

Influence of Internal Marketing Dimensions on Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Application in Ecuadorian Co-Operativism

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Abstract

Internal marketing involves planning, implementing, and assessing strategies focused on the internal customer (employee), who, at the same time, looks to strengthen their organizational commitment. In this context, leaders and managers should focus on human capital through policies which encourage the motivation and satisfaction of employees, in a way that they feel committed to the institution which, at the same time, will help the achievement of organizational targets. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to analyze internal marketing dimensions and their possible relationship with organizational commitment. To do so, fieldwork based on a research questionnaire has been developed, aimed at a very important area of the social economy: co-operativism in a developing country. A total of 2,499 surveys were distributed among employees, leaders, and managers of Ecuadorian cooperatives. To describe the possible mediating effect of the research variables, a hierarchical, multiple linear regression analysis was applied. The results reveal that the internal marketing dimensions present statistically significant correlations with the organizational commitment, with the internal communication dimension being its maximum relational exponent. It is also extracted from the study that sociodemographic and works position variables positively influence the relationship between both constructs, presenting higher relational levels when the employee is married, has higher studies and their work contract is temporary.

Keywords

internal marketing, organizational commitment, human resources management, co-operativism, Ecuador

Introduction

The world of business faces constant changes in terms of its economic, political, and social environment, creating permanent instability in the national and international markets (Ramos, 2018). Due to this, it is necessary to rely on human capital that is increasingly more committed to the organization's goals and targets (Zare et al., 2018). In this sense, the socially responsible organizations, such as the cooperative ones, have demonstrated significant growth and progress within the social economy, providing a clear example of a sustainable and successful business model (Coraggio et al., 2011). Because of this, it is necessary to discover the motivations which are behind the appearance of these organizations, as well as analyzing their peculiar characteristics, with the aim of providing a solid basis to reinforce the presence of a liberal economy that is even more globalized. These social entities had, historically, given an appropriate response to the specific and desirable socioeconomic needs of stakeholders (Limnios et al., 2018).

These social economy organizations emerge from the principle of co-operation among them, which suggests that, to work better for its members and areas, they should actively collaborate with other social institutions on a local, national, and international level (Puusa et al., 2016). This leads to the implementation, among other things, of inter-institutional agreements for the transfer of knowledge to strengthen the human resources that work on them, considered a priority for the efficient management of co-operatives. And this is so given that these are the ones who determine service quality, customer satisfaction and the decision to continue acquiring what the co-operative places on the market (Suprihanto et al.,

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2018). In this context, the quality perceived by the customer is closely linked to the performance of the employees, which is necessary for them to feel satisfied and committed to the organization. Because of this, one option to improve employees' commitment is by applying internal marketing strategies, in which the employee is conceived as an internal customer of the organization (Saad et al., 2002).

Internal marketing requires the implementation of a series of strategies directed at motivating, developing, and retaining employees and, as a result, fulfilling the expectations of customers (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2013). Accordingly, we should recognize the importance of this construct because of its approach toward employees, not only considering their position or power within the organization but also the contribution that is created for the external customer and, therefore, for the achievement of organizational goals (Braithwaite, 2016). In this context, Ecuador has had continuous development of the popular and solidarity economy (which includes co-operatives), because of the constitutional regulation given to them. This has allowed for them to be recognized, supervised, and supported by the government. However, Ecuadorian co-operativism needs to strengthen the management of human talent, innovating internal marketing strategies to improve the organizational commitment of employees toward the organization.

The aim of this research is to analyze the internal marketing dimensions and their possible relationship with the organizational commitment of their employees. To do so, an empirical study applied to co-operativism in Ecuador was developed, considering that the co-operative values and principles are well-defined. This also leads to association, co-operative organization, inclusive and fair value chains and market reserves, among others. In this sense, co-operativism becomes a reference point for the social economy, which promotes the generation of decent employment sources that are equal and do not discriminate (Ratner, 2009). Under this connotation, it is worth recognizing the perspectives of the employees regarding the internal marketing strategies applied in the Ecuadorian co-operatives, by means of questions which shall deal with responding to this study, allowing for the support and development of these social organizations. On this basis, the multidimensional internal marketing model proposed by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and Lings (1999) has been considered as a theoretical reference; as well as the one-dimensional organizational commitment model of Porter et al. (1974). These models are adjusted to the specific characteristics of co-operativism, by being part of the social economy and identifying themselves with the emotional nature present in co-operative values.

