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The Impact of Internal Marketing on "Green" Management of Intellectual Capital

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between internal marketing and "green" management of intellectual capital by testing correlations between internal marketing and knowledge capital, the development of "green" employees, "green" organisational culture and the "green" reputation of the organization. A questionnaire of 20 items was sent by e-mail via Google docs, to firms that employ more than 250 employees and have received awards for their working environment. Data collection lasted from July to November of 2020 and 609 questionnaires were collected. Results strongly confirmed the correlations between facilitation of flow information and maintenance of knowledge capital, informal communication and the development of "green" employees, participatory and supportive character of internal marketing programmes and the adoption of a "green" culture and internal customers' satisfaction and the development of the organization's "green" reputation, thus indicating a new perspective in a macro-level management. Managers need to adopt a contemporary perspective of managing the intangible assets of the organization. Integration of internal marketing practices can foster the maintenance of knowledge capital, the development of "green" employees and achieve the reinforcement of "green" organisational culture and the reputation of the organization. There is no previous research attempting to explore how the "green" management of specific elements of intellectual capital are correlated with internal marketing.

Keywords: internal marketing, "green" intellectual capital, knowledge capital, "green" employees, "green" organisational culture, "green" reputation.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations, in their efforts to address external challenges, realize that the answer lies within their internal environment. The available resources, tangible and intangible, the skills of the staff and the way they are used by the company, are the factors that make the organisation special and are related to its performance since they form the basis of the design of its strategy. Companies adopt modern approaches regarding the management of their intangibles and apply practices from different fields such as internal marketing, human capital management, organizational behavior and organisational reputation management, in order to diversify and improve their effectiveness. While there is an extensive literature regarding internal [3, 24, 33, 35, 61, 64, 74, 71, 78, 79, 80] and the management of "green" intellectual capital [15, 16, 49, 66,

86], little focus has been given in exploring the relationship between internal marketing and intellectual capital by integrating them at the same time with the environmental mainstream.

The concept of internal marketing is linked to the concept of employee welfare and the creation of a working environment where the needs and desires of employees are met and guaranteed to be at a high level [64, 71, 78, 79, 80]. Ahmed and Rafiq [3], de Farias [24], George [33], Greene et al. [35], Parkash et al. [61] and Sohl [74] have highlighted the importance of internal marketing as a means of implementing company's strategy as the implementation of relevant programmes reduces isolation and confrontations, bends resistance to change, resulting in motivated employees. It therefore contributes to the achievement of the organisation's goals. "Green" management of intellectual capital consists a contemporary approach that concentrates researchers' interest [15, 17, 18, 66, 84, 86] as it reflects the "green" conversion of organisations and the strengthening of their "green" consciousness by making the best possible use of their intangible assets. Firms realise that they are an integral part of the environment and therefore their sustainability is directly linked to it. Organisations are adopting new strategies that focus on their "green" character and try to find practices and procedures to reduce their ecological footprint at the same time as ensuring their economic survival [2].

This research correlates the relationships developed between internal marketing and specific elements of intellectual capital. It explores the associations of internal marketing with the maintenance of knowledge capital, the development of "green" employees, the promotion of "green" culture and the building of a "green" reputation for the organisation. The above elements were selected in such a way as to cover the three dimensions of intellectual capital. The development of employees and the maintenance of knowledge capital are examined in the context of the management of human capital and the organisational culture within the structural capital of the organisation. Furthermore, the dimension of relational capital is examined with regard to the reputation of the organisation.

This study aims to provide new perspectives regarding the dynamic role of internal marketing and highlights contemporary managerial directions by integrating issues that concern employees, organisation and society. By conducting quantitative research, the relationship among between internal marketing, maintenance of knowledge capital, development of "'green"' employees, adoption of "'green"' culture, and building a "'green"' reputation is examined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dynamic role of internal marketing

Concept of internal marketing has been documented through research its relationship with the adoption of new values and new culture [36, 40, 63] , knowledge management [9], the transition of a company to a learning organisation [29], reinforcing employees commitment [10, 70], value creation [13], organisational agility and reinforcing branding awareness [14, 28, 53]. In addition, internal marketing is a tool to detect the personal needs of employees and creates value because by meeting employees' needs they feel secure, strengthen their dedication and thus ensure the alignment of their values with the objectives of the organisation [5, 15, 34, 38, 39, 45, 47, 68, 71, 77, 85]. Therefore, internal marketing proves its dynamic role in the corporate environment.

