

# A Study of the Effects of Internal Marketing on Customer-oriented Social and Prosocial Behaviors (Case study: Hotels in Isfahan city)

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## Abstract

The present paper, titled 'A Study of the Effects of Internal Marketing on Customer-oriented Prosocial Behaviors' investigates the important role of internal marketing on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and, finally, role-prescribed customer service and extra-role customer service (prosocial behavior) among hotel employees in Isfahan city. A main hypothesis (speculating the significant effect of internal marketing on customer-oriented prosocial behavior) and eleven sub-hypotheses (speculating the significant effect of empowerment, service training and service reward on organizational commitment and job satisfaction as well as speculating the significant effect of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on role-prescribed customer service and extra-role customer service (prosocial behavior), are presented. This research, in terms of its purpose, is an applied one; and in terms of implementation method, is a survey with a correlation approach. The population includes 140 experienced managers, vice-presidents and employees of the hotels in Isfahan city. The data were collected using questionnaires with a *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient calculated as 0.91, which includes personal data and main, specialized questions for examination of research hypotheses. From 155 distributed questionnaires, 140 (90%) were returned. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software programs through statistical tests at descriptive (frequency, percentage, accumulated percentage, average and standard deviation) and inferential (t-test, regression modeling, variance analysis, non-parametric Kolmogorov and Smirnov test, and Freedman non-parametric test) levels. The findings supported all research hypotheses. The results indicated that the ninth sub-hypothesis, with a path coefficient of 0.69 is of the highest importance, and that the seventh sub-hypothesis with a path coefficient of

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0.18 is of the lowest importance. Thus, the internal marketing significantly affects the customer-oriented prosocial behaviors.

**Key words:** Internal Marketing, Service Reward, Empowerment, Service Training, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Role-Prescribed Customer Service, Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior)

### **Introduction**

The improvement efforts are considered as one of the inevitable principles of management that everyday a new subject and discussion is added to improvement efforts and its area is developing increasingly. Unlike to past times that the employees are expected to act in terms of their formal roles, the voluntary roles and functions that are beyond the formal role is expected in new psychological behaviors. Nowadays, such behaviors are known as organizational citizenship behavior (prosocial behavior) that concentrates on the employees' long-term participation in organizational success. The customers evaluate the services and then compare them with perceived quality. The customers will be satisfied and happy if their perceived quality is better what they expect. Otherwise they will be dissatisfied from delivered services. From customers' perspective, the socially learned behaviors of the service offenders can be a perspective of customer-orientation. Therefore, it can be said that socially learned behaviors can be considered as an important issue for services marketers and a practice for managers. The reason is that socially learned behavior is representative of the employees' communicational approaches toward customers. It also has a significant effect on the customers' evaluation from services quality and their satisfaction (Lemmink and Mattsson, 2002). In addition, behavior of the service offenders influences customers' perception in short-term (such as perceived quality) and long-term period (such as trust and loyalty). Therefore, it can be said that the services offenders play an important role in the customers' experiences through summarizing, describing, and defining customer services (Bitner et al., 1994). The reason is that the customers' evaluation from perceived services is influenced by interpersonal interactions of services offenders. The services companies have to find methods for managing services offenders effectively in order to ensure that the services employees' behavior and attitude results in more qualified services (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996). The experiences and results of the services offenders' socially learned behaviors are attended by journal of services marketing comprehensively. The results of the studies that have been published in such journals revealed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment helps the employees' socially learned behaviors. In other words, the commercial managers concentrate on increasing customer satisfaction and organizational commitment. In addition, job satisfaction is considered more important than organizational commitment (Williams and Hazer, 1986). Educational plans influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Additionally, an especial reward system can be effective on the behavior of services offenders and also their job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lee et al., 2006). This is why that the present study was aimed to examine the role of internal marketing on the employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and their prosocial behaviors in the hotels of Isfahan city.

## **Literature review**

### **Role-Prescribed Customer Service**

It refers to the intra-functional behaviors and also refers to the performances that are defined for a function and the employees are forced to do them. In other words, intra-functional behaviors are the acceptable behaviors in the organization and management. Indeed, these behaviors are defined in the organizational chart and the employees are forced to do them as a part of the job behaviors.

