

An Empirical Investigation of Brand Loyalty Behavior among Hotel Employees in Northern Malaysia

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Abstract

Employee brand loyalty is essential to all organizations as it could translate into high organizational performance. In order to encourage employees to exhibit loyalty behavior, it has been argued that organizations need to create an environment that is perceived as positive for performance. As such, this paper reports the findings of a study conducted in two hotels to examine the impact of internal market orientation on employee brand loyalty behavior. The findings of this study indicates that only internal intelligence dissemination has an impact on employee brand loyalty behavior.

Keywords: internal market orientation, employee loyalty, employee brand loyalty behavior.

1.0 Introduction

Customer retention and intensification of the service component in the total firm offering a great value for sustainable competitive advantage. Previous work in marketing emphasizes more on customer generation. Therefore, the concept of market orientation was discussed in describing the relationship between the company philosophy and actions to company's performance. Nevertheless, with regard to customer retention, greater responsibilities lie in the hands of the company's employees, especially those who are in direct contact with the customers. They are commonly known as boundary spanners.

However, to date, the research on explaining the phenomena of the role of boundary spanners in customer retention is lacking (Salniza, 2007). If any, disparate work is found in the human resource literature where the focus is more on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit. On the other hand, there are studies being done within the scope of service marketing which discuss the issue of relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. While discussing those issues, service marketing scholars especially Berry (1981) proposed the concept of internal marketing. This concept focuses on the contribution of organization's employees in the effort of delivering value to customer. Nonetheless, the development of the knowledge in internal marketing is still at the stage of infancy. This is evident by the work of Gounaris (2006) and Lings and Greenly (2005) in the development of the concept and measurement of internal market orientation (IMO). Hence, further study in this area is imperative.

In addition, though studies on individual performance or extra-role behaviors which focus on behaviors that are targeted at individuals within the organization itself (ex. Vigoda-Gadot, 2007) are plenty, studies that look into extra-role behaviors targeted at external individuals are insufficient. Brief and Motowidlo (1986) suggested that in studying extra-role behaviors, the focus should not only be on individuals within the organization but it should also be targeted at external individuals such as the clients of the organization. Therefore, the study posits that employee loyalty behavior directed at the customers will lead to high customer retention.

In lieu of the scarcity of study in this area, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the findings from a study that examines the relationship between internal market orientation and employee brand loyalty behavior. Hence, this paper is structured in such a way that firstly the literatures pertaining to this topic is discussed, followed by the research method, findings and discussion.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Employee Loyalty Behavior

Most organizations desire loyalty from their employees. Employee loyalty was found to provide many benefits to organizations because it was found that loyal employees are willing to do more than what the organization expects them to do so as to help the organization function more effectively and they often speak positively about the organizations to outsiders (e.g. Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). In fact, as pointed out by Powers (2000) employee loyalty is a concept that covers employee's willingness to remain with the organization, productivity that exceeds normal expectations, altruistic behavior and reciprocal behavior. Hence, employee loyalty behavior is defined as employee's extra role behavior that aims at satisfying customers' expectations.

Studies have shown that many organizational factors contribute to employee loyalty. In fact, practitioners also support the idea that engendering loyalty among employees is imperative (see Duboff & Heaton, 1999). This thesis gained full espousal both from academia and practitioners. As such, Sweetman (2001) found that employees will be loyal to the organization when employees trust the employer, received enough compensation, been treated fairly and been assigned suitable jobs by the employer. Besides monetary, job satisfaction and security, Wah (1999) however found that the employer should recognize the importance of personal and family life as to ensure the employee to be loyal to the organization.

The same idea is shared by practitioner, Mercer Consulting Group who asserted that compensation and rewards, work and organization design, information management, training, recruiting and infrastructure are key drivers to stimulate employee loyalty (see Duboff & Heaton, 1999). However, McGuinness (1998) who conducted a study in the nursing industry found employee loyalty can be fostered by participative decision making, effective/open communication, trust, career development, pay for productivity and flexible benefits.

Recognizing the importance of employee loyalty as the key to customer loyalty, employee loyalty cannot be taken for granted. Employee loyalty must be fostered and cultivated. In order to materialize this, thus it is vital for the company to be internally market oriented.