The above concepts, organisational culture, employee satisfaction and loyalty, organisation learning, value creation and enhancing brand awareness have been examined in the context of intellectual capital management [20, 25, 27, 44, 50, 67] and the importance of their relationship has been highlighted. Therefore, the relationship of internal marketing with the above concepts leads to its correlation with the management of intellectual capital.

"Green" Intellectual Capital"

The sustainability of the organisation presupposes the integration of "green" approaches into the organisation's strategy and the success of such an operation lies in the determination of the management and commitment to the goals [2].

Chang and Chen [15] examined the relationship between corporate social responsibility and "green" intellectual capital taking into account the role of environmental awareness at both individual and organisation level. At the individual level, the proper communication of the company's "green" orientation to employees cultivates and strengthens their environmental attitudes and thus encourages proactive environmental behaviors.

Moreover, Chen [18] explored the relationship between "green" intellectual capital management and competitive advantage and concluded that all dimensions of "green" intellectual capital ("green" human capital, "green" organisational/structural and "green" relational capital) are positively correlated with competitive advantage and the more effective the management of "green" intellectual capital the more powerful the competitive advantage.

"Green" Human Capital – Maintenance of Knowledge Capital and Development

Management of human capital is one of the three dimensions of intellectual capital. Nerdrum and Erikson [54, p.127] define it as: "individuals' complementary capacity to generate added value and thus create wealth".

Yosoff et al. [84] focus on sustainable resource exploitation and promoting environmental awareness by encouraging initiatives that promote "green" culture and the achievement of the organisation's "green" objectives. Relevant studies confirm the inextricable link between "green" human resource management practices and environmental management [60, 66, 69].

Ahmad [2] argues that "green" human resource management is being developed in two pillars: environmentally friendly practices and the maintenance of knowledge capital. "Green" practices aim to identify and activate "green" common denominators and seek to raise awareness and commitment among employees as well as increased responsibility in environmental matters it is hoped that employees adopt this attitude in their personal lives thus creating "green" knowledge capital. "Green" human capital management practices motivate employees, contribute to a better understanding of the effort to create a "green" culture, become more productive as they find meaning in carrying out their tasks, enrich their skills and reinforce the trend towards innovation [26].

An organisation that adopts "green" human resource management and development policies ensures the free flow of information and ensures that employees have unhindered access to databases. Employees are able to have a complete picture of the organisation, develop new skills, become more creative in recognising and appreciating the working environment that

provides them with these opportunities and for this reason low turnover rates are recorded [32, 52, 57]. Through internal marketing practices, the organisation highlights actions, enhancing information sharing and transparency. In this way it contributes to the maintenance of knowledge capital as the organization's actions facilitate the smooth flow of information in order to maintain its knowledge capital, the following hypothesis H1 is formed :

H1: The facilitation of information flow impacts the maintenance of knowledge capital

Mampra [49] correlates "green" intellectual capital management with all human resource management practices that encourage the sustainable use of a company's resources and promote the environmental awareness of employees, which in turn enhances employees' satisfaction.

Zoogah [86] describes "green" intellectual capital management as all practices, philosophy and policies designed to promote the rational use of the organisation's resources and prevent behaviors/actions that harm the environment. Renwick et al. [66] argue that "green" intellectual capital management is aimed at enhancing "green" behavior, motivating employees to think "green" and creating opportunities for employees to acquire knowledge and skills related to environmental sustainability. The achievement of the above dictates the integration of the environmental objectives of the organisation into the processes of intellectual capital management. Essentially reference has been made to "green" functions of human resource management ("green" attraction and retention of personnel, "green" training, "green" evaluation and so on [56], which in turn will lead to resource savings, attract the most talented people, enhance the reputation of the organisation and create a competitive advantage [1].

Khan and Khan [43] and Jia et al. [46] focus on the flexible, friendly and informal communication style. A communication style that respects the needs and interests of employees is what will speed up the processes and lead to the desired results as through the "green" practices of human resource management, the "green" passion of employees is reinforced. In this context, the hypothesis H2 follows:

H2: Informal communication affects the development of "green" employees

"Green" organisational/structural capital – Organisational culture

Organisational/structural capital is the second dimension of intellectual capital and includes all the intangible elements that characterize an organisation and concern culture-values, "green" innovation, information systems and the working environment [62].

Organisational culture is an important asset in the organisation's toolbox and a strong culture can lead to positive results at both employee and organisational level. Research [22, 23, 29, 63, 87] has underlined the important role of organisational culture in the adoption of environmental values and practices. The success of the environmental project is directly linked to both the value system of the employees and the open, supportive culture, which facilitates the dissemination of information and encourages communication and the exchange of views.