### **Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior)**

This refers to the behaviors that are learned socially beyond the organizational functions. Indeed, it refers to the employees' voluntary and informal behaviors. These behaviors are not the employees' formal functions and the employees who are organizational citizen do these behaviors. The employees who have socially learned behaviors are citizens that develop the job energy, dynamic, and effort in the organizational environment. They help others in doing their job and their goodwill is famous between all of the organizational members.

### **Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the employees' positive perception, feeling, and attitude about their job that derives from factors such as job environment, organizational system, environmental relations, and the effects of sociocultural factors. Job satisfaction not only can be helpful in the employees' physical and mental health, but also it is considered as one of the effective factors on the organizational efficiency. Higher levels of job satisfaction reflect a desirable organizational climate that leads to attract and maintain the employees (Robins, 2011: 46).

With regard to the literature review that has been presented in the past section, the following hypotheses can be developed.

1. Job satisfaction of the services offenders influences their Role-Prescribed Customer Service significantly.
2. Job satisfaction of the services offenders influences their Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior) significantly.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment can be defined as following:

- Desire to maintain the membership in an organization
- Desire to help the organization
- Desire to accept the organizational values and goals

Therefore, it can be said that organizational commitment is the employees' attitude and loyalty toward their organization. It also is a continuous process that can be determined employees' participation in the organizational decisions, their attention toward organization, and finally organization's success and welfare. Organizations can increase employees' organizational commitment through two main methods. The first method is that the organizations improve the employees' perception from organizational membership. The second is that the

organizations can pay attention to the employees and value them (Hamdi and Moradi, 2011: 38).

With regard to the literature review that has been presented in the past section, the following hypotheses can be developed.

3. Organizational commitment of the services offenders influences their Role-Prescribed Customer Service significantly.
4. Organizational commitment of the services offenders influences their Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior) significantly.
5. Services offenders' job satisfaction influences organizational commitment significantly.

### **Internal marketing**

Internal marketing refers to attracting, developing, and motivating the employees' quality through their job as a product and satisfying their needs and wants. In other words, internal marketing is the philosophy of common relationship and correlation between customers and employees (internal customers) on the other hand, it should be remembered that internal marketing is considered as an academic, scientific, and commercial awareness in terms of promoting the employees and customers' satisfaction. This field of marketing science can be influenced by quality management and services marketing and focuses on the importance and necessity of creating quality in total process of services delivery. It also discusses the relationship between inter-organizational customers and suppliers in creating value for external customers. It can be considered as a value chain and an instrument for developing quality of products and services and also interaction between inter-organizational and intra-organizational interactions (Ling, 2010). Therefore, it can be said that the purpose of internal marketing is to ensure the employees' satisfaction and developing quality of products and services in order to achieve external customers' satisfaction. This is a process that starts from internal customers and moves toward external customers. The results of the studies that have been done in this area revealed a positive relationship between internal customers (employees) and external customers' job satisfaction. The results of the study that has been done by Cohort (1992) indicated that the employees' satisfaction (internal customers) influences products quality significantly and thereby results in the external customers' satisfaction. Morrison (2004) identified five behavioral areas that can be influenced by internal marketing efforts. He indicated that it influences external customers and their satisfaction significantly. These include consciousness, altruism, goodwill in social behavior, chivalry, and politeness. (Hernandez, & Grayson, 2012).

### **Components of internal marketing**

All of the marketing efforts that are done in the organization seek to attract, maintain, and promote the customers' loyalty in the organization. In addition, human resource management seeks to achieve the internal customers' commitment, job satisfaction, and improving their attitude toward managers that these are combined with internal marketing efforts. Generally, the components of internal marketing can be divided into several parts. These have been presented in the following section.

