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A Theoretical Study of the Importance of Internal Marketing and Word-of-Mouth in Tourism Organizations

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***Abstract*—**This theoretical study aims to highlight the importance of internal marketing and word-of-mouth in tourism organizations. It addresses the basic concepts of internal marketing and examines word-of-mouth in tourism organizations. The study describes and analyzes the concepts related to both topics, seeking to identify the importance of each in tourism organizations and the nature of the relationship between them. It adopts the descriptive-analytical approach, which is considered the most appropriate method for the nature and objectives of this theoretical study. The findings indicate that internal marketing is a fundamental pillar of employee care. Through the application of a set of dimensions, it helps create a supportive work environment and develop employees' skills, enabling them to provide better services and interact effectively with tourists. The study also shows that word-of-mouth, as a form of informal communication among individuals, influences their behavior and their choice of tourist destinations and facilities, including hotels and restaurants. The study concludes that effective internal marketing leads to satisfied internal customers and, in turn, contributes to external customer satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. Positive word-of-mouth enhances an organization's image and helps attract new customers, thereby supporting its survival and continuity.

***Keywords*—**Internal marketing; word-of-mouth; tourism organizations; internal marketing dimensions; word-of-mouth dimensions.

Résumé :

Cette étude théorique vise à mettre en évidence l'importance du marketing interne et du bouche-à-oreille dans les organisations touristiques. Elle aborde les concepts fondamentaux du marketing interne et examine le bouche-à-oreille au sein des organisations touristiques. L'étude décrit et analyse les concepts liés aux deux thématiques, cherchant à identifier l'importance de chacun d'eux dans les organisations touristiques ainsi que la nature de la relation qui les unit. Elle adopte l'approche descriptive-analytique, considérée comme la méthode la plus appropriée à la nature et aux objectifs de cette étude théorique. Les résultats indiquent que le marketing interne constitue un pilier fondamental de la prise en charge des employés. Par l'application d'un ensemble de dimensions, il contribue à créer un environnement de travail favorable et à développer les compétences des employés, leur permettant ainsi d'offrir de meilleurs services et d'interagir efficacement avec les touristes. L'étude montre également que le bouche-à-oreille, en tant que forme de communication informelle entre individus, influence leur comportement ainsi que leur choix de destinations et d'installations touristiques, y compris les hôtels et les restaurants. L'étude conclut qu'un marketing interne efficace mène à des clients internes satisfaits et contribue, par conséquent, à la satisfaction des clients externes ainsi qu'à un bouche-à-oreille positif. Le bouche-à-oreille positif valorise l'image de l'organisation et aide à attirer de nouveaux clients, soutenant ainsi sa survie et sa pérennité.

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Mots-clés: Marketing interne ; bouche-à-oreille ; organisations touristiques ; dimensions du marketing interne ; dimensions du bouche-à-oreille.

Introduction:

Human resources are a fundamental pillar across service sectors, and their importance is particularly pronounced in tourism because service delivery depends to a great extent on direct interaction between employees and tourists. Employees represent the organization's public face and image to its customers; their behavior and manner of interaction directly affect tourists' experiences and impressions of the organization. Against this background, the concept of internal marketing has emerged. It views employees as internal customers and seeks to care for them and meet their needs through a range of practices that contribute to their satisfaction and improve their performance, which may, in turn, help achieve external customer satisfaction (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024; Merqash, 2024).

Tourism services are intangible and difficult to evaluate before they are experienced. As a result, tourists may hesitate when comparing available alternatives and may seek information from other sources, relying on other people's opinions and experiences before deciding to engage with a particular tourism organization. Word-of-mouth is one of the most important sources of such information, enabling people to exchange opinions, experiences, and recommendations about organizations and their services. It also influences their attitudes, behavior, and decisions. Positive word-of-mouth is especially important to tourism organizations: satisfactory customer experiences may encourage customers to share their impressions and recommendations with others, helping build a positive organizational image and reputation (Al-Nusour, 2017; Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).

