

ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF INTERNAL MARKETING ON ORGANISATIONAL MARKET COMPETITIVENESS: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIAN QUANTITY SURVEYING FIRMS

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Abstract. The construction sector is competitive, and a quantity surveying (QS) firm, being a subset of this sector, is not exempt. For quantity surveying firms to compete in this environment, they need to improve their internal marketing. The study evaluates the impacts of internal marketing of quantity surveying firms on their market competitiveness. Data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to employers and employees in quantity surveying firms in Lagos State, Nigeria, using a random sampling technique. The one hundred and nine (109) questionnaires obtained from sixty-nine (69) registered QS firms were analysed using mean item score and standard deviation, with the results presented in tables. The findings revealed that internal marketing play a significant role in quantity surveying firms in a competitive environment as it facilitates firm's growth, improves the firm's chance of survival, improve the patronage, increases the firm's competence, and improves employee performance and productivity of the firms, among others, and that internal marketing provides competitive advantage to the firm. To effectively promote the firm to external consumers, particularly in a competitive market, the study advised employers to view their employees as valued internal customers to enhance the effective service marketability of the quantity surveying firm.

Keywords: Quantity Surveying Firms, Internal Marketing, Competitive, Employee, Employer

Introduction

The construction sector is domiciled in a competitive business environment, and the quantity surveying firm, which is a subset of this sector, is not an exception (Moyanga & Agboola, 2020). The construction sector is well known because of the important role it plays in the development of the national economy (Sui-Pheng et al., 2019). This sector comprises various segments, including the quantity surveying firm, which plays a crucial role in the construction sector by providing cost management and consultancy services vital for the successful completion of construction projects (Allan, 2018). In addition, the nature of quantity surveying firms necessitates a high degree of internal coordination and communication, making them an interesting context for exploring the implementation and impact of internal marketing strategies (Allan, 2018). Quantity surveying firms often face competition driven by factors such as diverse project types, geographical cost variation, price sensitivity of clients, and availability of skilled employees (Ogunsina et al., 2018).

Due to the increasing competition, firms constantly seek ways to stand out among their competitors, and this can only be done by embracing marketing concepts. Marketing is the set of activities a firm undertakes to promote its services; it is also referred to as a discipline that involves all the efforts put in place by the firm to draw customers and maintain relationships with them (Gloeckner, 2019). Marketing seeks to match a firm's services with customers who need those services to bring productivity to the firm. Moreover, marketing centres on an exchange that involves two parties (the firm and the client). One party represents the firm that renders services, while the second party represents the client who needs such services at a profit.

In the case of quantity surveying firms, the transaction (marketing activities) that occurs is regarded as internal marketing. Internal marketing is a technique that emanates from marketing relationships; it is centred on internal marketing, interactive marketing, and external marketing (Basu et al., 2023). Internal marketing focuses on the interaction between the employer and the firm's employee, while interactive marketing focuses on the employee of the firm and the client. In contrast, external marketing focuses on the interaction between the employer and client (Basu et al., 2023). Internal marketing is a technique that has gained significance in the field of marketing in recent

years. It plays a crucial role in shaping the firm's brand image and reputation, as employees are often the face of the firm and have a direct impact on customer perceptions (Penalba-Aguirrezabalaga et al., 2022).

Internal marketing helps to build strong relationships with employees of the firm to enhance their loyalty and commitment to the firm (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). As earlier stated, internal marketing is a relationship that exists between the employer and the employees of a firm, which usually determines the success of external marketing (Nemteanu et al., 2021). In internal marketing, the employee becomes the first customer who must be well satisfied to excellently sell the firm to external customers (Bohnenberger et al., 2019; Ojo & Ebunoluwa, 2019). In this case, both the employer and the employees ought to adequately carry out the activities of internal marketing in a firm so that the performance of these activities will lead to successful internal marketing, which will enhance the services delivered to external customers. The primary notion underlying internal marketing is to view employees as internal consumers, with their work serving as internal products that suit their needs and desires. This approach has been linked to improved organisational performance and employee satisfaction (Penalba-Aguirrezabalaga et al., 2022). However, despite the growing interest in internal marketing, there is a dearth of studies focusing specifically on its application within quantity surveying firms.