1. **job security:** it is considered as one of the main components of internal marketing. This part of internal marketing refers to the employees' security in terms of job. Any decrease in the productivity and profitability may leads to transmit, educate, and rotate the employees. It is possible to apply the customers in other units for preventing their dismissal. The results of different examinations revealed that increase in the employees' job security results in more loyalty, satisfaction, and trust among them.
2. **Comprehensive and diversified educations:** creating and improving knowledge is one of the most important factors in achieving competitive advantage at global level. Generally, educating employees is in terms of recognizing and solving the problems, creating necessary changes in terms of processes and job methods, and post-purchase services.
3. **Offering equal rewards:** offering salaries and rights that are more than prominent salaries and rights of industry and payment based on the performance and productivity are the most important offering equal rewards. The results of different examinations revealed that the employees with higher levels of salaries will have more satisfaction and commitment toward their organization.
4. **Information sharing:** in order to create and share the information in the organizations, it is necessary to create communicational processes in the organization through different methods. The importance of these informational processes is facilitating decision making and other organizational activities, creating an appropriate feedback mechanism, and promoting employees' abilities.
5. **Employees' empowerment:** this consists of two parts. The first is authority and elbowroom and the second is expectations and responsibilities.
6. **Decreasing the social gap between employees:** decreasing social gap between employees help them to express their ideas and also increase creativity, trust, and job satisfaction. Two methods of decreasing position differences, decreasing differences in the salaries, and creating organizational symbols in consistency with organizational communications based on the development of organizational justice and trust (Ahmed and Refig, 2003).

### **Empowerment**

Employees' empowerment refers to encouraging them toward more participation in the organizational decisions that are effective on their activities. This means that the climate is provided for employees so that they can create better ideas and operationalize them in action. Empowerment is a critical component in the modern world. Improvement in services, continuous innovation delivery, and increase in productivity are the main purposes that the organizations seek to achieve them in employees' empowerment (Lalianpor et al., 2011: 25). With regard to the literature review that has been presented in the past section, the following hypotheses can be developed.

6. Employees' empowerment influences job satisfaction significantly.
7. Employees' empowerment influences organizational commitment significantly.

### **Education**

Helping employees for making them more effective and efficient in doing existing and future functions is education. This can be done through considering employees' educational needs and

cultivating their mental abilities, skills, and physical abilities. It also can be done through educating them necessary information and knowledge (Sharifzade et al., 2008: 45). On the other hand, education is a planned process for changing knowledge, attitude, or skills through learning. This can be done for achieving efficient performance in an activity or a set of activities (Sabaghian and Akbari, 2010: 128).

With regard to the literature review that has been presented in the past section, the following hypotheses can be developed.

8. Services education influences employees' job satisfaction significantly.
9. Services education influences employees' organizational commitment significantly.

### **Reward**

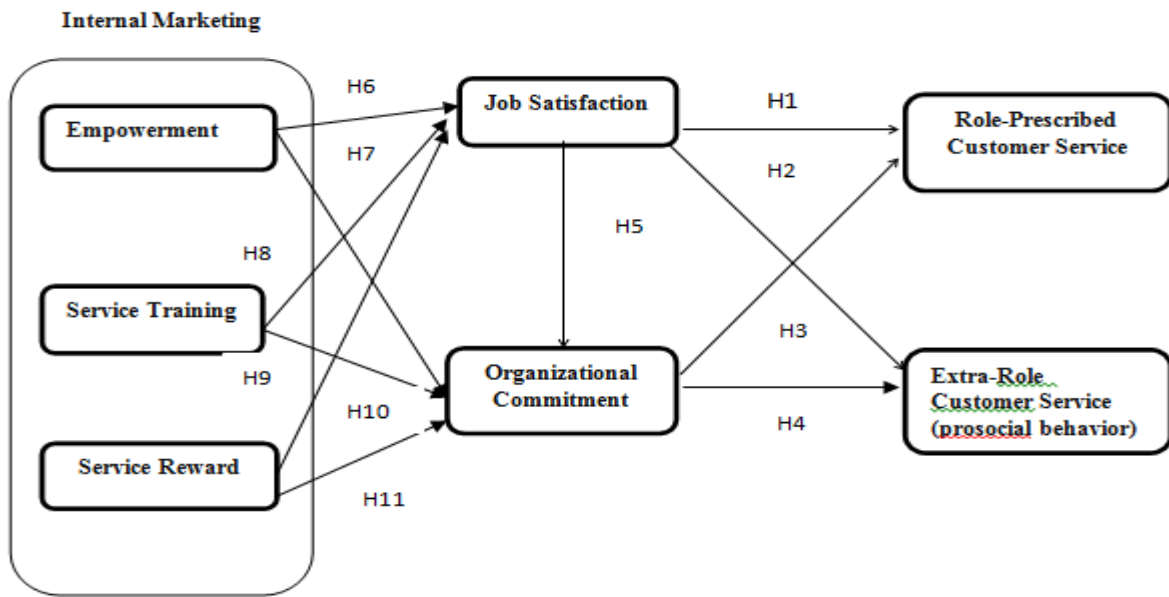
Reward refers to the compensation that is offered for employees' efforts in doing organizations' functions and creativities in finding and applying new methods and procedures. The reward consists of two parts. The first part of the rewards refers to the salaries that employees receive because of their efforts in doing formal functions. Another part of the rewards is offered for employees because of their extra efforts in organization (Saadat, 2007: 253).

