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Empirical research on relationships among enterprises' internal market orientation, market orientation, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction

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Internal market orientation focuses on employees' strategic thinking and increases the effectiveness of the company's response to any changes in the market. This orientation also allows the company's management team to align its market objectives with internal capabilities in order to enhance the managerial performance. The goal of this study was to construct an integrative framework and explore the effects of internal market orientation, market orientation, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction within the organization. The authors also verified the mediating role of market orientation on the relationships among internal market orientation, employee satisfaction (ES) and customer satisfaction. This proposed theoretical model was tested with the linear structured equation model (SEM), as being consistent with the partial least squares (PLS) path modeling assumptions. A total of 82 valid and dyadic questionnaires were collected. The results revealed that internal market orientation positively affects market orientation, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction; market orientation positively affects employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction has positive effects on customer satisfaction, but market orientation does not significantly affect customer satisfaction. Furthermore, employee satisfaction is the mediator for internal market orientation and customer satisfaction. Finally, according to the conceptual framework and research findings, this study concluded with some suggestions in terms of academic and practical implications for future studies.

Key words: Internal market orientation, market orientation, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Taiwan has passed through the global financial crisis, during which the competitiveness between firms intensified; the changes in scientific technology have sped up, and the product life cycle has thus been reduced. Encountering such stress sourcing from the great competition, firms continuously have to create customers, satisfy customers' needs and enhance customers' satisfaction in order to maintain their competitive advantages within the market. At the same time, to foster the enterprises' awareness that the market is one of the main forces in promoting performance, the companies have to introduce more marketing concepts into their

firms and employees to create customer values and thus achieve the goal of the profitability the company.

Market orientation (MO) views customers as the most critical element and significant resource in creating competitive advantages for firms (Hunt and Morgan, 1995). Narver and Slater (1990) delineate MO as a kind of organizational value, which helps enterprises to create prominent values for their customers. In addition, MO prioritizes customer benefits, its ultimate goal is to achieve profitability for the enterprises and promote firm performance effectively (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Rueket, 1992; Pelham, 2000). After decades of evolution, MO from the theoretical marketing perspective has become the focus of research. Regardless of whether the action view (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) or cultural perspective (Narver and Slater, 1990) is adopted, MO focuses on the core of customers and competitors, whereas it

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it neglects the employees' influence on organizational performance and customer satisfaction (CS) in terms of MO research. If only paying attention to the external market, researchers may inevitably neglect the effect of enterprises' internal market (Lings, 1999a).

Enterprises should first consider achieving customer satisfaction through employee commitment. Firms can consider executing the internal market orientation (IMO) strategy practically by viewing employees as the company's internal customers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Lings, 1999b, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2005). IMO lays emphasis on enhancing the relationships between enterprises and customers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). IMO encourages positive interactions between companies and employees, which help in satisfying and motivating employees (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991); as the administrators guide the firms with an MO strategy, and consider the important role of employees in terms of marketing activities, the employees' identification with the company's products and services will be promoted. Thus, the first step of the company is to focus on the employees, and view them as internal customers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Joseph, 1996; Lings, 1999b, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2005). Employees serve as the front-line workers, who have direct contact with customers. That is one of the reasons that IMO emphasizes promoting the relationships between employees and customers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) as well as treating employees as customers within the companies. Scholars tend to adopt the perspective of human resources to direct the strategy of IMO (Lings, 1999b, 2000, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2001). In other words, as enterprises view their employees as customers, they must make much more effort to respond to the demands of their internal customers through appropriate job design (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) and through human resource strategies to enhance employees' positive attitudes towards the organization that they work for (Tansuhaj et al., 1988). In short, to attract and motivate potential customers from both external and internal markets, organizations should pay attention to internal market research, segment the markets, and promote communication with customers (internal vs. external), as well as paying attention to advertisements (Hales, 1994; Lings, 1999b, 2000, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2001; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2003). IMO can be practiced through the generation, distribution, and feedback of the internal market information (Lings, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006) generated by employees. That is to say, employees play an important role in executing IMO strategies. To create better competitive advantages, organizations need to make great efforts to serve customers, understand competitors' MO culture, set up an organizational system such as job design to promote employees' willingness to exchange information with customers and achieve service quality and customer satisfaction.