Researchers such as Qiu et al. (2022) and Nemteanu et al. (2021), among others, focused on studies on internal marketing of different professions, while Caldwell et al. (2015) conducted research on internal marketing as a means to achieve competitive advantage within the construction industry. Also, Alshura et al. (2016) and Soni et al. (2019) focused on internal marketing impact on an organisation's commitment and service excellence of the employees in the organised retail and hotel industry. A related study on marketing within the quantity surveying profession in Nigeria was conducted by Ojo and Ebunoluwa (2019), focusing on the internal marketing relationship of quantity surveying firms in south-western Nigeria. Although, internal marketing as a strategic approach aimed at improving employee satisfaction and retention, and service delivery, has demonstrated potential benefits in various sectors, its application within quantity surveying firms remains inadequately explored, in order to attest its impact within the quantity surveying profession in Nigeria necessitate this study which will add to the body of knowledge on internal marketing as it relates to quantity surveying firms and its capability to aid the firm market competitive advantage and also abreast the quantity surveying employers on its importance in enhancing effective service marketability of quantity surveying firm.

1.0 Internal Marketing Concept

Marketing is a business philosophy that prioritises the customer in all organisational activities, aiming to meet customer needs and foster a relationship that generates greater profit for the organisation (Yankah, 2015). In addition, marketing is a management tool that focuses on creating value for customers, rendering services that will meet clients' demands, building a long-term relationship, increasing the firm's profitability, strengthening competitive advantage, and achieving the firm's goal (Naranjo et al., 2011; Ogbu, 2015; Birnin-kebbi & Muhammed, 2016). One of the significant benefits of marketing is to create a competitive advantage, which is paramount to the survival of any firm in a competitive business environment (Caldwell et al., 2015). This indicates that for a firm or organisation to thrive in a competitive business environment, effective marketing strategies must be put in place.

Internal marketing can be viewed as the relationship between the employer and employees, in which the relationship reflects the process of applying marketing internally within an organisation (Salomao, 2010). Internal marketing is a crucial aspect of a firm's overall marketing strategy, which focuses on ensuring that employees are fully engaged and aligned with the firm's goal and values through effective communication and motivation of the firm's employees, which will further strengthen the cordial relationship between the employer and the employees (Nemteanu et al., 2021). It represents the human resource management of an organisation where the employees are viewed as the internal customers, and they must be valued if the organisation wants to succeed. The distinguishing characteristic between internal marketing and human resource management is that human resource management puts employees' benefits over the firm's benefits but internal marketing creates a balance between the employees' benefits and the firm's benefits, internal marketing makes the firm realize that the more they treat the internal customers (employees) with dignity, the more successful they will be (Bohnenberger et al., 2019). This makes internal marketing a give-and-take concept.

In addition, internal marketing helps to create a good working atmosphere, increase employees' commitment to work, and improve organisational performance (Alshura et al., 2016) because when internal customers are satisfied, quality service will be delivered to the external customers. Firms operate in a competitive environment through selection and

recruitment, as well as the training and development of employees, which play a significant role in the quality of service delivered (Elsamen & Alshurideh, 2012). Wambugu (2015) opined that when the employee's capability is developed concerning the required job skills, it will help to improve the firm's performance. Employee training helps improve internal service quality among employees. In contrast, motivation helps support and encourage employees to work hard and be open to training and development programs, thereby improving their capabilities (Bohnenberger et al., 2019). In today's competitive business environment, internal marketing has become a crucial strategy for firms to engage and motivate their employees, which significantly impacts the organisation.