With regard to the literature review that has been presented in the past section, the following hypotheses can be developed.

10. Compensation influences employees' job satisfaction significantly.
11. Compensation influences employees' organizational commitment significantly.

### **The conceptual model of study**

The conceptual model of study has been presented in figure 1. The relationships between variables of this model refer to the research hypotheses.



**Fig1: The conceptual model of study (Yong-Ki Lee et al, 2006)**

**Research methodology**

**Research methods:** This study is a descriptive-survey research from methodology view, practical from purpose view, and correlation from identity view. The relationship between research variables is examined in the correlation studies. Because the authors of this study seek to study the relationship between dependent and independent variables, it can be said that this study is a correlation study. In order to collect the research data, both library and field methods have been used.

**Statistical population and sample:** the statistical population of this study includes managers, assistants, and employees of hotels in the city of Isfahan. Because this population is not very large, the authors decided to use census method rather than sampling.

**Data collection method:** in order to collect the research data, both library and field methods have been used. The survey method has been used for collecting the research data in order to confirm or reject the research hypotheses. For this purpose, library method has been used for reviewing the research literature and then a self-administrated questionnaire has been used for collecting the research data.

**Validity of the questionnaire:** reliability refers to degree of generalization of the results of study to a larger population. In order to improve validity of the questionnaire, it is necessary that the questionnaire is reviewed and modified by other experts and professors so that the questionnaire is finalized in a defect-less version. The questionnaire of this study has been developed based on reviewing research literature and then is reviewed and modified by experts and professors for improving its validity.

**Reliability of the questionnaire:** most of the studies that using questionnaire for collecting data use Cronbachs’ Alpha coefficient for examining reliability of the questionnaire. In order to examine reliability of this questionnaire, Cronbachs’ Alpha coefficient has been used in the SPSS. In order to this, 30 questionnaires have been used. This coefficient was 0.91 for our questionnaire. Because the minimum level of Cronbachs’ Alpha coefficient should be 0.70, it can be said that the questionnaire of this study has good and desirable reliability as a data-collection instrument. Also Cronbachs’ Alpha coefficient has been calculated for each items of this questionnaire individually. These findings have been indicated in table 1.

**Table 1: scale, frequency of the questions, and Cronbachs’ Alpha coefficient of the questions**

Variables	Scale type	Number of questions	Cronbachs’ Alpha coefficient
Empowerment	Likert five-point	6	0/76
Service Training	Likert five-point	5	0/71
Job Satisfaction	Likert five-point	6	0/77
Service Reward	Likert five-point	2	0/84
Organizational Commitment	Likert five-point	5	0/75
Role-Prescribed Customer Service	Likert five-point	4	0/87
Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior)	Likert five-point	5	0/84
Total	Likert five-point	33	0/91

**Data analysis**

In order to summarize demographic characteristics of the respondents, 6 questions have been developed. The findings revealed that 69.4% of the respondents were male and 30.7% of them were female. From age perspective, 41.4% of the respondents had 30-39 years old and only 9.3% of them had more than 50 years old. 55% of the respondents had M.Sc. and only 1.4% of them had Ph.D. degree. 37.1% of the respondents had 6-10 years job experiences and only 15% of them had 16-20 years job experiences. About 39.2% of the respondents were managers, 22.9 of them were assistants, and 44.3 were employees. 33.6 of the hotels were three-star and only 1.4 of them were five-star. These results have been indicated in table 2.

As the results revealed, all of the path coefficients were significant and so it can be said that all of the hypotheses of this study are confirmed.

