Neyman J (1936). Tests of certain linear hypotheses and their application to some educational problems. *Statistical Research Memoirs*, 1: 57-93.
- Kenny DA (2014). *Mediation: Effect size of the indirect effect and the computation of power*. Available online at: <http://davidakenny.net/cm/mediate.htm>
- Kotler P (2003). *Marketing management: The millennium edition*. 11th Edition, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, USA.
- Lance CE (1988). Residual centering, exploratory and confirmatory moderator analysis, and decomposition of effects in path models containing interactions. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 12(2): 163-175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014662168801200205>
- Lefebvre RC (2011). An integrative model for social marketing. *Journal of Social Marketing*, 1(1): 54-72. <https://doi.org/10.1108/204267611111104437>
- Lings I (1999). Balancing internal and external market orientations. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(4): 239-263. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870342>
- Little TD, Bovaird JA, and Widaman KF (2006). On the merits of orthogonal zing powered and product terms: Implications for modeling interactions among latent variables. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 13(4): 497-519. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328007sem1304_1
- Lučić A (2020). Measuring sustainable marketing orientation-Scale development process. *Sustainability*, 12(5): 1734. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12051734>
- McDonagh P and Prothero A (2014). Sustainability marketing research: Past, present and future. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30(11-12): 1186-1219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.943263>
- Papadas KK, Avlonitis GJ, and Carrigan M (2017). Green marketing orientation: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Business Research*, 80: 236-246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.05.024>
- Papadas KK, Avlonitis GJ, Carrigan M, and Piha L (2019). The interplay of strategic and internal green marketing orientation on competitive advantage. *Journal of Business Research*, 104: 632-643. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.009>
- Park HS, Auh S, Maher AA, and Singhapakdi A (2012). Marketing's accountability and internal legitimacy: Implications for firm performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(11): 1576-1582. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.02.042>
- Podnar K and Golob U (2007). CSR expectations: The focus of corporate marketing. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 12(4): 326-340. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563280710832498>
- Porter M (1999). *La concurrence*. Editions Dunod, Paris, France: 213-214.
- Riefler P, Diamantopoulos A, and Siguaw JA (2012). Cosmopolitan consumers as a target group for segmentation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 43(3): 285-305. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2011.51>
- Sarkis J, Gonzalez-Torre P, and Adenso-Diaz B (2010). Stakeholder pressure and the adoption of environmental practices: The mediating effect of training. *Journal of Operations Management*, 28(2): 163-176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2009.10.001>
- Spiller SA, Fitzsimons GJ, Lynch JG, and McClelland GH (2013). Spotlights, floodlights, and the magic number zero: Simple effects tests in moderated regression. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50(2): 277-288. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.12.0420>
- Turker D (2009). Measuring corporate social responsibility: A scale development study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85(4): 411-427. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9780-6>

Vieira VA (2010). Antecedents and consequences of market orientation: A Brazilian meta-analysis and an international

mega-analysis. BAR-Brazilian Administration Review, 7: 40-58. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1807-76922010000100004>