Accordingly, the success of tourism organizations depends not only on the quality of the services they provide but also, to a considerable extent, on how well they care for their human resources and create a motivating internal environment in which employees can perform their roles efficiently. The nature of tourism services also makes customers' opinions and experiences an important source of information, giving word-of-mouth a prominent role in shaping customers' perceptions and influencing their decisions, particularly when it is positive. This leads to the following research question: (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024; Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015)

How important are internal marketing and word-of-mouth in tourism organizations?

Based on this main research problem, the study advances the following hypotheses:

- Internal marketing is a managerial approach that focuses on employees as internal customers by meeting their needs and developing their capabilities in ways that serve the organization's objectives.
- Through its various dimensions, internal marketing contributes to improving the efficiency of tourism organizations by caring for employees, developing their capabilities, motivating them, and empowering them, thereby positively affecting service quality and customer satisfaction.
- Word-of-mouth is a form of informal communication through which individuals exchange information, opinions, and experiences about an organization, its products, or its services.
- Word-of-mouth takes several forms depending on its direction and how it circulates. The main forms include positive and negative word-of-mouth, as well as traditional and electronic word-of-mouth.
- Word-of-mouth is particularly important in tourism organizations because it conveys tourists' experiences and opinions, influences potential customers' decisions, and strengthens the organization's positive image and reputation.

This study aims to identify the importance of internal marketing and word-of-mouth in tourism organizations. Its specific objectives are:

- To highlight the importance of word-of-mouth as a significant source of information.
- To demonstrate the complementary relationship between internal marketing and word-of-mouth by explaining how caring for employees can affect customer experiences and, consequently, the opinions and recommendations they share.
- To contribute to the theoretical literature on internal marketing and word-of-mouth in tourism and services.

The study adopts the descriptive-analytical approach, as it is best suited to the nature and objectives of a theoretical study. This approach is used to describe and analyze concepts related to internal marketing and word-of-mouth in tourism organizations. Relevant literature and previous studies are drawn upon to explain the concept, characteristics, types, objectives, and dimensions of internal marketing, as well as the concept, types,

characteristics, dimensions, and sources of word-of-mouth. The study then analyzes the importance of each in tourism organizations and seeks to clarify the nature of the relationship between them.

Previous Studies:

The study draws on the following previous studies:

- Yenoun, Issam, and Sami Zaabat (2024), "The Impact of Implementing Internal Marketing in Tourism Organizations on Service Quality: A Study of a Sample of Hotels in Béjaïa Province." The study measured the impact of applying internal marketing on service quality in Algerian tourism organizations. Its findings showed that the various dimensions of internal marketing positively affected service quality, except for the recruitment dimension, which did not affect service quality in the tourism organizations examined (Yenoun & Zaabat, 2024).
- Khatabat, Amina, and Othman Lakhlaf (2019), "The Impact of Implementing Internal Marketing in Tourism Organizations on the Quality of Tourism Services in Algeria: A Study of a Sample of Employees and Guests of Algerian Hotels." The study sought to determine the effect of internal marketing on tourism service quality in Algeria and to examine the extent to which internal marketing was implemented in Algerian hotels and the quality of the tourism services offered to guests. It found that the various dimensions of internal marketing were implemented at a moderate level and that tourism service quality was also moderate. It further found that all dimensions affected tourism service quality (Khatabat & Lakhlaf, 2019).
- Kragel, Adel (2024), "The Impact of Internal Marketing on Job Satisfaction: A Study of a Group of Classified Hotels in Sétif Province." The study examined the effect of internal marketing on job satisfaction in a group of classified hotels in Sétif. It found statistically significant effects for empowerment, training, motivation, and internal communication, but no statistically significant effect for the selection dimension on job satisfaction (Kragel, 2024).
- Masoudi, Najwa, and Rabah Bouguerra (2015), "The Role of Word-of-Mouth in Evaluating a Service Brand: The Case of Mobile Phone Services in Algeria." The study highlighted the importance of word-of-mouth in evaluating a service brand. It concluded that word-of-mouth circulates widely and intensively among customers concerning various services and significantly influences customer attitudes and perceived value (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).
- Atiq, Aisha, et al. (2023), "The Impact of Word-of-Mouth on Consumer Purchasing Decisions: A Field Study Using SPSS Among Customers of IRIS SAT Electronics." The study examined the effect of word-of-mouth on consumers' purchasing decisions regarding IRIS electronics products. The results indicated that word-of-mouth significantly influenced purchasing decisions in both the short and long term and was considered one of the most credible communication tools (Atiq et al., 2023).
- Joual, Mohamed, and Abdel Samad Boudi (2021), "Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Its Effect on the Decision to Purchase Hotel Services: An Applied Study of Customers of the Red Carpet Hotel in Mila Province." The study examined the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on hotel-service purchase decisions among customers of the Red Carpet Hotel in Mila. The results showed a positive effect of the different dimensions of electronic word-of-mouth on the decision to purchase hotel services (Joual & Boudi, 2021).
- Sebaa, Manal, and Nadjet Kadi (2022), "The Role of Word-of-Mouth Sources in Activating Customers' Decisions to Purchase Transport Services Using the Logistic Model: A Field Study of the Private Taxi Companies Taxi Adel and Taxi Issam in Aïn Defla Province." The study explored the role of word-of-mouth sources and dimensions in activating customers' decisions to purchase transport services. It concluded that word-of-mouth sources and dimensions play a substantial role in customers' decisions to use the private taxi services studied (Sebaa & Kadi, 2022).