2.2 Employee Brand Loyalty

A company can perform effectively and achieve superior performance if its employees exhibit positive work behavior and try to meet the organization brand promise creatively at every customer touch point (Chiaburu & Lim, 2007; Henkel et al., 2007). In this study, employees' performance is conceptualized as employee brand loyalty behavior (EBLB) which is defined as employees' ability to exhibit loyalty behavior in upholding companies' brand image by assisting their peers, customers and the organization as a whole. This conceptualization of employee brand loyalty is based on the work of Organ (1996), Pappasolomou and Vrontis (2006), which attributed EBLB as a multi-dimensional concept consisting of employee loyalty to customers, loyalty to organization and lastly, loyalty to co-workers/peers.

King and Grace (2008) asserted that the central component of managing customer's brand experience and perceptions toward the brand is by effectively managing the employee in the organizations. Truly loyal employees normally work hard, stay late, go the extra mile to delight the customers and recommend their friends to work with their company (Sweetman, 2001).

The exhibition of these behaviors will make business successful. Employee brand loyalty behavior is a key link to growth in corporate value (Duboff & Heaton, 1999). In fact, they asserted that engendering loyalty among employees is imperative. In order to be able to build long term relationship with the customer, it is crucial for companies to build effective and long term relationship with the employees since they will serve the customers.

2.3 Internal Market Orientation

Internal marketing concept has been in the main stream of marketing management literature due to its important place to the role of employees in the organizations. The literature regarded employees of the organization as integral to the organizational success. For instance, Berry (1981) stated that customer satisfaction can be achieved by fulfilling the needs of the employees. By satisfying the employees' need, the staff will be motivated and thus, serve the external customer needs better. In order to provide a superior value to external customers, an organization should focus on providing value to internal customer (Mohr-Jackson, 1991). Hence, employees are considered as the internal customer of the organization.

Internal market orientation (IMO) derives from the element of internal marketing as it involves communication among employees that will satisfy their wants and needs. IMO has been conceptualized as the managerial behaviors, which emphasize on managing the relationship between employee and employer (Lings & Greenley, 2005). According to Lings and Greenly (2005), IMO is a concept that links marketing and human resource management that holistically affects the perceptions of the employees on their work climate which in turn will be reflected in their performance. Similarly, Gounaris (2008) noted that IMO is a company orientation and a management commitment towards the employees. Taking into account both perspectives, it can be concluded that the role of manager is important in influencing the employees' behaviors which eventually will affect customer perceptions of the service offered by the employees (Hartline & Ferrell 1996).

Based on Lings (2004), a suggested conceptualization of IMO was developed into a hierarchical approach (Gounaris, 2006). The primary dimensions consist of three dimensions, which are internal market intelligence, internal intelligence dissemination, and response to intelligence. Internal market intelligence generation dimension is represented by identification of exchanges value, awareness of labour market conditions, segmenting internal market and targeting internal segment. Internal intelligence dissemination dimension is signified by two sub-dimensions, which are communication between managers and employees and communication among members. The third dimension of response to intelligence is characterized by job description, remuneration system, management concern and training (Gounaris, 2006).

Several studies have linked IMO with internal aspects of organizational performance such as employee retention (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991); employee motivation and morale (Piercy, 1995) and employee satisfaction (Bowen, 1996). Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) noted that managers' actions influence employees' attitude and behavior. Recent studies have also indicated that IMO is a significant dimension in explaining employee job satisfaction as well as moderating the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction (Gounaris, 2008).

2.3.1 Internal Market Intelligence

According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990), the external market orientation perspective of market intelligence refers to the organization obtaining information on customer needs, including obtaining information from other exogenous factors outside the organization system such as government regulation, technology, competitors and environmental forces. In other words, the focus of obtaining information is the market that involves end users, distributors and other external forces that affect customer needs and preferences. In addition, the information obtained is not limited to the current needs but also future needs of the customer since it is important for an organization to develop a new product offering.

On the other hand, internal market intelligence refers to the managers obtaining information from the internal market (Carter & Gray, 2007). Internal market in this aspect refers to the employees of the organization. The information generated includes identifying what are the benefits that employees search for from their jobs, what they are willing to give up in order to get something, and what the competitors are offering to the employees (Lings & Greenley, 2005). By having this information, management of an organization is able to develop jobs that are attractive to the existing and future employees as compared to the jobs offered by the competitors.