2.0 Impacts of Internal Marketing on the Market Competitiveness of Quantity Surveying Firms

Internal marketing is a crucial element for quantity surveying firms, which aims at achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage. This is achieved through enhanced employee performance and productivity, client relationship management, and innovation and adaptability (Anning-Dorson & Nyamekye, 2020). Albulushi et al. (2020) and Caldwell et al. (2015) opined that some of the impacts of internal marketing on the market competitiveness of quantity surveying firms include competitive advantage, wealth creation, increased organisation performance, and improved employee performance and productivity. Competitive advantage can be achieved by creating a relationship that cannot be duplicated between the employees and their customers, in a business environment where there are new entrants from time to time and prices are relatively high, firms must develop the ability to create a close relationship with the customers to achieve competitive advantage (Albulushi et al., 2020).

Investing in the workforce through training and motivation allows firms to enhance service quality, drive innovation, and foster lasting client relationships, securing a robust market position (Olazo, 2022). The strategic implementation of internal marketing not only leads to improved employee engagement but also translates into tangible competitive advantages, as indicated by various empirical studies across different sectors (Butt et al., 2020; Mazzarolo et al., 2021). Internal marketing processes, such as empowering employees, are a determinant of a close relationship with external customers, as firms are beginning to understand that creating a strong customer relationship will help them achieve a competitive advantage. An effective internal marketing strategy also helps the firm develop committed employees, which is crucial for strengthening customer relationships, increasing loyalty, and enhancing customer satisfaction and profit (Caldwell et al., 2015).

Caldwell et al. (2015) further established that internal marketing helps in motivating and educating employees to be more customer-conscious and market-oriented, enabling them to add value to customers. The study added that competitive advantage and wealth creation are products of the trustworthiness of a leader in an organisation. When employees develop enough trust in their leaders, it makes them more committed, thereby valuing and creating more wealth for the organisation. In addition, the study noted that internal marketing aids in creating a learning culture, which is beneficial for increasing organisational competencies and enhancing a firm's performance through the learning of new concepts that will help them in delivering quality services to clients and also make them stand out among other firms.

Ojo and Ebunoluwa (2019) opined that internal marketing leads to the growth of a firm, which was attributed to the profit made by the firm. Good internal marketing by a firm will enhance its performance and increase profit, thereby improving the growth of the firm. The study added that internal marketing increases loyalty of the external customers to the firm, giving the firm a competitive advantage in a business environment. In addition, Nemteanu et al. (2021) found in their study that internal marketing leads to job satisfaction and employee retention, while also enhancing job performance. Job satisfaction is an attitude that reflects an employee's positive well-being, enhancing the workplace atmosphere and increasing their dedication to work. A satisfied employee is more likely to be retained and represent the organisation with dignity.

Naghi and Preda (2015) and Muhammad (2021) recorded that internal marketing leads to improved organisational citizenship behaviour and also brings about organisational commitment. These studies further explain organisational citizenship as a set of discretionary behaviours of the employee that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organisation, which does not lead to a formal reward. An employee will start to behave as if he is the owner of the company; that is, he will work hard to protect the interests, image, and anything that belongs to the firm with the mindset that the success of the firm will earn him more rewards, either monetary or non-monetary. This organisational commitment can be affective, normative, and continuance commitments (Muhammad, 2021).

Other impacts of internal marketing include improved client satisfaction and retention, improved employee development, improved client retention, cooperation among employees, improved flow of information between departments in the firm, increased awareness of quantity surveying profession and services, improved service quality, improved employees' safety in the workplace, facilitates swift service delivery, update firms with the latest technology, helps the employees to develop positive attitudes towards work, improves employees' self-competence, increased client's satisfaction and retention, improved patronage, improved employee-client relationship, improved chance of survival for firms, reduces frustration among employees and improved service quality (Elsamen & Alshurideh, 2012; Mbengo & Chinakidzwa, 2014; Jongo et al., 2019).