Section One: Basic Concepts of Internal Marketing

Internal marketing is a relatively modern concept that emphasizes employees within organizations, viewing them as a fundamental pillar and as the interface through which the organization's image is reflected. The following section discusses the main basic concepts of internal marketing (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024; Khalfi & Raggad, 2024).

First: The Concept of Internal Marketing

Researchers have approached this concept from several perspectives. To develop a clear understanding of it, the following discussion presents its definition, characteristics, and objectives.

1. Definition of Internal Marketing

Researchers and practitioners in internal marketing have offered various definitions, each emphasizing different aspects of the concept. The following are among the principal definitions:

Berry defines internal marketing as treating employees as internal customers and jobs as internal products that should be designed to satisfy internal customers' needs and wants while helping achieve the organization's objectives (Berry, n.d.).

Johnson describes it as the efforts made by service organizations to ensure that all members of the organization clearly understand its mission and objectives through training programs, incentives, and evaluation, in order to achieve the desired goals (Johnson, n.d.).

Kotler defines it as the work an organization undertakes to train employees, particularly those who have direct contact with customers, and to support service employees in working as a team to achieve customer satisfaction (Kotler, n.d.).

Based on these definitions, internal marketing can be understood as a set of activities and practices adopted by an organization to engage with employees as internal customers by meeting their needs and providing training, motivation, support, and effective communication. These practices help improve employee performance and strengthen teamwork, ultimately contributing to the achievement of organizational objectives (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024; Zerzar & Ben Oureida, 2023).

2. Characteristics of Internal Marketing

Internal marketing has a number of characteristics that reflect its nature as a managerial and marketing approach focused on the human element within an organization:

- Internal marketing is a social process. It is implemented within the organization to manage exchange and interaction between the organization and its employees. Employees' needs are not limited to material needs; they also have social needs, such as security, belonging, and friendship, which internal marketing can help satisfy (Khalfi & Raggad, 2024).
- Internal marketing is a managerial process. It seeks to integrate the organization's different functions by ensuring that employees have sufficient knowledge and experience of their activities and understand how these activities contribute to meeting customers' needs. It also ensures that employees are prepared and motivated to perform their work efficiently (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024).
- Internal marketing consists of interconnected activities. It encompasses the quality of customer-service programs, strategies, and overall organizational activities. These activities form an organizational structure that supports external marketing. This is crucial to the success of internal marketing, helps create a competitive advantage, and reduces conflict among staff (Taboub & Zaabat, 2023).
- Internal marketing is a voluntary process. It encourages employees to achieve good results and supports the development of a creative spirit (Khalfi & Raggad, 2024).