According to Huseman and Hatfield (1990), there are three objectives in gathering the information about employees. They are to identify employees' perception on their job inputs; to identify employees' perception of their job outputs such as what they receive; and to identify the perception of employees on the fairness of the exchange.

There are two types of information: formal and informal information. The generation of formal information includes formal written media such as questionnaires and job satisfaction surveys, face to face interactions such as interviews, performance appraisals and meetings. Meanwhile, the informal information generation is the daily encounters among employees and managers such as day to day needs and wants of staff and face-to-face interactions between employees and managers (Cobb, Samuels, & Sexton, 1998).

2.3.2 Internal Intelligence Dissemination

Kohli and Jaworski (1990) described the intelligence dissemination as an activity that distributes and shares the information obtained throughout the organization. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) suggested that dissemination of the information needs to be carried out effectively so that it will result in collaborative actions among all departments. Besides formal distribution of information, informal discussions and horizontal communication among employees are other means of disseminating market information (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

In the aspect of internal intelligence dissemination, internal communications among employees are central in disseminating information. A good communication system in an organization will provide opportunities for information sharing between managers and employees. Furthermore, the needs and wants of the employees can be identified and taken care of by the management. This will align the employees' attitude in meeting the organizational goals (Gronroos, 1990). A study by Johlke and Duhan (2001), indicated that employee performance especially the front line staff will improve if there is a two-way communication between managers and employees. Hence, internal intelligence dissemination places the importance of internal communication among the staff especially communication between the management and employees or supervisors and their subordinates.

2.3.3 Internal Response to Intelligence

Responsive to intelligence in the context of external market orientation is basically referred to responding to market needs (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). An action needs to be taken by an organization to respond to the market information received as a result of information gathered and disseminating the information throughout the organization. The response includes the whole departments in the organization besides marketing department to take action in the form of selecting target markets, designing, offering, producing, promoting and distributing products or services that meet current and potential needs (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

As for the internal responsiveness, an action needs to be taken as a result of generation of information and exchange of information between managers and employees on the wants and needs of employees (Carter & Gray, 2007). Past literature has suggested that since employees have sacrificed their time, energy and values for the organization, they expect the reward in terms of money. However, Huseman and Hatfield (1990) suggested that other rewards or benefits besides money such as status, recognition, and sense of accomplishment are important to be considered by the management. Specifically, it has been suggested that internal market orientation is about comparing inputs and outputs. Inputs are what the employees give to the organizations and outputs are what the employees receive as a result of the input. Inputs in this aspect include effort, loyalty to the organization and compliance to organizational politics. On the other hand, outputs include payment and fringe benefits and non-financial rewards such as sense of accomplishment, recognition of the work carried out and status (Huseman & Hatfield, 1990). Management, having taken this input and output into consideration, will expect higher performance from the employee. However, sometimes there is a conflict in terms of what the employees want and what the employer agrees to provide since employer is both the seller and buyer of the job market (Hales, 1994).

In brief, IMO has three main thrusts: 1) gathering the internal market intelligence; 2) disseminating the internal intelligence between employees and managers or supervisors; and 3) response to the intelligence by employing suitable strategies.

2.4 Internal Market Orientation and Employee Brand Loyalty Behavior

It has been proposed that the greater the internal market orientation of the firm, the higher the employee performance. By providing the needs and wants of the employees, managers are expected to have positive consequences from the employees to the organization (Lings & Greenley, 2005). Similarly, managers behaviors towards their employees will have an impact or influence the behaviors and attitudes of the employees (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). For instance, those employees that are satisfied with their job condition and motivation will be able to provide good customer service for the organization. This is basically, the main principle of the proponents of internal marketing researchers, whereby a happy and motivated employee will in turn provide excellent service delivery to customers (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Literature has also suggested that building a conducive internal environment such as helpfulness, friendliness, mutual trust and respect and considerate management behavior in the organization will have positive consequences to organizations' strategies such as creating customer satisfaction (Johnston, Parasuraman & Black, 1990; Ramaswami, 1996). Furthermore, it has been proposed that high levels of employee satisfaction will lead to higher employee loyalty since a happy and motivated employee will less likely to have the intention to leave the job as compared to a dissatisfied employee (Taylor & Cosenza, 1998).