Harris and Crane [40] and Wang [81] refer to "green" organisational culture which raises challenges and new data for employees and managers (adopting new values, gaining competitive advantage) while stressing the supporting role that the organisation's policies and activities should have. In addition, internal marketing programmes contribute to the change of

organisational culture and the adoption of new values [36, 40]. Therefore, internal marketing programmes that are in line with the support of employees, contribute to the adoption of environmental values. H3 is formed within this context:

H3: The supportive character of internal marketing programmes is correlated with the adoption of "green" culture

"Green" Relational Capital – The reputation of organisation

Relational capital, the third dimension of intellectual capital is not limited to relationships with customers and suppliers. Initially, Bontis (1998) referred only to the organisation's relations with customers but very soon other dimensions such as strategic alliances, partnerships, the supply chain and reputation of the company were examined and were even studied in the context of environmental awareness [7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 50, 73, 75, 76, 82, 83].

Environmental trends have affected consumers' behavior and have changed the criteria on which they base their purchase intention. Armitage et al. [6] link the identity and reputation of the company to economic and environmental performance [17, 18, 19, 21, 48, 55, 59, 65]. Corporate identity gives particular impetus to the organisation as long as it meets the ever-increasing demands of consumers which is a priority in their minds.

The organisation's commitment to new values, enhances the corporate reputation and identity of the organization, which is the vehicle to enter new markets and attract new customers [17, 18, 50, 56].

According to Tortosa et al. [78] communication, and in particular informal information gathering, is an important factor in the relationship between internal marketing and consumer satisfaction. This is because informal information collection is based on emotion since in order to express an opinion freely, one must feel safe and feel that one's opinion really matters. This enhances employees' satisfaction as they feel that they enjoy consumer confidence and their behavior is intending to meet customers' needs [71, 77]. Organisation's reputation is positively correlated with job satisfaction [4] and consequently attract talented and committed employees, who in turn confirm and reinforce the existing organisation's reputation. Therefore, the extent to which organisations intend to build a "green" reputation, they can achieve it through employees' satisfaction. In this context hypothesis H4 is developed:

H4: The satisfaction of internal customers affects the building of a "green" reputation for the organisation

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in the context of the ethical principles of conducting studies. Participation was voluntary, all participants were informed of the purpose of the survey and every effort was made to protect the privacy and personal data of the participants.

Data collection

The sampling frame derived from companies operating in Greece with more than 250 employees These companies have been distinguished and awarded for their working environment and have established themselves among the best companies according to the institution ***Great Place to Work*** [37]. The evaluation of the working environment of these

companies reflects their organisational culture from the point of view of the employees and it was considered that their selection best serves the research objectives of this research.

The sample of participants was based on random sampling as all units constituting the population have the same probability of selection as no specific criteria or conditions for participation have been set.

Completion of the questionnaire during the pilot test lasted 15-20 minutes. The questionnaire was sent electronically via the Google docs application to 16 companies that employ around 5600 employees. Overall 609 questionnaires were electronically submitted recording a 10.87% response rate. The collection of questionnaires lasted five (5) months from July to November 2020.

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire of 20 closed, classified items (a Likert scale of 5 points : I disagree – I probably disagree – I neither agree nor disagree – I probably agree – I agree). The second section includes questions relating to demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of education, job, work experience.

A pilot test was also carried out on a 26-person convenience sample to ensure that all questions were understandable and to record any comments concerning either a rewording of the question or some improvements regarding syntax. The pilot test identified a double-entry question, which was deleted immediately as improvements were made to the two questions' syntax.

Sample Design

In terms of the demographics characteristics of the participants, 44% of respondents were female while 50% were male. Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents (38.7%) ranged from 41 to 54 years old, 29.0% belong to the age group 31-40, while 16.1 % were up to 30 years old and 6.5% were over 55 years old. The level of education was high as 40.9% of respondents held a master's degree, 47.3% had a university education and 5.4% had only received secondary education. Survey participants also had many years of experience as 49% had worked more than 15 years. Finally, regarding the position of responsibility of the respondents, 56% were employees, 31% were heads of department and 7% were senior managers.

In summary, the sample consisted of people who are at the most productive age, with a high educational level and who have many years of work experience.