3. Objectives of Internal Marketing

The objectives of internal marketing can be summarized as follows.

Table 1. Objectives of Internal Marketing

General objective: To make employees more aware of, motivated by, and attentive to customers.

Strategic objectives: To create an internal environment that supports customer orientation; to support management methods, personnel, internal training policies, and planning procedures; and to develop services by strengthening their internal acceptance and activating communication channels and personal-selling activities.

Tactical objectives: To help employees understand how to behave toward customers and to support attitudes, services, and activities within the service organization.

Source: Boudia, Hajar, and Abdelhakim Ben Salem (2024), "The Impact of Internal Marketing Policies on Strengthening Employees' Organizational Commitment: A Case Study of Naftal GPL in Béchar Province," *Al-Manhal Al-Iqtisadi*, 7(1), p. 877 (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024, p. 877).

The table divides internal marketing objectives into three levels. The general objective is to increase employees' awareness of the importance of customers and motivate them to perform their roles more effectively, particularly in service organizations where employees interact directly with customers. The strategic objective focuses on building an organizational environment and internal culture that support customer orientation by creating conditions that help the organization achieve its long-term goals. The tactical objective concerns employees' day-to-day behavior and their interactions with customers. It involves helping employees understand how to deal with customers and supporting their attitudes toward the services and activities provided by the organization (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024).

Second: Dimensions of Internal Marketing

Researchers have examined internal marketing through several dimensions that reflect the various activities directed at employees within an organization. The following are among the most important dimensions identified in the relevant literature and studies (Zerzar & Ben Oureida, 2023; Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024).

1. Employee Selection

Selection involves comparing applicants for a particular position in terms of their suitability for that position. Its purpose is to place the right person in the right job by matching the requirements and duties of the job with the qualifications and characteristics of the applicant, taking into account differences in individuals' skills and aptitudes (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024).

2. Training

Training is an activity undertaken by management to develop individuals in several areas, including knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes, and job performance (Taboub & Zaabat, 2023).

3. Motivation

Motivation is one of the main drivers of activity and effectiveness at work. Incentives are external factors that encourage individuals to perform better. They may take the form of opportunities, rewards, or bonuses provided by the organization to stimulate employees' desires and motivate them to pursue these rewards through effort, diligent work, and appropriate behavior (Chrit & Atoui, 2022; Charfi & Boudiaf, 2022).

4. Empowerment

Empowerment is a strategy based on granting employees greater freedom and autonomy in carrying out their work, along with the authority and responsibility to make decisions. This enables organizations to respond more flexibly and rapidly to customer requests, improve the quality of services and products, and strengthen their competitive position (Chrit & Atoui, 2022; Charfi & Boudiaf, 2022).

5. Internal Communication

Internal communication is the network through which information is collected and transferred among different managerial levels. It is therefore essential to effective decision-making (Boudia & Ben Salem, 2024; Zerzar & Ben Oureida, 2023).

Third: The Importance of Internal Marketing in Tourism Organizations

Internal marketing practices are particularly important in tourism organizations. Although these organizations may differ in nature, their practices complement one another in achieving shared objectives, most notably improving employee performance, enhancing tourism service quality, strengthening customer orientation, and achieving employee and tourist satisfaction. Together, these objectives support tourism organizations in meeting their goals and improving their competitiveness. The importance of each internal marketing dimension is discussed below (Merqash, 2024; Kragel, 2024).

1. Importance of Employee Selection in Tourism Organizations

Human resources play a central role in service delivery and direct interaction with tourists. Selecting people with the competencies, skills, and personal qualities suited to tourism work helps organizations to:

- Ensure that employees' qualifications match the requirements of tourism jobs.
- Select individuals with personal qualities appropriate for dealing with tourists.
- Place the right person in the right job.
- Reduce the risks and replacement costs associated with unsuitable recruitment.