Several studies have linked IMO with internal aspects of organizational performance such as employee retention (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991); employee motivation and morale (Piercy, 1995) and employee satisfaction (Bowen, 1996). Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) noted that managers' actions influence employees' attitude and behavior. Recent studies have also indicated that IMO is a significant dimension in explaining employee job satisfaction as well as moderating the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction (Gounaris, 2008). A study on the relationship between internal market orientation and organizational effectiveness of banks in Gorontalo, Indonesia found that information dissemination was the most influential variable that affected organizational effectiveness (Juanna, 2009).

Although there have been many studies conducted on market orientation perspectives and their relationship with business performance, those studies mainly focus on external customer of the organization. Studies on internal focus of customer that focus on the relationship between the company and the organization own employees' are still limited (Lings, 2004). Specifically, there is still lack of studies on the application of marketing tools to the employee market in the organization. It has been specified that organization should not only focus on satisfying customers to improve their organizational performance but creating satisfied and motivated employees are also essential to achieve higher organizational performance. Thus, this leads to the concept of internal market orientation (IMO), which is about "identifying and satisfying the wants and needs of employees as a prerequisite to satisfying the wants and needs of customers" (Lings, 2004, p.408). The role of IMO is to facilitate the relationship between organization and employees so that an effective relationship between employees and customers can be created.

Employees of the organization are also considered the internal customers (Mohr-Jackson, 1991). In order to provide a superior value to external customers, organization should focus on providing value to internal customers. A study on the relationship between market orientation and internal customer orientation has also been investigated (Conduit & Mavondo 2001). The sample of the study was from three Australian-based organizations. The study found out that internal customer orientation has a significant and positive relationship with market orientation. Conduit & Mavondo (2001) also study on the antecedents of internal customer orientation. There were mixed findings on antecedents of internal orientation. Those antecedents that support the relationship with internal orientation include management support, internal communication and personnel management.

Taylor and Cosenza (1998) specified that although money is considered an important motivator to retain employees, other factors such as the intensity of management interaction with the employees and higher responsibilities and control on decision that may affect the employees are crucial for employee loyalty. Other studies have also indicated that staff compliance should be examined as employee consequences of internal market orientation. Carter and Gray (2007) have proposed that the greater the internal market orientation of the organization, the higher the compliance, retention and satisfaction of the employees.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature discussed above, it can be concluded that internal market orientation adopted by organizations creates a positive work environment for the employees. In accordance to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), most people instantly feel a sense of obligation after someone treats them kindly, and hence often would like to return the favors. As such, when organizations treated the employees well, they will feel obligated to exhibit more loyalty towards the organizations. Therefore, the theoretical framework shown in

Figure 1 is proposed.