Measures

The design of the questionnaire used in this survey concerning internal marketing practices and management of green intellectual capital was based on the following questionnaires already used in similar surveys; their validity has been confirmed:

1. Joung [39] - *(internal marketing, item No 8,14)*
2. Bailey et al. [8] - *(internal marketing, item No 1,2)*
3. Tortoza et al. [78] - *(internal marketing orientation, item No 6,7)*

4. Seleim and Khalil [72] - *(knowledge management – intellectual capital, item No 4,5)*
5. Chang and Chen [15] - *(green intellectual capital, item No 6,13)*
6. Wang [81] - *(organisational green culture, item No 3,17,18,20)*
7. Huang and Kung [42] - *(green intellectual capital, item No 9,10,11,12,15,16,19)*

RESULTS

Reliability and validity

The reliability of all items ranges from >0.70 and the overall reliability of internal consistency is 0.957. Therefore, the questionnaire becomes reliable by allowing for safe conclusions to be drawn (Table 1).

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,957	20

The degree of validity (MMO) of the survey is 0.839 and p=0.000. The condition to be met is p<0,05, so the sample is sufficient and the variables show a high degree of correlation (Table 2)

Table 2 : KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,839
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	28459,106
	df	990
	Sig.	,000

Hypotheses testing

The SPSS statistical programme was used to process the quantitative data and the examination of the hypotheses was carried out through the Crosstabs process, which produces correlation tables and with x^2 factor (Pearson Chi-square) we will examine whether the variables are independent.

H1: The facilitation of information flow impacts the maintenance of knowledge capital

Data processing confirms the first hypothesis and highlights the importance of the following items in maintaining knowledge capital (Table 3).

Table 3: Facilitating information flow and maintenance of knowledge capital

Items	Pearson Chi-SquareTests	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
1. The internal communication channels are very important to me.	*696.460*	*.001*
2. The organisation reinforces learning processes.	*392.322*	*.000*
3. I am particularly pleased that it is very difficult for the competitors to imitate us.	*228.233*	*.002*
4. I sincerely appreciate that there is information about the company's position and objectives.	*472.782*	*.000*

Very strong correlations were found regarding the attitudes of the employees who consider it very important to be informed about the goals and the current situation of the organisation. Their willingness to keep learning and develop new skills is facilitated by the organisation offering a supportive learning environment. Special attention is also given to the internal communication channels and to the fact that it is difficult for the competitors to imitate the organisation. All of the above confirm the important role of the facilitation of information flow on preserving knowledge capital.

H2: Informal communication affects the development of "green" employees

Statistically significant correlations were observed in the following items, confirming the important role of informal communication in developing "green" employees (Table 4).

Table 4 : Informal communication and development of "green" employees

Items	Pearson Chi-Square Tests	Df. Sig. (2-sided)
5. The briefing of new recruits regarding their desired "green" behavior is done by specific individuals – mentors.	*121.605*	*.000*
6. Managers support employees to achieve the company's environmental goals.	*275.442*	*.000*
7. Managers try to discover employees' views on the "green" way they work.	*85.770*	*.000*
8. The company has adopted a reward system in the context of achieving environmental objectives based on the recognition of their contribution.	*87.379*	*.000*

Communication that is not limited in a specific formal context, is more likely to result in desired outcomes. A flexible way of communicating, sincere interest in employees' feelings and a supportive style of management have a strong impact on influencing the employees in raising environmental awareness.

H3: The supportive character of internal marketing programmes is correlated with the adoption of "green" culture

Based on the results, the following items appear to have strong statistical correlations between the supportive character of the internal marketing programmes and the adoption of "green" culture (Table 5).

Table 5 : Supportive character of internal marketing programmes and adoption of "green" culture

Items	Pearson Chi-SquareTests	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
9. There is as specific team that monitors progress on key environmental protection issues.	*311.862*	*.000*
10. My company actively supports environmental practices.	*443.011*	*.000*
11. The environmental management system is clear and understandable to all employees.	*193.529*	*.000*
12. The environmental protection team is active and show the work that has been done.	*179.103*	*.000*

It is clear that a firmly supportive environment, a fully understandable environmental management system and the environmental commitment of the management have a strong impact in adopting "green" organisational culture.

H4: The satisfaction of internal customers affects the building of a "green" reputation by the organisation

The processing of the data confirmed hypothesis 4, highlighting the relationship between employee satisfaction and the building of a 'green' reputation by the organisation (Table 6).

Table 6: Satisfaction of internal customers and building of a "green" reputation by the organisation

Items	Pearson Chi-SquareTests	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
13. My company offers an appropriate working environment and ensures the well-being of employees and their families.	*143.701*	*.000*
14. I'm satisfied with company's environmental policy.	*298.233*	*.000*
15. My company designs its processes/products taking into account the suggestions of the employees.	*20.,874*	*.000*
16. I feel like my company really cares about the environment.	*319.103*	*.000*
17. My company implements educational programmes in order to enhance environmental behavior.	*268.172*	*.000*
18. My company invests in the development of new employee skills.	*264.860*	*.000*
19. My company continuously improves environmentally friendly products/services.	*245.885*	*.000*
20. My company redesigns products or services in order to meet environmental criteria.	*404.391*	*.000*

Very strong correlations were found by examining H4. Employees' satisfaction is correlated with the "green" reputation of the organisation. Employees' feeling that the organisation listens to their ideas, invests in developing new skills, promotes work-life balance and wellbeing, sincerely cares about the environment, are the same individuals who will advertise these features and characteristics of the organisation, thus contributing to building its "green" reputation.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between internal marketing and "green" management of specific elements of intellectual capital.