- Achieve harmony between employees and the organization's organizational culture.
- Attract competent people who can respond to the specific demands of tourism work.
- Reduce employee turnover caused by a mismatch between individuals and their jobs.

2. Importance of Training in Tourism Organizations

The importance of training in tourism organizations can be summarized as follows:

- Provide employees with the knowledge and information needed to perform their jobs.
- Update employees' knowledge in line with developments in the tourism sector.
- Develop professional and technical skills related to tourism jobs.
- Equip employees with the skills needed to handle different situations and problems.
- Train employees to use modern technologies and systems at work.
- Help new employees integrate into and adapt to the organization's work environment.
- Prepare employees to assume new responsibilities and tasks in the future.

3. Importance of Motivation in Tourism Organizations

- Motivation is important in tourism organizations for the following reasons:
- Encouraging employees to make an additional effort in carrying out their duties.
- Rewarding employees for outstanding achievements and results.
- Strengthening employees' sense of appreciation and recognition for their efforts.
- Encouraging initiative and innovation at work.
- Increasing employees' attachment to the organization and their desire to remain with it.
- Providing material and non-material incentives commensurate with employees' efforts.
- Creating a positive competitive atmosphere among employees.

4. Importance of Empowerment in Tourism Organizations

- Employee empowerment is important in tourism organizations for the following reasons:
- Granting employees appropriate authority to make decisions related to their duties.
- Reducing dependence on senior management for day-to-day decisions.
- Strengthening employees' sense of autonomy and responsibility.
- Involving employees in certain work-related decisions.
- Allowing employees to propose new ideas and solutions.
- Enabling employees to respond directly to situations requiring rapid decisions.
- Strengthening mutual trust between management and employees.

5. Importance of Internal Communication in Tourism Organizations

- The importance of internal communication in tourism organizations includes:
- Ensuring the smooth flow of information between management and employees.
- Clarifying instructions, duties, and work procedures.
- Facilitating coordination among different departments and units.
- Providing channels through which employees can express opinions and suggestions.
- Communicating information about organizational changes and decisions in a timely manner.
- Reducing rumors and misunderstandings about instructions.
- Strengthening communication among different managerial levels.
- Providing feedback that helps management identify employees' problems and needs.

Section Two: Word-of-Mouth in Tourism Organizations

Word-of-mouth is an important factor influencing tourists' behavior and decisions, particularly as they increasingly rely on other people's experiences and opinions when choosing destinations and tourism organizations. It is especially important in tourism because tourism services are difficult to evaluate before they are experienced. The experiences and information shared by previous tourists are therefore important sources for shaping the expectations of potential tourists. In this context, word-of-mouth has become an effective means

through which tourism organizations can enhance their image and reach new customers (Al-Nusour, 2017; Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).

First: The Concept of Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth is an important phenomenon in marketing because it enables individuals to exchange information, opinions, and experiences about products, services, and organizations. The concept has received increasing attention in marketing literature because of its influence on people's attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing decisions (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015; Al-Nusour, 2017).

1. Definition of Word-of-Mouth

Because researchers have approached word-of-mouth from different perspectives, several definitions have emerged to explain its nature and principal elements.

Arndt (1950), one of the early researchers to study the concept, defined word-of-mouth as oral, personal, face-to-face communication between a sender and a receiver, in which the receiver understands that the information conveyed about a brand, product, or service is not commercially motivated and is not intended as promotion, but rather forms part of interpersonal communication.

Grönroos (1990) defined word-of-mouth in the context of services from the perspective of integrated communications. In his view, word-of-mouth communication consists of messages about an organization, its credibility and trustworthiness, the way it operates, and the services it provides, which are passed from one person to another.

East et al. (2008) defined word-of-mouth as informal advice exchanged among consumers about a brand, product, or service. Such advice is usually rapid and interactive and is relatively free from commercial bias.