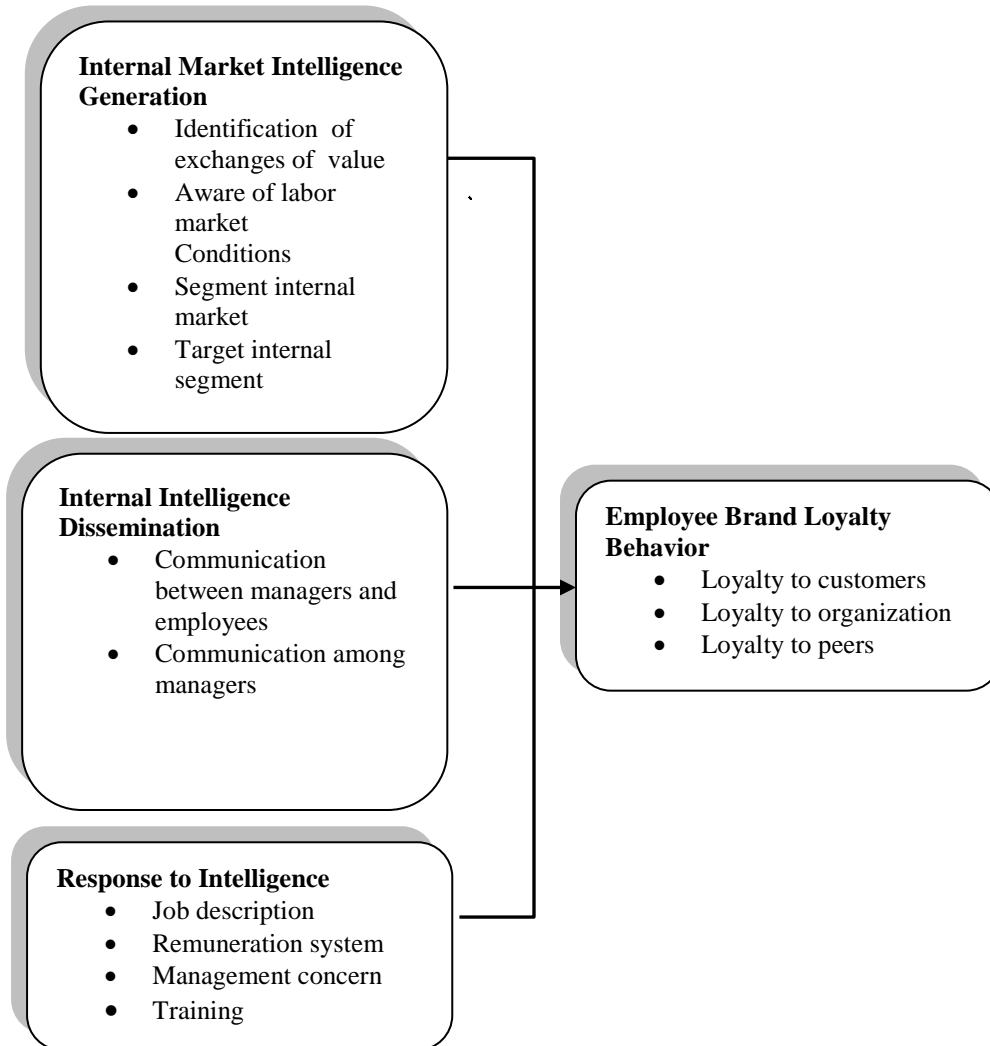


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional approach using survey questionnaires. This industry was studied for a couple of reasons. One of them is because the set up operation in this industry consists of clear demarcation between the front office operation and back office support. Hence, this provides appropriate set up for studying internal marketing. The second reason is that this industry, which is classified as a service industry, contains a large component of employees' contribution in customer evaluation of the company's service performance. There were 62 hotels identified in the region selected for this study. However, only 7 hotels were willing to cooperate and allow the researchers to distribute questionnaires to their employees. Based on the information given by the Human Resource Managers there are a total of 859 employees working for these 7 hotels.

Following the rule of thumb proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample required for this study is 266. Since the response rate for questionnaires in social science studies usually is between 20 to 30 percent, in order to get 266 respondents, 859 questionnaires were distributed. However, only 226 questionnaires were returned and usable for data analyses. In order to distribute the questionnaire, the hotel management personnel were contacted. After a brief discussion with the managers of each hotel, both indicated their willingness to help in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Hence, the managers were informed that the questionnaires were to be collected back after two weeks. At the end of period allocated, the completed questionnaires were collected from the two hotels.

4.2 Research Instrument

For the purpose of this study, the survey instrument was prepared in both English and Bahasa Malaysia. It was to facilitate the respondents in responding to the survey in which ever language that they feel comfortable with. In addition to that, in this study all measures use a six-point Likert scale for measuring each item. With a six-point Likert scale 1 was used to represent 'strongly disagree', 2 to represent 'disagree', 3 to represent 'slightly disagree', 4 to represent 'slightly agree', 5 to represent 'agree', and 6 to represent 'strongly agree'.

The dependent variable, employee loyalty, was measured using a modified scale initially intended to measure employee behaviors developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). This scale measures three aspects of employee behavior which are employee's organizational citizenship behavior that benefits other individuals, organizational citizenship behavior that benefits the organization, and employee's in-role behavior. For the purpose of this study, the scale was used to measure employee loyalty because this variable was operationalized as employee behavior that is beneficial to the organization, his/her colleagues, and the performance of his/her job. In all, this scale consists of 21 items.

In this study, internal market orientation is defined as activities that involve generating and exchanging information among members of the organization (Gounaris, 2006; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Hence, this variable was measured using a scale developed by Gounaris (2006). According to Gounaris (2006), internal market orientation consists of three primary dimensions which are internal market intelligence generation, internal intelligence dissemination and response to intelligence. There were a total of 43 items in this scale, whereby 17 items measured internal market generation, 9 items measured internal intelligence dissemination, and 17 items measured response to intelligence.