This study shall address content such as the introduction, followed by the theoretical review of the researched constructs. Afterward, the methodology applied, and the instruments and the procedures used are described. Following this, the results obtained are presented by means of a hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis and the discussion of

these, where the findings are contrasted with other authors. Finally, the conclusions which look to provide an answer to the stated goal are provided, expanding on the limitations and future lines of research.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

The market is becoming increasingly more competitive which means that businesses should look for innovative strategies. It is because of this that they should invest in human capital, considering it is the main intangible asset which they have in an organization (Olson et al., 2018). Therefore, the directors and the people responsible should note, in the current business environment, that employees should be prepared and motivated to address the problems and demands of customers. At the same time, the workers shall have high expectations of their work positions, as a source of personal fulfillment and self-development (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2013). With this idea, internal marketing allows the business to align its strategies with the needs of the internal customer (employee) and, by doing so, provide quality products and services to the external customer (S. Gounaris et al., 2010).

Up until now, Ecuadorian co-operatives have been able to address the current challenges of an increasingly more globalized economy. However, they need a greater degree of knowledge regarding strategies related to internal marketing and other areas relevant to the management of human talent (Navarro & Carmona, 2010). In such a way that it becomes a primordial function in these types of organizations and, therefore, also achieves the satisfaction and loyalty of its external stakeholders (Ainsworth et al., 2016). As such, human resources play a decisive role in this process, encouraging co-operatives to consider their employees as real internal customers (Dilger et al., 2017).

Internal Marketing

Co-operatives should develop instruments to obtain information regarding the expectations and needs of its staff, with the aim of improving employees' satisfaction, skills, and attitudes. This will also lead to them providing a quality service (Puusa et al., 2016). Consequently, internal marketing has emerged specifically as an effective approach to manage human resources (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005). In general, an internal marketing strategy involves performing a series of dimensions focused on giving a response to the needs of the employees (Narteh, 2012; Park & Tran, 2018). From this point of view, this research, in the area of internal marketing, uses the model proposed by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and Lings (1999) as a reference. This model considers the following dimensions associated with the construct analyzed: identify value exchange, internal market segmentation,

internal communication, management concern, training, and work/family.

Specifically, the identify value exchange dimension intends to obtain information from the moment of hiring a new employee to relate their values to the business' (Zebal, 2018). For its part, the dimension known as internal market segmentation consists of the grouping of employee functions into various levels of responsibility (Cerqueira dos Santos et al., 2018; Ruizalba et al., 2014). The dimension of internal communication is considered a main factor in the organization by being the means through which interpersonal relationships are generated (Ali, 2016). In this sense, Albassami et al. (2015) show that internal communication helps the development of the business' activities. The management concern dimension expects that the leaders and the people responsible worry about the present and future expectations of their employees and display good practices to motivate their performance (Chareonwongsak, 2017). Another important component for the employee and the organization is training, which allows for the reliance on staff who are prepared for the activities to be carried out in their workplace, providing an improvement in their performance (Abzari et al., 2011). And, finally, the work/family dimension looks for businesses to develop policies which allow them to harmonize family and work life, in a way that retains their human capital (S. P. Gounaris, 2006).

Organizational Commitment

The first definitions regarding Organizational Commitment determine it as an emotional feeling of employees toward the organization they work in (Buchanan, 1974; Sheldon, 1971). For Porter et al., (1974), it is a strong belief and acceptance of the goals of the organization and its values, which leads the employee to exercise a considerable effort in its name. From these classical concepts of organizational commitment, it can be gathered that it is a multidisciplinary construct which uses theories, principles, methods, and models of different disciplines. More recently, different researchers (among others, Allen & Meyer, 1990; King et al., 2013; Meyer et al., 2002; Neiningner et al., 2010; Yao et al., 2018) define organizational commitment as an attitude which expresses a psychological union between the individual and their organization, that is to say, the degree of active participation and loyalty of the collaborators with their business, which is evidenced by the performance of these for the fulfillment of their organizational goals.