Methodology

The systematic review of literature is based on previous studies on the impacts of internal marketing on other sectors' competitiveness. The research employed a quantitative method of data collection to explore and obtain viable data regarding the study's aim, using a structured questionnaire that gathered facts and opinions from other researchers on the subject matter. The study population for this research were one hundred and thirty-seven (137) registered quantity surveying firms in Lagos State, according to the 2021 directory of Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors Lagos state chapter, this population consists of all units which possess variable characteristics under study and for which research finding can be generalized (Shukla et al., 2022). The respondents were asked to rate the level of impact of internal marketing on a 5-point Likert scale from 1-very low to 5-very high. The focus on Lagos state was based on the premise that it has the most significant construction hub, with increased commercial development and a large number of quantity surveying firms domiciled in the state (Oke et al., 2024). The study adopted simple random sampling to select sample from the total population under which sixty-nine (69) registered quantity surveying firms were captured, making 50% of the total population under study, the sampling technique gave participant within the study population equal probability of being chosen as a response to the study because the study population exhibit similar character (Noor et al., 2022).

A total of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) questionnaires administered within sixty-nine (69) registered quantity surveying firms, making 50% of the study population with focus on the firm's employer and one employee (Quantity Surveyor) per firm, the use of employer and one employee was based on the premises that the opinion of the duo is crucial for the study's validation. However, one hundred and nine (109) questionnaires were retrieved, having fifty-one (51) and fifty-eight (58) responses from employers and employees, respectively. This gives a response rate of seventy-nine per cent (79%), which is deemed adequate for the study based on the submission of Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), that a survey's response rate is biased if it is less than fifty per cent (50%). The retrieved data were analysed using Mean Item Score and Standard Deviation. The results were presented in tables.

Results

Respondents' Information

According to the information provided by respondents, as shown in Table 1, more than 63% of the firms under study have been in operation for more than 10 years, and both employers and employees have the appropriate training and experience to provide valuable data for the study. Participants in the study demonstrated that they all have formal education relevant to the investigation. Also, over 64% of the participants were fully registered with their professional body. In addition, 67% of the organisations under consideration specialise in civil and building engineering projects, with the remainder limited to either civil or building projects within the research field.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents/Quantity Surveying Firms

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Status of the respondent</i>		
Employee	58	53.2
Employer	51	46.8
Total	109	100
<i>Year(s) of existence of the firm</i>		
< 10years	40	36.7

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
11-20 years	50	45.9
21-30 years	14	12.8
> 30years	5	4.6
Total	109	100
<i>Highest academic qualification of the respondents</i>		
HND	20	18.3
B.Sc/B.Tech	41	37.6
M.Sc/M.Tech	41	37.6
PhD	7	6.4
Total	109	100
<i>Professional qualification of the respondents</i>		
MNIQS	53	48.6
FNIQS	16	14.7
Probationer	40	36.7
Total	109	100
<i>Type of work the firm engages in</i>		
Building and Civil Engineering Construction	73	67
Civil Engineering Construction	6	5.5
Building construction	30	27.5
Total	109	100

Impacts of Internal Marketing on the Market Competitiveness of Quantity Surveying Firms

As revealed from the Table 2, the prevailing five (5) impacts of internal marketing were ‘it facilitates firm’s growth’ with mean item score of 4.14 and standard deviation of 1.054, ‘Improves the firm’s chance of survival’ with mean item score of 4.10 and standard deviation of 0.977, ‘improves patronage’ with mean item score of 4.10 and standard deviation of 0.956, ‘it increases the firm’s competence’ with mean item score of 4.06 and standard deviation of 0.995, and ‘improves employee performance and productivity’ with mean item score of 4.06 and standard deviation of 0.922. Meanwhile, the least three (3) ranked impact of were ‘It creates awareness of the QS services and the profession’ with mean item score of 3.88 and standard deviation of 0.978, ‘it makes the employee have a sense of belonging to the firm’ with mean item score of 3.88 and standard deviation of 0.948, and ‘improves employees’ job satisfaction and retention’ with mean item score of 3.88 and standard deviation of 0.879.