The literature indicates that MO focuses on the circulation of significant information (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990), but seldom pays attention to its effect on customer satisfaction (CS). Similarly, although scholars suggest that the information exchanges between employees and different departments increase owing to the firms' adoption of IMO strategies (Gronroos, 2000), there are few empirical studies emphasizing the influence of IMO on CS (Lings, 2004). Therefore, the authors propose an integrative framework that connects the four dimensions, IMO, MO, employee satisfaction (ES), and CS, and contributes to investigating further how an organization can promote its MO, ES, and CS through an internal market-oriented strategy.

THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

Internal market orientation (IMO)

There is still room for the development of the concept and its implications (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006). Many researchers try to explain IMO from different perspectives. In recent years, some scholars have tried to explore internal marketing (IM) through the concept of IMO and have produced some good results (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Lings, 1999a, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006). IMO mainly discusses the front-line workers who have direct contact with customers during service procedures, focuses on enhancing relationships between customers and employees (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991), and suggests that firms should treat their employees as customers of the company. In other words, IMO helps fill the literature gap related to internal marketing. In addition to viewing employees as customers, satisfying their needs and putting this into practice by setting up appropriate human resource systems such as job design, IMO uses marketing-like activities to motivate, educate, and train employees to offer the best services to the external customers with whom they have contact, so that the customers perceive the employees' service quality. Finally, the enterprises' operational goal can in turn be achieved (Lings, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006).

Using an IMO strategy to motivate employees and take care of employees' needs, enterprises should consider how to establish a suitable organizational environment for employees from the perspective of internal customers. Besides, firms can also systematically analyze employees' working conditions and provide a sound reward system to enhance employees' satisfaction, which in turn will be transformed into customers' satisfaction. Being a type of managerial philosophy and practice and strategic development strategy considering how to treat employees as customers and satisfy employees, IMO helps organizations retain good and suitable employees (Tansuhaj et al., 1988; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991).

Internal market orientation (IMO) and market orientation (MO)

MO gives consideration to both the customers and the competitors (Hunt and Morgan, 1995), and cares about the employees of the company. The company normally depends on employees for the development of its MO culture. The literature review results demonstrate that MO research has become an important issue and core concept within the marketing and strategic management fields (Sanzo et al., 2003; Slater and Narver, 1995). In short, MO is the practice of the marketing concept, strategic development (Ruekert, 1992), and an organizational culture that enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of the operation, which generates activities required to create values for customers (Narver and Slater, 1990). Moreover, MO is a series of activities, including the generation of market information (IG) on existing and potential customers, the distribution of information (ID) between different departments within firms, and organizational responses (IR) to the information collected (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). MO is an issue worthy of discussion and exploration, which, however, has had little academic discussion in the past. Pitt and Foreman (1999) suggest that a symmetric MO model is able to maintain the balance between MO and IMO strategies for firms. Through the development of IMO, MO is more advantageous in the outer market in terms of competitiveness. Consequently, the development of MO has significant effects on the development of an overall marketing strategy and external MO.

IMO advances employee satisfaction (ES) (Piercy, 1995) and encourages employees to be involved with the customers' and competitors' activities. George (1990) has the notion that when IMO activities are applied within the organization, employees are encouraged to have greater awareness of providing customer services and thus become customer-oriented. On the other hand, when firms' administrators and their employees have two-way communication, employees will express their requirements towards the jobs and distribute information about the external customers and competitors to the administrators. Through such a communication mode, the MO within the firms is pushed forward (Conduit and Mavondo, 2001; Tansuhaj et al., 1991; Arnett et al., 2003; Caruana and Calleya, 1998). Organizations use the IMO concept to reward and motivate employees to become market-oriented (Ruekert, 1992). A motivating method has to be market-oriented, instead of attracting employees to generate only short-term benefits (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Banai et al., 2004; Ackfeldt and Coote, 2005). As an organization cares about its employees' needs and motivates its employees through the installation of different advantageous reward systems or a system by which employees can express their demands and opinions, the employees' positive attitudes will be induced to achieve a high level of satisfaction with their jobs

(Joseph, 1996). The nature of the system itself is to allow the occurrence of employees' positive attitudes; it is expected that an individual's attitude will influence his behavior. To provide good-quality customer services, the company needs to integrate different business units into the organization, which provide a variety of services and products, in order for different departments to have a complete and supplementary system supporting and assisting the service provision activities. As the communicative problem between different departments is solved, the internal service quality can be improved – the interdependence between different departments helps improve the communication, information distribution, and thus the level of MO within and outside the organization (Lings, 1999b; Martin-Consuegra and Esteban, 2007).