In this sense, the committed employees have, among other attitudes, less chance of leaving or accepting other jobs. As a result, the organization does not incur costs because of staff turnover (Schulz et al., 2017). Therefore, when they are committed and highly qualified, they require less supervision, given that they know the importance and value of combining their goals with those of the organization, because they think of both on a personal level (Kamaruddin, 2018). Among the

different research regarding organizational commitment, there is an open debate regarding dimensionality. In this sense, there is an academic current which defends its multidimensionality (among others, Allen & Meyer, 1990; Gopalakrishnan & Zhang, 2017; Shahid & Zain, 2018), while other authors, among those highlighted by the research of Porter et al. (1974), propose the one-dimensionality of the construct on the basis of a single dimension of emotional nature related to the sensitive part of the individual. This research values the classical one-dimensional model of Porter et al. (1974), considering that the co-operatives and the guiding principles of its management take priority over being human and the community regarding commercial profitability, thus identifying them with the affectivity that the aforementioned model indicates.

Relationships Between Internal Marketing and Organizational Commitment

The internal marketing approach is derived from organizational strategies that determine the business concern of its employees and their needs, dealing with them fairly, equally, and in a way that does not discriminate. As a consideration, employees will feel a sense of union and commitment to the organization. In this sense, there are numerous, recent empirical studies which relate internal marketing to organizational commitment. Thus, Bailey et al. (2016), in a study undertaken by 234 workers in Saudi Arabian financial entities, concluded that there is a positive relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment. Similarly, Ismail and Sheriff (2017) determined that internal marketing significantly influenced organizational commitment in their research of 2,452 employees in the Yemeni banking sector. A year later, Asiamah et al. (2018) completed a study of 717 workers regarding health in Ghana, confirming the positive effect of internal marketing in the organizational commitment of the workers surveyed.

In terms of Latin America, there is little research that has related both constructs. Among those, Torres and Torres (2014) analyze the relationship of internal marketing and organizational commitment of a sample of 279 employees in a public business in Lima (Peru), determining the significant and positive correlations among these variables in the results. For their part, Araque Jaimes et al. (2017), with a sample of 100 employees belonging to Colombian Technological Development Centers, concluded that there is a moderate and significant positive relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment.

Method

Survey Design

The method used was based on fieldwork done with a research survey. The study used a correlational design, given

that it investigated the relationship between internal marketing and the organizational commitment of the employees of Ecuadorian co-operatives. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship of the independent and dependent variables. For its part, it used a hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis to identify the effect that may specify the application of internal marketing strategies for the organizational commitment of workers, bearing in mind sociodemographic and work position variables.

Data Collection

At the beginning, the purpose of the study was explained to the leaders of each co-operative, requesting their respective permission to survey employees and directors. Its application was done on-site with the purpose of addressing any doubts the respondents may have. However, a small proportion was completed online in the co-operatives of the rural area of Ecuador, due to the difficulty of being present. The fieldwork took place between February 1 and March 15, 2018. For its development, it relied on the support of a team of surveyors linked to the Eloy Alfaro de Manabí Lay University (Ecuador). The questionnaires were provided in Spanish. The target sample of the study consisted of 2,499 employees and people in charge from Ecuadorian co-operatives (1,700 financial workers and 900 nonfinancial workers), with a rejection rate of 3.88%. This corresponds to 101 questionnaires which were not valid due to a lack of details. The length of the survey did not exceed 15 min in any case.

Measuring

For the completion of the fieldwork, an instrument derived from the adaptation of two measuring scales was applied. For internal marketing, the theoretical model proposed by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and Lings (1999) was used as a reference, which determined the use of Ruizalba et al., (2014) questionnaire. This instrument consists of six dimensions and 22 items that specified, in the aforementioned study, several appropriate goodness-of-fit indexes, which suggests the validity of the model. Similarly, the application of Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.90) reached a heightened reliability.

For their part, in terms of organizational commitment, the single dimension theoretical model of Porter et al. (1974) and Mowday et al. (1979) was used, applying the questionnaire of 15 items proposed by Hidalgo-Fernández et al. (2020). This questionnaire has recently been validated and adapted for the co-operative sector of Ecuador, with this research presenting worthy goodness-of-fit indexes. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.855) indicated a high level of reliability.