Table 2: Impact of Internal Marketing on the Market Competitiveness of Quantity Surveying Firms

S/N	Impact of internal marketing	Employee MIS	Employer MIS	Overall MIS	Std.Dev	Rank
1	It facilitates the firm’s growth	4.13	4.18	4.14	1.054	1
2	Improves the firm’s chance of survival	4.07	4.18	4.10	0.977	2
4	Improves patronage	4.09	4.12	4.10	0.956	3
4	It increases the firm’s competence	3.98	4.29	4.06	0.995	4
5	Improves employee performance and productivity	4.02	4.18	4.06	0.922	5
6	It enhances the firm’s performance	3.89	4.35	4.00	0.900	6
7	It helps employees develop a positive attitude towards work	3.87	4.24	3.96	1.010	7
8	Improves clients’ satisfaction and retention	3.71	4.00	3.96	0.837	8
9	Improves employee-client relationship	3.95	4.00	3.96	0.830	9

10	It facilitates the swift delivery of services	3.84	4.29	3.94	0.939	10
11	It provides a competitive advantage for the firm	3.78	4.35	3.92	0.909	11
12	Improves the firm's reputation	4.00	4.12	3.88	1.048	12
13	Improves service quality delivery	3.76	4.24	3.88	0.979	13
14	It creates awareness of the QS services and the profession	3.85	3.94	3.88	0.978	14
15	It makes the employee have a sense of belonging to the firm	3.82	4.06	3.88	0.948	15
16	Improves employees' job satisfaction and retention	3.82	4.06	3.88	0.879	16

Discussion of findings

The general consideration of the study outcome, as revealed from the most prevailing impacts, showed that internal marketing is beneficial to the firm, giving it a competitive advantage in a hostile environment. This justifies the opinion of Anning-Dorson and Nyamekye (2020) that an organisation's internal marketing aims at achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage for such an organisation. The most prevailing five (5) impacts, as shown from the ranking, are: it facilitates the firm's growth; Improves the firm's chance of survival; Improves patronage; increases the firm's competence; and improves employee performance and productivity. The outcome of this research aligns with Mbengo and Chinakidzwa (2014), which affirms that a good relationship between the employer and employee enables the employee to market the firm to external customers, thereby improving patronage. Furthermore, the study also agreed with Ojo and Ebunoluwa (2019) that good internal marketing in an organisation facilitates its growth adequately. In addition, the research also established Elsamen and Alshurideh (2012), who affirmed that a firm with good internal marketing will not struggle for survival in the face of increasing competition.

Conclusion

The study evaluates the impact of internal marketing on an organisation's marketing competitiveness from the perspective of Nigerian quantity surveying firms, considering the benefits and impacts of internal marketing in other organisations. The findings revealed that internal marketing plays a crucial role in the market competitiveness of Nigerian quantity surveying firms. Hence, employers are expected to view their employees as valued internal customers to enhance the marketability and profitability of quantity surveying services. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on internal marketing in quantity surveying firms, highlighting its potential to aid in achieving a competitive market advantage. The study implies that the application of internal marketing will aid adequate growth and profitability of the firm.

This study is limited to Lagos State, Nigeria. Further research can be conducted in the southwestern part of Nigeria to enhance the research's validity. Future studies can then assess the impact of internal marketing on employee performance in Nigerian quantity surveying firms.

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Author contributions

Esther Ilori EBUNOLUWA –Research Administrator, designed the Questionnaire and vetted the manuscript; Adepoju Moses ADEJUMO – Revised the drafted work, analysed data, prepared the discussion of findings; Temilola Mopelola

ADEJUMO – drafted the Introductory part and review of literature; Olayinka Folashade KINGLEY-OTARU – Established data population, monitored distribution and collation of data, and wrote the conclusion.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study in any form.

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