The Cronbach-alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the reliabilities of all measurement scales and the results is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients for the Variables of the Study

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach α
Employee brand loyalty		
Peers focused	7	.932
Customer focused	4	.923
Organizational focused	6	.864
Internal Market Intelligence Generation		
Identification of exchanges of value	5	.892
Aware of labor market conditions	4	.777
Internal market segmentation	4	.876
Internal segment targeting	4	.787
Internal Intelligence Dissemination		
Communication between managers and employees	5	.935
Communication among managers	4	.711
Response to intelligence		
Job description	4	.748
Remuneration system	5	.721
Management concern	4	.613
Training	4	.669

5.0 Findings

5.1 Respondents Profile

The respondents of this study were mainly Malay (93.8%), while other races only represented 1.7 percent of the sample. In general 50.9 percent of the respondents were male and 45.1 percent were female. A majority (58.0%) of the respondents has a high school education certificate (SPM). 22.1 percent has some kind of further education certificate, 10.6 percent has a diploma and only 4.9 percent has a bachelor's degree. The respondents also provide their age and the number of years of experience with their current organizations. The mean age of the respondents is $M=30.92$ years with a standard deviation of 8.86. The mean of total experience of the respondents is $M = 5.02$ years with a standard deviation of 5.54.

5.2 Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis on the internal market orientation variables (i.e. internal market intelligence generation, internal intelligence dissemination and response to intelligence) and employee brand loyalty was conducted to examine whether and how strongly the studied variables are related. Table 2 displays the inter correlations of the studied variables. Across the diagonal, moderate ($r = 0.607, p < 0.01$) to strong ($r = 0.882, p < 0.01$) correlations were found in the factors of employee brand loyalty, internal market intelligence generation, internal intelligence dissemination and response to intelligence.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlations among Main Variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4
1 Employee Brand Loyalty	4.18	.82	1			
2 Internal Market Intelligence Generation	4.24	.92	.711**	1		
3 Internal Intelligence Dissemination	4.38	.93	.805**	.882**	1	
4 Response to intelligence	3.92	.78	.607**	.790**	.778**	1

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

For the purpose of answering the research questions, multiple regression analysis was performed. In conducting multiple regression analysis, all four assumptions about the relationships between the dependent and the independent variables mainly normality, linearity, constant variance of the error terms and independence of the error terms (Hair et al., 1998) were tested, and results indicated that all these assumptions were met. In addition to that, the main concern of this study is to determine the relationship between internal market intelligence generation, dissemination and response and employee brand loyalty (EBLB). The results are shown in Table 3, and they show that only internal intelligence dissemination has a significant positive impact in the prediction of EBLB ($\beta=0.82, p < 0.001$). The adjusted R indicates that this variable explains 64 percent of the variation in EBLB.

Table 3: Regression Results between the Dimensions of Internal Market Orientation Variables and Employee Brand Loyalty

	Employee Brand Loyalty
Internal Market Intelligence Generation	.03
Internal Intelligence Dissemination	.82***
Response to intelligence	-.05
R ²	.65
Adjusted R ²	.64
F-value	135.33***

In order to clarify which of the organizational practices (sub-dimensions of IMO) have the greatest impact on each of the dimensions of EBLB, three more multiple regression analyses were performed. In each of this analysis, all sub-dimensions of IMO were entered as the independent variable, and the results are presented in Table 4.

The table shows that communications between managers and employees, and the availability of job description have a significant positive impact on all three EBLB dimensions. Besides that, EBLB that is focused on peers is also negatively influenced by internal segment targeting ($\beta=-0.21$, $p<0.05$), and positively influenced by communication among managers ($\beta=-0.19$, $p<0.05$). Finally, only EBLB that is focused on customer is significantly influenced by the remuneration system. Unfortunately the relationship is negative.

Table 4: Regression Results between Sub-dimensions of Internal Market Orientation Sub-dimensions and Sub-dimensions of Employee Brand Loyalty

Variables	Employee brand loyalty (β)		
	Peers focused	Customer focused	Organizational focused
Internal Market Intelligence Generation			
Identification of exchanges of value	-.058	-.060	.080
Aware of labor market conditions	-.045	.043	.208
Internal market segmentation	.166	.154	.075
Internal segment targeting	-.211*	-.143	-.134
Internal Intelligence Dissemination			
Communication between managers and employees	.560***	.678***	.268**
Communication among managers	.196*	.080	-.085
Response to intelligence			
Job description	.314***	.175*	.457***
Remuneration system	-.077	-.131*	.086
Management concern	-.051	.059	-.102
Training	-.029	-.099	-.066
R ²	.66	.66	.58
Adjusted R ²	.64	.65	.56

6.0 Discussions and Conclusions

Generally, the result of this study adds on to the limited knowledge of internal market orientation (IMO) and employee brand loyalty behavior (EBLB). Also, the study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between internal market orientation and employee brand loyalty in the context of hotel sector in Malaysia.