In any case, the application of the previously validated whole instrument was also reviewed by various experts in the field of social economy in Ecuador, to address the

possible concerns regarding terminology in its adaption and application. Moreover, the communal matrix was performed so as to discover the appropriateness of the items (Table 1). The questionnaires are presented with a structure of open and closed questions, in aspects related to the work position and sociodemographic data. For their part, the items related to the constructs of this research are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where the options for the people surveyed range from 1 = *completely disagree* to 5 = *completely agree*. Definitively, this instrument includes 37 items, 22 of them grouped into the six internal marketing dimensions and 15 items which correspond to organizational commitment.

Sample and Sampling Error

The target population of this study includes employees and people in charge of Ecuadorian co-operatives. It is classified as (a) financial, while at the same time being subdivided into Segments 1 to 5 (in terms of the figure of their assets), and (b) nonfinancial which is classified by the following branches of activity: services, housing, production, and consumption (Superintendencia de Economía Popular y Solidaria, 2017). A stratified sample was carried out, where 2,499 properly completed surveys were obtained. A confidence level of 95% and the sampling error of $\pm 1.89\%$ were estimated. Table 2 reflects the main data corresponding to the sample.

In relation to the sample, it is interesting to highlight that the majority of employees have a stable working relationship, by means of a permanent contract. It can also be seen that there is a highlighted number of employees with a level of studies of non-compulsory secondary education or lower and official university degrees. This comes from the characteristics of the sample, where we have organizations dedicated to the financial environment (Savings and Credit co-operatives), with a habitually higher level of education and, nonfinancial, including various activities, such as those indicated previously, and whose educational levels are usually lower. In terms of compensation, most employees receive salaries of between US\$500 and US\$750, placing them above the monthly minimum wage (US\$398.00) in force in Ecuador.

Data Analysis

Once the refinement of the data was completed, SPSS v.23 software was used to calculate the statistics for parametric data to each one of the elements, studying its asymmetry, along with normality at a multivariant level. Afterward, Pearson's linear correlation coefficient (r) was applied, to determine the relationship of the constructs. In the end, multivariant hierarchical linear regression was performed, to identify the effect of the sociodemographic and work position variables in the relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment.

Table 1. Communalities Internal Marketing and Organizational Commitment.

Internal marketing	Comunalidad
Identify value exchange (IVE)	
IM1 Your employees needs	0.588
IM2 Meetings between manager and employee	0.792
IM3 Inquiry of expectations	0.787
IM4 Prove labor satisfaction	0.668
Internal market segmentation (IMS)	
IM5 Well-defined groups	0.785
IM6 Design of socialized politics	0.745
IM7 Equal opportunities	0.748
Internal communication (IC)	
IM8 Interest in management	0.697
IM9 Communication of unemployment	0.705
IM10 Permanent attention to employee	0.720
IM11 Direct information from management	0.533
Management concern (MC)	
IM12 Inversion of resources on employees	0.727
IM13 Ones necessities creates politics	0.677
IM14 Management mediator of conflict	0.764
IM15 Personalized attention toward employee	0.708
IM16 Management compression	0.636
Training (TR)	
IM17 Communication about new changes	0.738
IM18 Permanent training	0.698
IM19 Training for new positions	0.800
Work/family (WFB)	
IM20 Compassion toward family necessities	0.787
IM21 Support of work/family relationship	0.858
IM22 Encourages an equilibrium between work and family	0.746
Organizational commitment	Comunalidad
OC1: I am willing to make a big effort to contribute to the success of this cooperative.	0.620
OC2: When I talk with my friends I tell them my cooperative is a great place to work in. cooperative	0.783
OC3: I feel loyalty toward my cooperative.	0.556
OC4: I would accept nearly any task to keep my job here. Cooperative	0.793
OC5: I consider that my values and the cooperative's management are very similar.	0.657
OC6: I feel proud to say I am part of this cooperative.	0.738
OC7: I would not mind working in another cooperative if the kind of job was similar.	0.645
OC8: Management contributes to my motivation to work in the cooperative.	0.614
OC9: In my current situation, I would not be affected by leaving the cooperative.	0.636
OC10: I am delighted by having chosen this cooperative and not another to work	0.627
OC11: It is not worth working in this cooperative indefinitely.	0.681
OC12: I usually disagree with the corporate policies toward employees.	0.676
OC13: I care a lot about this cooperative's future.	0.522
OC14: For me, this is the best cooperative to work in.	0.712
OC15: The decision to work here has been a mistake on my behalf.	0.671

Source. Own elaboration.