Based on these definitions, word-of-mouth can be understood as a form of informal communication among individuals through which information, opinions, experiences, and recommendations about an organization, brand, product, or service are exchanged personally and interactively. This communication is not commercial in nature and is not directly intended to promote the subject being discussed, although it may influence people's attitudes, perceptions, and decisions about it (Arndt, 1950; Grönroos, 1990; East et al., 2008).

2. Characteristics of Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth has several characteristics:

- Valence: It may be positive or negative.
- Scope: Word-of-mouth operates across all markets.
- Timing: Word-of-mouth may occur before or after a purchase. Before purchase, it is an important source of information and is sometimes referred to as input word-of-mouth. Customers may also spread word-of-mouth after experiencing or consuming a product or service; this is referred to as output word-of-mouth (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).
- Stimulation: Not all word-of-mouth originates spontaneously from customers. An organization may encourage people to talk about it. Word-of-mouth may therefore be initiated with or without prompting, and it may or may not be actively sought.
- Intervention: Although word-of-mouth can arise spontaneously, an increasing number of organizations actively intervene to encourage and manage word-of-mouth activity.

3. Types of Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth takes various forms depending on the nature of the information exchanged, its direction, and the means through which it spreads. Its influence on consumers' attitudes and behavior also varies. Researchers have classified it into several types to clarify its nature and role in marketing, particularly in tourism services (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015; Joual & Boudi, 2021).

By direction, word-of-mouth can be classified as follows:

- Positive word-of-mouth: A positive attitude toward the services provided by an organization after using and evaluating them. It expresses customer satisfaction.
- Negative word-of-mouth: Dissatisfaction with the services provided by an organization, expressed through negative reactions or verbal accounts shared by dissatisfied customers after a purchase.

- Neutral word-of-mouth: The exchange of information or experiences without expressing a positive or negative judgment. Its purpose is to convey facts or describe a service objectively.

By the means through which it is transmitted, word-of-mouth can be classified as follows:

- Traditional word-of-mouth: Communication that takes place directly between people, face to face or by telephone, without electronic media. It relies on the personal relationship between sender and receiver.
- Electronic word-of-mouth: Communication that takes place through the internet, social media, websites, rating platforms, and review sites. Individuals can share their experiences and opinions with large numbers of people in a short time (Joual & Boudi, 2021).

Second: The Importance of Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth is increasingly important in the marketing environment because it provides an informal means of exchanging information, experiences, and opinions. This makes it an influential source in shaping consumer attitudes and decisions. Its importance extends beyond consumers to organizations; accordingly, it can be considered from two main perspectives (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015; Atiq et al., 2023).

1. Importance of Word-of-Mouth for Consumers

- Providing information about an organization and its services through other people's experiences and opinions.
- Reducing perceived risk and uncertainty when deciding to purchase a tourism service that is difficult to evaluate before experiencing it.
- Helping consumers choose an appropriate hotel, restaurant, or tourist destination.
- Enabling consumers to learn about service levels and quality through other people's experiences.
- Shaping positive or negative attitudes toward a tourism organization.
- Strengthening trust in information when it comes from people the consumer trusts.
- Saving time and effort when searching for information about tourism services.

2. Importance of Word-of-Mouth for Organizations

- Strengthening the organization's reputation and image through the circulation of positive customer experiences (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015; Merqash, 2024).
- Attracting new customers through recommendations from previous customers (Atiq et al., 2023; Sebaa & Kadi, 2022).
- Increasing trust in the organization's services without relying entirely on formal advertising messages.
- Reducing some promotional costs because customers can indirectly help spread information about the organization.
- Strengthening customer loyalty by encouraging customers to share positive experiences.
- Reaching a wider audience as information passes from person to person, especially through social media (Joual & Boudi, 2021).
- Obtaining feedback that helps the organization understand customers' opinions and comments about its services.
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in services through the experiences customers share.
- Supporting competitiveness by building a positive reputation in the tourism market.

Third: Sources of Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth sources vary according to the individuals or entities that provide information and opinions about organizations and their services. The main sources are outlined below.