**Table 2: the respondents’ demographic characteristics**



Variable	Levels	%	Variable	Levels	%
Gender	Male	69/3	Educational levels	Less than M.Sc.	27/9
	Female	30/7		M.Sc.	55
				M.A.	15/7
				P.H.D	1/4
Age	>30	26/6	Job experiences	>5	25
	30-39	41/4		6-10	37/1
	40-49	25/7		11-15	22/9
	<50	9/3		16-20	15
Type Of Hotel	One-star	27/9	Post	manager	39/2
	Two-star	27/1		assistant	22/9
	Three-star	33/6			
	Four-star	10			
	Five-star	1/4		employee	44/3

**Measurement model**

Generally, two main models are tested in the structural equation models. The first is measurement model for latent variables. This model refers to the factor loadings of observed variables for latent variables. The goodness of fit measures has been indicated in the following table for all of the latent variables. As indicated in table 3, all of the goodness of fit indexes is in acceptable and in desirable range.

**Table 3: the goodness of fit indexes for structural equation modeling**

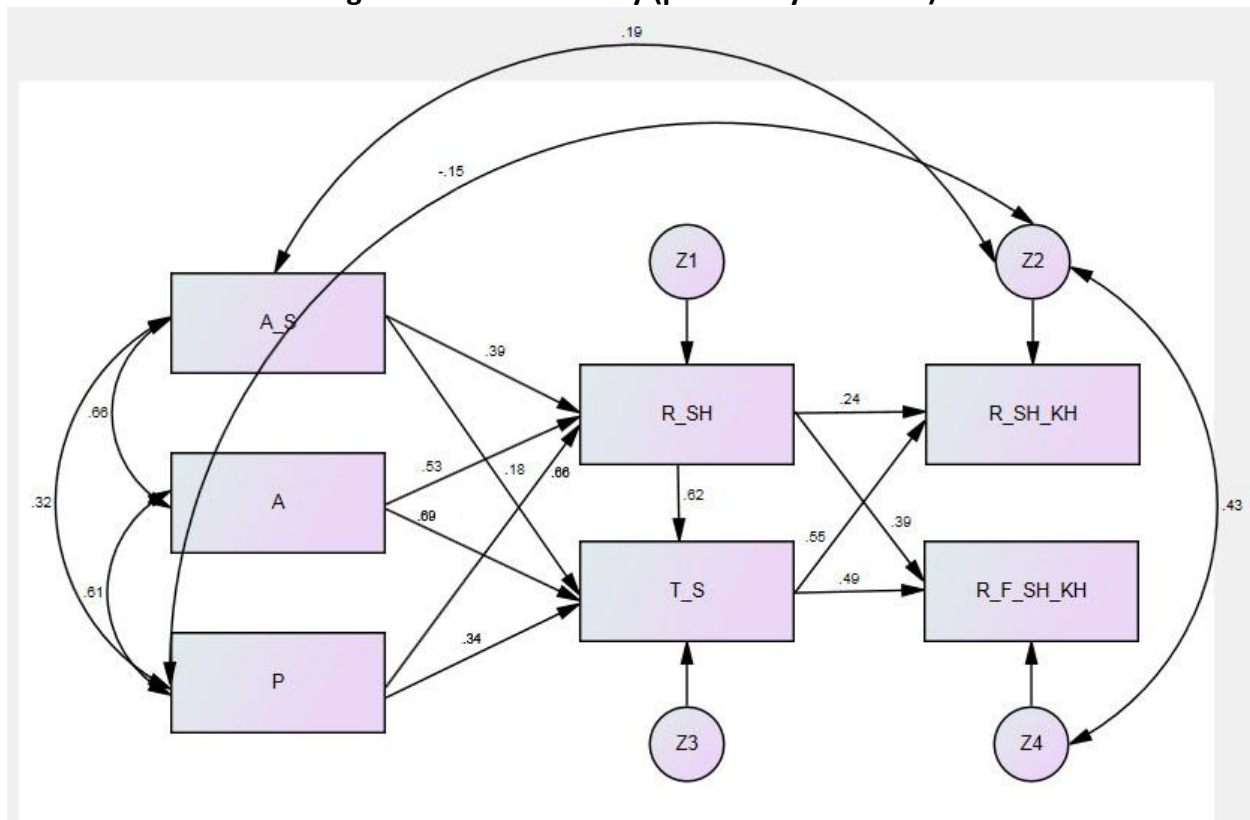
The fit indices	indexes	Secondary model
	NPAR	24
	DF	4
	P >0.05	0.074