This research highlights the importance of internal communication channels for employees. Managers try to provide employees with information regarding the current situation and objectives of the company while strengthening the learning process and achieving employee satisfaction and commitment. The results confirm the relationship between facilitating the flow of information and maintaining knowledge capital and are in line with the research results of Ahmad [2] and Devi [26], who state that the challenge of internal marketing and "green" human capital management practices lies in maintaining the knowledge capital by balancing the needs of the organisation and employees.

As regards the role of informal communication, its influence on the development of 'green' employees is confirmed. The adoption of "green" behaviors is related to the guidance of employees, specifically the support they receive from managers and their colleagues in a voluntary context. The results of this study reinforce the results of the surveys of Aazhvaar [1], Khan and Khan [43], Mampra [49], Opatha and Arulrajah [58], Renwick [66] and Zoogah [86], which converge on the observation that the “green” behavior of employees is reinforced through interpersonal relationships aimed at informing other colleagues and encouraging them to adopt “green” behavior.

Internal marketing programmes reflecting the stability, continuity and competence of management also reinforcing the adoption of a "green" culture. This confirms surveys [22, 23, 29, 63, 81, 87], which argue that there must be coherence and commitment to environmental values so that there is no room for questioning or opposing views.

The relationship between the satisfaction of internal customers and the building of a "green" reputation by the organisation is documented. Employees who are satisfied with the company's environmental policy, the working environment and the fact that they believe that the company is really interested in the environment, themselves become communicators as members of society and contribute to the building and strengthening of the "green" reputation of the organisation. These findings are also confirmed by the studies of Chen Y.S. [17], Chen Y.S. [18], Chen Y.S. [19], Martin De Castro et al [50] and Ngniatedema and Li [56].

Although there is an extensive literature exploring internal marketing [5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 28, 30, 34, 36, 38, 39, 45, 47, 53, 63, 68, 70, 71, 77, 85] and “green” intellectual capital [15, 18, 49, 66, 86] there has never been research investigating the relationship between internal marketing and “green” intellectual capital. The strong relationship between these two concepts is highlighted and therefore managers should help to decode and (re)shape the internal environment in order to effectively manage the “green” intellectual capital of the organisation.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the research form a basis for organisations which have set similar or familiar strategic goals and want to stand out for their working environment and effectiveness.

The findings consist of the best practices for organizations that are determined to address external challenges by taking full advantage of their internal environment and offer a unique context to implementing policies by integrating new approaches of existing concepts.

After an organization has decided its managerial shift to “green” management of its intangible assets, it is important to align the internal organisational environment with its strategic goals. Management should facilitate the flow of information by encouraging internal channels of communication and by fostering learning processes, team working and the exchange of ideas. Moreover it is crucial to realise the important role of informal communication and to try to draw on information about employees’ feelings, perceptions and ideas in order to promote “green” values and “green” reputation.

LIMITATIONS

The examination of specific elements of intellectual capital such as the development of "green" employees, the adoption of "green" culture, the maintenance of knowledge capital and the building of a "green" reputation, constitute a first limitation for the research. Exploring the relationships of internal marketing with more elements of intellectual capital such as the internal processes of the organisation, the functions of human capital management, the relationship with stakeholders and social corporate responsibility would extend the existing knowledge.

The survey also involves companies that have been distinguished for their working environment without taking into account their categorisation by sector (construction, trade, services, industry). However, firms in different sectors differ in terms of the business risks they face, growth rates and the degree of flexibility and adaptation. Therefore not examining these criteria is another limitation of the study.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Exploring the relationship of internal marketing with more elements of intellectual capital (the functions of human capital management, the relationship with stakeholders and social corporate responsibility) would provide more evidence to better understand the relationship between internal marketing and intellectual capital and provide organisations with important administrative tools. Also conducting research in companies from different sectors and comparing their results would help to extract targeted and tailored results. Since the survey was carried out in companies based in Greece, the participation of European/multinational firms would provide an expanded comparative framework to enable different administrative approaches, organisational culture and the emergence of best practices.

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