Personal Sources (Close Sources):

- These include influence from friends, family members, and colleagues.
- Family: The family has a direct influence on an individual's purchasing behavior because it helps shape the individual's basic values and attitudes. This influence is associated with shared customs and traditions and the length of time family members spend together.
- Friends: Friends are connected through close relationships and often share opinions and ways of thinking. They can have a substantial influence on an individual's purchasing decisions.

- Colleagues: People may spend more than half of their available weekly time at work. Employees who interact regularly therefore have considerable opportunities to exchange information about many aspects of life and daily living.

Non-Personal Sources (Distant Sources):

- These include information received from experts or through various social media platforms.
- Experienced consumers: Other customers who have previous experience with the product or service.
- Social media: Social networking websites enable electronic word-of-mouth to emerge and take diverse forms. This innovation allows customers to communicate with one another, exchange information, and share their interactions and daily experiences over the internet.

Third: Dimensions of Word-of-Mouth

The dimensions of word-of-mouth are important determinants of its nature. They vary according to the aspects used to measure how information, opinions, and experiences about an organization and its services circulate among individuals. The following are among the most commonly used dimensions.

1. Credibility

The credibility of word-of-mouth refers to the degree to which recipients trust the accuracy and objectivity of information, opinions, and experiences shared about a tourism organization and its services, as well as the extent to which they rely on that information to form perceptions and make decisions (Al-Nusour, 2017; Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).

2. Content

The content of word-of-mouth refers to the nature of the information, opinions, and experiences that individuals exchange about an organization, its products, or its services. In tourism, content may concern service quality, price levels, employee behavior, facilities, cleanliness, speed of service delivery, and the tourist's overall experience. This dimension is important because it helps identify the topics tourists discuss and whether the information exchanged reflects positive or negative aspects of the organization and its services (Joual & Boudi, 2021; Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).

3. Source

The source is the person or entity from which information, opinions, and experiences about an organization or its services originate. The source may be current or former customers, friends, relatives, employees, or others with experience or knowledge of the service. This dimension is particularly important in tourism because tourists rely on different sources to obtain information that helps them evaluate services and make decisions (Sebaa & Kadi, 2022).

4. Intensity

Intensity refers to how frequently and regularly individuals exchange information, opinions, and experiences about an organization or its services, as well as how widely these discussions spread among customers. The more frequently customers talk about an organization and its services, and the wider the circulation of that information, the greater the intensity of word-of-mouth (Saoudi & Bouguerra, 2015).

5. Positive Word-of-Mouth

Positive word-of-mouth involves customers sharing favorable opinions, experiences, and recommendations about a tourism organization and its services with others because they are satisfied with their experience. It includes praising service quality, commending employees' conduct, and recommending the organization to friends, relatives, or other people.

6. Negative Word-of-Mouth

Negative word-of-mouth refers to customers sharing unsatisfactory experiences and opinions about a tourism organization or its services, particularly when they encounter problems or deficiencies in service quality. Such comments may concern poor treatment, low service quality, high prices, or failure to meet tourists' expectations. Negative word-of-mouth is especially important in tourism because it can influence the organization's image and potential customers' decisions. At the same time, negative feedback can help the organization identify shortcomings and address them.

Section Three: The Relationship Between Internal Marketing and Word-of-Mouth

The preceding sections discussed the importance of internal marketing for employees in tourism organizations, particularly its emphasis on treating employees as internal customers, meeting their needs, and improving their work environment so that they can perform their roles efficiently. This section considers the importance of employees in improving tourists' experiences through better service quality, and then examines how improved tourist experiences contribute to word-of-mouth.

First: The Importance of Employees in Improving Service Quality

Employees in tourism organizations reflect the organization's image through their direct or indirect interactions with external customers. Their behavior and skills directly affect tourists' perceptions of service quality through the following:

- Responding promptly to tourists' various requests.
- Providing services competently and skillfully in ways that meet tourists' expectations.
- Resolving tourists' problems quickly and handling their complaints.
- Avoiding recurring errors through experience and competence.
- Treating tourists well and showing care and empathy, thereby adding a human dimension to the service.
- Providing clear information and informing tourists of updates to available services.
- Adapting services to tourists' different needs and expectations.
- Ensuring internal communication and coordination among employees and departments so that services and information are delivered accurately.
- Improving communication style and courtesy when dealing with tourists.
- Providing management with information about tourists' needs and problems.