<b>Implicit</b>	CMIN (Chi Square)	8/54
	AGFI >0.9	0/881
	GFI >0.9	0/983
<b>Comparative</b>	TLI > 0.9	0/970
	NFI > 0.9	0/990
	CFI > 0.9	0/994
<b>Thrifty</b>	PNFI > 0.5	0/188
	PCFI > 0.5	0.189
	RMSEA <0.08	0.080
	CMIN/DF < 0.5	2/135

### **Structural model**

It is necessary to test the structural model after testing the measurement model. It is possible through structural equation modeling. In order to this, the Amos has been employed. The conceptual model of this study has been showed in figure 2. In order to use Amos, it is should be remembered that  $\gamma$  refers to the effects of external variables on the internal variables and the  $\beta$  refers to the effects of internal variables on each other. In order to examine significance of  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ , it is necessary to examine t-value of every path. If the t-value is more than 2 and is significant, it can be said that all of the paths are confirmed. Therefore, it can be said that all of the research hypotheses are confirmed and all of the paths are significant

**Fig2: the model of study (path analysis model)**



The coefficient of path can be examined through P-value. If the value is less than 0.05, the coefficients are acceptable and vice versa. Therefore, it can be said that all of the research hypotheses are confirmed. The results of examining direct and indirect effects of independent variables on dependent variable have been indicated in table 4.

**Table 4. examining direct and indirect effects of independent variables on dependent variable**

	Secondary hypotheses	Standard coefficient	Standard error	C.R. Critical ratio	p-value	Result
Job Satisfaction...> Role-Prescribed Customer Service	H1	0/235	0/091	2/986	0/003	Is confirmed
Job Satisfaction...> Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior)	H2	0/486	0/085	6/474	***	Is confirmed

Organizational Commitment ---> Role-Prescribed Customer Service	H3	0/389	0/079	5/181	***	Is confirmed
Organizational Commitment---> Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior)	H4	0/550	0/098	7/023	***	Is confirmed
Job Satisfaction---> Organizational Commitment	H5	0/617	0/100	5/692	***	Is confirmed
Empowerment---> Job Satisfaction	H6	0/394	0/067	7/007	***	Is confirmed
Empowerment---> Organizational Commitment	H7	0/178	0/092	2/128	0/033	Is confirmed
Service Training ---> Job Satisfaction	H8	0/534	0/067	7/960	***	Is confirmed
Service Training ---> Organizational Commitment	H9	0/692	0/116	7/244	***	Is confirmed
Service Reward---> Job Satisfaction	H10	0/660	0/092	8/746	***	Is confirmed
Service Reward---> Organizational Commitment	H11	0/335	0/478	4/107	***	Is confirmed
*** P is less than 0.001						

In order to examine the direct and indirect effects of independent variables on the dependent variable, it is necessary to examine the total, direct, and indirect effects for internal variables.

**Table 5: total, direct, and indirect effects**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Job Satisfaction	Empowerment	0/39	0	0/39
	Service Training	0/53	0	0/53
	Service Reward	0/66	0	0/66

Organizational Commitment	Empowerment	0/18	0	0/18
	Service Training	0/69	0	0/69
	Service Reward	0/34	0	0/34
Role-Prescribed Customer Service	Empowerment	0	0/24*0/39	0
	Empowerment	0	0/18*0/55	0
	Service Training	0	0/53*0/24	0
	Service Training	0	0/69*0/55	0
	Service Reward	0	0/66*0/24	0
	Service Reward	0	0/34*0/55	0
	Job Satisfaction	0/24	0	0/24
	Organizational Commitment	0/55	0	0/55
Extra-Role Customer Service (prosocial behavior)	Empowerment	0	0/39*0/39	0
	Empowerment	0	0/18*0/49	0
	Service Training	0	0/53*0/39	0
	Service Training	0	0/69*0/49	0
	Service Reward	0	0/66*0/39	0
	Service Reward	0	0/34*0/49	0
	Job Satisfaction	0/39	0	0/39
	Organizational Commitment	0/49	0	0/49