Note. IM = internal marketing; OC = organizational commitment.

Results

Correlation Matrix

The initial approaches of this research stem from internal marketing having a direct effect on organizational commitment. To determine this relationship, Pearson's linear correlation coefficient (r) was applied among the dimensions of internal marketing and organizational commitment where

the maximum correlation among the variables did not exceed .70. As such, no problems of multicollinearity that may affect the findings of the study are presented.

In Table 3, the descriptive statistics of the scores obtained in the research questionnaires applied are shown. Here, it can be seen that the organizational commitment is correlated, in a way that is statistically significant and positive, with all the dimensions of internal marketing. The dimension of internal

Table 2. Sample Composition.

Variable	N	%
Age (years)		
18–29	817	32.7
30–39	1,122	44.9
40–49	465	18.6
50–59	80	3.2
>60	15	0.6
Sex		
Woman	1,414	56.6
Man	1,085	43.1
Type of contract		
Permanent	2,256	90.3
Temporary	243	9.7
Education		
Post-compulsory secondary education or lower	1,150	46
Professional technician	68	2.7
Diploma	159	6.4
University degree	1,049	42
MSc or PhD	73	2.9
Compensation		
<500	830	33.2
500–750	1,000	40
750–1,000	398	15.9
1,000–1,500	179	7.2
1,500–2,000	93	3.7

Source: Own elaboration.

communication ($r = .480, p < .001$) is the one that presents the best relationship. This latest result confirms the importance of an appropriate internal communication policy between employees and leaders of the Ecuadorian co-operative sector so as to have an efficient, strategic management of human resources. In general, it is considered that internal marketing looks to keep employees motivated, satisfied, and that they feel proud of belonging to the co-operative, which is reflected in greater productivity and commitment to the performance of their job.

For its part, Table 4 presents the coefficient values of correlation among the sociodemographic and work position variables with organizational commitment. The details reflect a statistically significant relationship.

Multivariate Analysis

To determine the purpose of sociodemographic variables, the work position, and the dimensions of internal marketing in organizational commitment, a hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was completed. In a way that, first of all, the sociodemographic variables were introduced followed by the job variables and, finally, the internal marketing dimensions.

In Table 5, the regression model is shown. In Stage 1, it was observed that marital status and having higher education

positively influenced organizational commitment, accounting for 8.6% of this construct's variance. These findings appear to indicate the increase in this construct derived from the economic responsibility of having a family (among married workers), and with particular interest in being promoted and improving their compensation and status within the organization (among the workers with a greater level of studies).

The addition of variables in the work position in Stage 2, reached a variance percentage of 15.4%. Because of this, maintaining the sociodemographic variables which presented a significant effect in Stage 1 (marital status and level of studies), another positive effect resulted: age (the older someone is meant a lower organizational commitment score). We can interpret this as the case because the older employee is less interested in doing their job excellently, considering that they already contributed enough to the organization in the past and is only hoping to reach the required retirement age (65 years of age in Ecuador). In terms of variables for the job, those shown to have a positive relationship were as follows: the type of contract (a temporary worker makes a greater effort to keep their job and, therefore, to have greater work stability); the salary (those with a greater salary have a greater commitment), considering that it is a primordial factor for the motivation of the employee; and belonging to the management department in the co-operative increases organizational commitment (being in administration decreases organizational commitment in terms of being an operative).

In Stage 3, the internal marketing dimensions are included in the model, showing a significant increase in the percentage of explained variability, reaching 42.1% in this stage. Accordingly, the sociodemographic variables and the work position (age, studies, type of contract, and department) maintained their effect regarding organizational commitment. Regarding the dimensions of internal marketing, organizational commitment is significantly associated with high levels in the dimensions of identify value exchange ($B = .084, p < .001$), internal communication ($B = .111, p < .001$), management concern ($B = .052, p = .001$), training ($B = .039, p = .004$), and work/family ($B = .086, p < .001$).