The objective of the study was to assess the relationship between the internal market intelligence generation, dissemination and response, and EBLB. The results of the study has indicated that the model significantly explain the variance of EBLB. However, only internal intelligence dissemination which has manifested the internal marketing communication significantly predicted the EBLB. The other two variables (i.e. internal market intelligence generation and response to intelligence) were not important in predicting employee loyalty behavior. This finding support that communication is the relevant means which people within and between department transfer and disseminate information (Carter & Gray, 2007; Johlke & Duhan, 2000). Also it echoes the notion of Groomroos (1990) who suggested that internal communication is central to the alignment of employee attitude with organizational goals.

Internal intelligence dissemination essentially is the communication that occurs within an organization, specifically, the communication between managers and employees or communication among co-workers. The finding of this has study suggested that in order for employees to exhibit behaviors that can benefit the customers, such as high quality service, there should be open communication between managers and employees. In fact, it is utmost important that the managers communicate to the employees the significance of their behaviors towards the customers on the overall performance of the organization. This will not only make them realize their roles in providing services to the customers, but it can also convey the importance of their jobs to the organization. Furthermore, another important aspect of the communication between managers and employees is the feedback given by managers regarding the performance of employees (van Vuuren, de Jong, & Seydel, 2007). Feedback is always required in order to improve performance. Without feedback, the employees will not know what they did right or wrong.

All these could contribute to the employee overall job satisfaction (Burton, Pathak, & Zigli, 1976; Callan, 1993) and organizational commitment (van Vuuren, de Jong, & Seydel, 2007) and eventually positive employee behavior, specifically employee loyalty behavior.

Besides that, communication among co-workers or members within the organization is also important. Communication between co-workers reinforces the communication with managers. Co-workers are individuals that are constantly along-side the employees. When the employees are having any kind of difficulty in the workplace, the first place that they refer to is their co-workers. Hence, co-workers can help each other in showing and promoting employee loyalty behavior, including employee loyalty behavior towards the customer.

Based on this finding, it can be implied that in order to engender positive employee behavior towards the customer, management must ensure that the communication climate within the organization is of high quality. Specifically, communication between managers and employees should happen as often as possible. Firstly, the managers must communicate to the employees the important aspects of work and work performance. This means managers must provide feedbacks to the employees regarding their performance. In addition to that, managers must also communicate information about the organization such as organizational performance and problems. This is also known as information sharing. According to Pfeffer (1998), information sharing is one of the practices of high-performance organizations. Secondly, communication between members within the organization should also be encouraged. Constructive communication between employees of an organization can also lead to knowledge sharing which is an important element of knowledge management (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). In short, communication within an organization is important for employee loyalty.

The study is not free of limitations, hence suggesting that caution is needed in interpreting some of the results. However, without undermining its contribution future studies may be able to address them. The first limitation is the context of the study which is provincial in nature. This is because the study was conducted only in Kedah and Perlis due to time and budget constraints. This study however has proven the validity of the framework, as well as the measurement, hence it should be extended to a national level study to obtain a wider generalization.

This study is also limited by the structure of the sample as it focuses on a single industry, i.e. hotel and lodging industry. Even though this allows in depth understanding of the study variables in this particular industry due to the control of inter industry variations, thus attaining a homogeneity respondent, it limits generalization of the findings. Therefore, the possible direction of future research should extend the examination of this framework into a wider sample comprising of organizations from different industries.

Another area that future research can address is the performance aspect of the outcome of the IMO. Although this study has shown a significant link between IMO and the EBLB, future studies may look at possible measures of individual performance such as employee brand citizenship behavior. This will provide more significant implications to practitioners as well as academics.

This research marks the attempt to approach service delivery phenomenon in interdisciplinary perspective by integrating marketing concept with organizational behavior. Indeed, the finding of this study has shown a remarkable result in explaining the relationship between internal market intelligence generation, dissemination and response and EBLB.

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