### Discussion and conclusion

Nowadays, marketing is considered as one of the main strategies in implementing organizational plans. The results of the studies that have been done in this area revealed that internal marketing activities improve organization's competitiveness and also increase socially

learned behaviors among them through encouraging and motivating employees. The results of this study revealed that internal marketing influences socially learned behaviors significantly ( $\beta$ : 0.58). The components of internal marketing include empowerment, education, and reward. Also the results showed that internal marketing influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment among service offenders. The results also revealed that empowerment influences job satisfaction ( $\gamma$ : 0.39) and also empowerment influences organizational commitment significantly ( $\gamma$ : 0.18). The results of the study that has been done by Gunlu et al. (2010) found that increase in job satisfaction results in more organizational commitment. Kirkman and Rosen (1999) found that empowered employees have more organizational commitment. Li (2009) suggested that increase in the employees' capabilities, that the managers use them, is a combination of knowing organizational services and directing them toward higher levels of organizational commitment among employees in the hotel industry. The results of this study revealed that services education influences job satisfaction ( $\gamma$ : 0.53) and also services education influences organizational commitment significantly ( $\gamma$ : 0.69). These results are consistent with results of the study that has been done by Harle et al. (1999). They pointed out that education not only improves the skills and abilities of the employees, but also increase their satisfaction from job and organization. Yap et al. (2010) found that education influences employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The results of our study also revealed that reward influences job satisfaction ( $\gamma$ : 0.66) and also reward influences organizational commitment ( $\gamma$ : 0.34). These findings are consistent with results of the study of Kanter (1993). He indicated that behaviors of the services offenders are influenced by especial reward plans. This means that reward and recognizing excellence services influences job satisfaction significantly. Another part of the results of this study revealed that job satisfaction influences socially learned behaviors ( $\gamma$ : 0.49) and also job satisfaction influences job behaviors of services offenders significantly ( $\gamma$ : 0.24). These findings are consistent with results of the study that has been done by Hoffmand et al. (1992). They found that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job behaviors. McKenzie et al. (1998) found that there is a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and socially learned behaviors. They also pointed out that increase in the employees' job satisfaction results in improved services. In addition, the service employees enjoy from responding the customers' needs and wants that this leads to deliver better services to the customers. Another part of the results revealed that organizational commitment influences socially learned behaviors ( $\gamma$ : 0.55) and also it influences job behaviors of services offenders significantly ( $\gamma$ : 0.39). The result of this part of our study is consistent with findings of Kim and Han (2000). They revealed that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment of services offenders and their socially learned behaviors. They pointed out that services offenders with higher levels of organizational commitment do efforts that are not their formal functions and this is that influences services quality. This means that these employees pay attention to organization's profit. The results of this study also revealed that job satisfaction influences organizational commitment.

### **Limitations of study**

Every author has several limitations in his/her study that some of them exists in beginning of study The most important limitation of this study is poor participation of the respondents (hotel managers, assistants, and employees) for indicating questions. On the other hand, there is an inappropriate culture in this industry and also its managers have sensitivity toward surveys and

questionnaires. This is why that many managers do not desire to indicate questionnaires. Another limitation of this study derives from excepted variables that may be resulted from especial plans and methods that are used in the study. Such variables destroy reliability and validity of the study through different methods. It should be noted that it is not possible to control or eliminate such variables. The authors of this study seek to identify and predict these variables and decrease them. Another limitation of this study is its time interval. Time interval of this study is limited. Is it necessary that time interval of the study is as long as possible to cover the effective factors on the respondents' behaviors. For example, political and economic revolutions can influence the behaviors and decisions of the respondents. Another limitation of this study is its geographical position. In other words, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other cities and industries. Also because statistical population of this study was hotels' employees, the results cannot be generalized to other industries.

### **Future studies suggestions**

With regard to this fact that only three factors (empowerment, rewards, and education) have been examined in this study, it is suggested that the future studies examine other factors such as job security, information sharing, decrease in social gap and also study the effects of them on the socially learned behaviors. Also it is suggested that other effective factors on the socially learned behaviors are examined in the future studies.

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