Discussion

The results of the research confirm the relationship of internal marketing and organizational commitment, in accordance with the terms suggested in previous studies, which, in most cases, have been performed in developing countries. This suggests leaving to one side an important part of the territories, considering that the patterns of market evolution are not always valid for all the countries, given their specific economic and cultural nature (Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2018). Accordingly, there is a breach in the research referring to developing countries and even more so in the social economy sector such as co-operatives, which are essentially ruled by principals such as mutual assistance. These organizations

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and Correlation Coefficient Between Internal Marketing and Organizational Commitment.

Internal marketing dimensions	M	SD	IVE	IMS	IC	MC	TR	WFB
Identify value exchange (IVE)	4.11	0.82	I					
Internal market segmentation (IMS)	4.13	0.88	.619*	I				
Internal communication (IC)	4.18	0.74	.715*	.587*	I			
Management concern (MC)	4.04	0.81	.645*	.636*	.697*	I		
Training (TR)	4.22	0.80	.505*	.617*	.490*	.520*	I	
Work/family (WFB)	4.15	0.88	.537*	.506*	.604*	.630*	.570*	I
Organizational commitment	3.89	0.47	.459*	.395*	.480*	.459*	.392*	.461*

*p < .001.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficient Between Sociodemographic and Work Position Variables and Organizational Commitment.

Construct	Sex = woman	Age	Marital status = married	Marital status = single	Studies = higher	Contract type = Permanent	Salary	Management department	Administration department
Organizational Commitment	0.213*	0.211*	0.308***	-0.197*	0.357***	-0.263***	0.215**	0.367***	-0.429***

Source. Own elaboration.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

expect reciprocity and balance in the employee-organization activities, which leads to organizational commitment (S. Gounaris et al., 2010).

Therefore, empirical research is essential to address these constructs in the geographic areas and activity, as well as the possible influence of sociodemographic (sex, age, marital status and level of studies) and work position (type of contract, salary and department) variables, some of which may be determining factors in the relationship between internal marketing, and organizational commitment. In general, planning and implementing internal marketing strategies and activities leads to an increase in organizational commitment among the workers of Ecuadorian co-operatives. This suggestion is supported by the hypotheses of recent studies (among others, Asiamah et al., 2018; Bailey et al., 2016; Ismail & Sheriff, 2017; Schulz et al., 2017) that coincide with the positive relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment.

In this context, the study of Asiamah et al., 2018 highlights that employment, training, income, and promotion increase the level of workers' organizational commitment, with income (salaries) having a greater implication on internal marketing. For their part, Bailey et al. (2016) present a significant relationship among the constructs, without highlighting any sociodemographic aspect that may influence the increase of organizational commitment. In the Latin American environment, Torres and Torres (2014) proposed a relationship of both constructs measured by variables such as sex, age, and length of service. In this study, it shows that at an older age and a longer length of service, there was greater commitment from the workers.

However, the results of this research show different conclusions. In this sense, it is specified that older workers of the

co-operatives present a lower level of organizational commitment. This could be because they may consider that they have already made a great effort due to their years of work and all that expect is retirement. Therefore, this presents an interesting result regarding marital status, where married workers have a greater level of organizational commitment than single people, looking to stay permanently in the organization that allows them to maintain an appropriate income for their household. However, regarding the academic level and its influence on organizational commitment, the differences may be due to the important presence of financial co-operatives in the Ecuadorian social economy, mainly savings and credit co-operatives. In these, the academic and cultural level of its employees is higher than other types of co-operatives, where, in addition, they may reach positions of greater responsibility and social recognition which leads to a greater organizational commitment.

This study shows the link between internal marketing and organizational commitment, where this last construct is the result of the emotional response of employees to the internal marketing practices focused on the following: identify value exchange (empowerment in the organization), internal market segmentation, internal communication, management concern, work/family (compensation or incentives for workers), and training (development in the job). This determines that all the dimensions are statistically significant.

In any case, the dimension with the greatest relationship is internal communication, given the important contribution of appropriate communication among the different internal stakeholders of an organization for its efficient and sustainable management. In this sense, the leaders of the co-operatives should develop internal communication by being a fundamental tool for generating participation, integration,

Table 5. Influence of Demographic Variables, Job, and Internal Marketing in Organizational Commitment.