Second: The Importance of Service Quality in Improving the Tourist Experience

Tourists' perceived service quality results from the extent to which the services provided match their expectations. The closer the services come to meeting or exceeding those expectations, the higher the quality tourists perceive. High service quality contributes to a positive tourist experience and strengthens trust in the organization. Its importance in improving the tourist experience includes:

- Reducing or eliminating the gap between tourists' expectations and their perceptions of the service.
- Increasing tourists' satisfaction with the services provided.
- Strengthening tourists' trust through their dealings with the organization.
- Reducing complaints and negative impressions.
- Creating an impression that enhances the organization's image in the tourist's eyes.
- Building tourist loyalty and encouraging repeat business.
- Creating a distinctive and integrated tourism experience through good treatment and service quality, thereby successfully meeting tourists' expectations.

Third: The Importance of the Tourist Experience in Generating Word-of-Mouth

The tourist experience is the overall outcome of interactions with the different aspects of a tourism service, including employees, the service itself, and the facilities. Whatever the nature of the experience, tourists may share it with others, either positively or negatively. The tourist experience is important to word-of-mouth in the following ways:

- Personal experience is generally a direct and trusted source of information.
- It influences potential tourists' decisions and choices, including their choice of destination and facilities.
- A positive experience encourages positive word-of-mouth, while an unsatisfactory experience encourages negative word-of-mouth.
- A satisfactory experience helps build a positive image and reputation for the organization; the opposite is true of a poor experience.
- It helps gain tourist loyalty and encourages tourists to recommend the organization.
- It reduces hesitation among potential customers and influences their decisions.
- It encourages tourists to share their experiences with friends, relatives, and other customers.

Conclusion

Human resources are a fundamental pillar of the service sector, particularly in tourism, where employees and tourists interact and communicate directly. Internal marketing has emerged in this context as an approach that treats employees as internal customers who deserve attention through a range of practices, beginning with recruitment and continuing through training, motivation, empowerment, and stronger internal communication. These practices can develop employees' capabilities and skills to meet tourists' needs and provide services that match their expectations and aspirations, thereby creating a distinctive and integrated tourist experience and a favorable image of the organization.

Amid intense competition and the wide range of alternatives that can make tourists hesitant, word-of-mouth serves as an informal communication channel that provides information about tourist destinations, service levels, service variety, and other matters relevant to each tourist. Information may come from close or more distant sources, lending it a degree of credibility and trustworthiness and helping resolve hesitation, either positively or negatively. A satisfactory tourist experience generates positive word-of-mouth, which strengthens potential tourists' trust in the organization and creates a positive image of it; the reverse is also true.

Accordingly, investing in employees through training, motivation, empowerment, and internal communication does more than improve their performance: it also affects service quality, the tourist experience, and ultimately word-of-mouth. The more internal marketing practices improve employee performance, the more service quality is likely to rise and the tourist experience to improve, increasing the likelihood that tourists will share positive experiences with others.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this theoretical study on the importance of internal marketing and word-of-mouth in tourism organizations, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Tourism organizations should adopt internal marketing.
2. Care should be taken to recruit competent employees suited to the nature of the service, placing the right employee in the right position.
3. Continuous training and professional development should be maintained to improve skills.
4. Employees should be given the authority needed to address tourists' problems quickly and effectively.
5. Material and non-material incentive systems should be developed to strengthen employees' sense of belonging to the organization and encourage teamwork.
6. Internal communication between management and employees should be improved across all levels and departments.
7. Negative word-of-mouth should be used to identify weaknesses and address them promptly and professionally.
8. Organizations should keep pace with technology and social media to monitor tourists' opinions, experiences, and ratings.
9. Service quality and the tourist experience should be improved to encourage positive word-of-mouth.

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