Demographic variables	Stage 1			Stage 2			Stage 3		
	B (SE)	t	p-value	B (SE)	t	p-value	B (SE)	t	p-value
Sex (Woman vs. Man)	.038 (.02)	1.925	.054	.055 (.02)	2.715	.007	.072 (.017)	4.168	<.001
Age	-.013 (.013)	-1.027	.304	-.031 (.014)	-2.144	.032	-.019 (.012)	-1.603	.109
Marital status									
Other	Ref.			Ref.			Ref.		
Married	.11 (.024)	4.611	<.001	.102 (.024)	4.245	<.001	.03 (.021)	1.479	.139
Single	.014 (.027)	0.529	.597	.01 (.027)	0.373	.709	-.023 (.023)	-0.99	.322
Studies (Higher vs. Basic)	.152 (.019)	7.889	<.001	.114 (.021)	5.317	<.001	.04 (.019)	2.162	.031
Contract type (Permanent vs. Temporary)				-.12 (.033)	-3.692	<.001	-.121 (.029)	-4.248	<.001
Length of service				.001 (.001)	0.121	.904	.001 (.001)	0.233	.816
Salary				.031 (.01)	2.932	.003	-.011 (.009)	-1.233	.218
Department									
Operations				Ref.			Ref.		
Management				.079 (.028)	2.804	.0005	.052 (.024)	2.172	.03
Administration				-.099 (.022)	-4.456	<.001	-.08 (.019)	-4.194	<.001
Internal marketing									
Identify value exchange							.084 (.015)	5.619	<.001
Internal market segmentation							.006 (.014)	0.462	.644
Internal communication							.111 (.017)	6.351	<.001
Management concern							.052 (.016)	3.289	.001
Training							.039 (.014)	2.849	.004
Work/family							.086 (.013)	6.726	<.001
R ² fitted		8.6			15.4			42.1	
ΔR ² fitted					6.8***			26.7***	
Model			F(5.2476) = 19.361, p < .001			F(10.2471) = 17.451, p < .001			F(16.2465) = 74.236, p < .001

***p < .001.

Bold values denote statistical significance at the p < .05 level.

SE: standard error.

and a sense of belonging, becoming an important factor for the achievement of the goals of the organization.

Conclusion

Internal market and organizational commitment have revolutionized the business market in recent years by being directly linked to the management of human capital, a primordial factor for the achievement of the organization's goals. Considering that internal marketing consists of adopting strategies to satisfy the needs of the internal customer and that organizational commitment is the emotional link established between the employee and the business, it can be understood that both have a narrow relationship. Under this point of view, diverse empirical study has been conducted and has analyzed both constructs in areas of activity that are quite different or separate, because of which, there is a lack of academic work studying this relationship, specifically in the social economy organizations.

In addition, the analysis of these constructs may be considered innovative for Latin America. This suggests that the completion of empirical research in geographical areas that

are less economically developed shall help the strengthening of employee commitment. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that improving the practices related to internal marketing in Ecuadorian co-operatives, employee commitment may increase.

The implications of theories provide an internal marketing model which allows for the design, implementation, and assessment of strategies focused on the dimensions of this construct: identify value exchange, internal market segmentation, internal communication, management concern, training, and work/family. These positively influence the commitment of co-operative employees. In addition to this, this study supports the idea that internal marketing dimensions are a form of identifying the needs of the employees of these organizations, bearing in mind that their main goal is the provision of quality services to their associates.

In practice, the findings of the study provide important contributions and implications for the professional workers and managers of the co-operatives, as well as the people in charge who are responsible for supervision and growth. Because of this, it is recommended that the leaders of the co-operatives establish effective initiatives to develop their internal marketing

strategies and, in this way, contribute to improving and strengthening the emotional relationship between the employees and the organization. As such, the practice of internal marketing should be designed and executed in such a way that they can guarantee that they cover the employees' expectations. It is important to consider that these constructs provide sustainable, competitive advantages in national and international markets, within an increasingly more globalized economy.

The main restriction of this study comes from the partial difficulty in the completion of the fieldwork, due to the target sample of study being spread throughout Ecuador, with there being areas that are underrepresented. For future lines of research, it is proposed to extend the study to other developing countries. As well, it could be expanded to other types of social economy organizations and even beyond it. It could also include other constructs such as sustainable development or corporate social responsibility.

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