Gronroos (2000) identifies that IMO is to motivate, manage, and control employees' attitudes towards customers, awareness of the customers and commitment to their jobs. As the IMO level within the organization is advanced, the employees' satisfaction level is also promoted. Therefore, employees become willing to be involved in the business activities related to customers and competitors. George (1990) suggests that when marketing-like activities are applied within the organization, employees are led to produce service awareness and customer-oriented behaviors. In addition, when administrators and employees have interactive communication, the employees will feed back their demands about their jobs and information about external customers and competitors to the company. Through such an interactive communication pattern, the MO of the organization can be effectively improved (Conduit and Mavondo, 2001). Companies often utilize the IMO concept in terms of a reward system to encourage their employees to become more market-oriented (Ruekert, 1992). However, a reward system that is established based on the MO concept is not only a designed profitability program for encouraging employees in the short run. Based on the literature, the authors propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: IMO has a positive effect on MO.

Internal market orientation (IMO) and employee satisfaction (ES)

Lings (2004) suggests that by the introduction of IMO, the employees' satisfaction level can be increased and by the installation of a motivating human resource system, the effectiveness of IMO, ES and CS, the customer retention rate, and the firm's profitability can all be increased. IMO suggests treating employees based on the human - perspective and focusing on the front-line workers, who have direct contact with customers during the service process, by using marketing-like methods (Lings, 2004; Lings and Greenley, 2001; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2003), in order to promote the relationships between employees

and customers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). Berry and Parasuraman (1991) indicated that the development of products that suit the needs of the internal customers helps attract, encourage and retain outstanding employees – it is a philosophy of internal strategic management of the organization. The research results of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) demonstrate that companies that adopt internal and external MO as their organizational strategies have a higher level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment from their workers. IMO has positive effects on job satisfaction (Quester and Kelly, 1999) and job performance (Lings, 2000), including an increase in positive job attitude and emotional commitment to the organization, an improvement in employees' morale, the firm's brand image, and the MO of the firm and employees, and a decrease in workers' turnover rate. Chen (2008) believes that enterprises that install a well-designed information system can also increase workers' job satisfaction. In other words, customer orientation, training and education program, intensive interaction between different business units, managerial support, marketing participation, and the like can all significantly promote employees' satisfaction (Lings, 1999a).

IMO strategies first require enterprises to fulfill internal customers' demands, so that employees' job satisfaction can produce their identification with the firms' values and policies. MO enhances the organizational internal communication and coordination (Webb and Lambe, 2007), through motivating the human resource system, IMO increases workers' job satisfaction, and as a result, the job performance (Lings, 2004), in which job satisfaction and organizational commitment can promote enterprises' overall job satisfaction level (Tansuhaj et al., 1991; Arnett et al., 2003; Caruana and Calleya, 1998). To sum up, IMO focuses on satisfying internal customers' demands by providing internal products. IMO can be divided into three major dimensions (Gounaris, 2006): the generation of internal market information (IG), the distribution of internal information (ID), and feedback of the information (IR).

The empirical evidence from the literature shows that a high level of IMO has a positive effect on employees' participation, authorization, and job satisfaction. If enterprises practice an IMO strategy within their organizations, ES can thus be effectively increased (Banai et al., 2004; Ackfeldt and Coote, 2005; Boyt et al., 2005). Based on this, the authors propose the following hypotheses:

H₂: IMO has a positive effect on ES.

H₃: IMO has a positive effect on CS.

Market orientation (MO), employee satisfaction (ES) and customer satisfaction (CS)

Based on the marketing perspective, a very difficult goal for the management team to achieve is CS. Under this

premise, companies begin to develop MO. In the aspect of internal marketing, firms tend to adopt the marketing perspective in designing a human resource management system to ensure that their employees understand the fact that the companies have put their focus on fulfilling customers' needs. The purpose is to motivate and train the employees to offer better service quality. During the process of socialization within the organization, IMO can effectively increase employees' centripetal force and self-identification with the companies for which they work. The self-identification of employees with companies can increase the job satisfaction and performance of the enterprises.

To achieve the satisfaction of the external customers in the market, firms should consider satisfying their internal employees in the first place (George, 1977); the aim is to motivate employees, the front-line workers who have direct contact with the customers, to have a higher level of perception of the customers' needs (Gronroos, 2000). Therefore, companies need to integrate and allow service personnel to provide effective and good supporting activities to the internal and external customers and relevant business units in the companies (Gronroos, 2000). Some scholars point out that IMO increases both the MO level and the employees' job satisfaction with the firm (Tansuhaj et al., 1988).

In cross-sectional and in-depth interviewing research, which covers the field of consumer products, industrial products, service organization, and retail and wholesale business, Mohr-Jackson (1991) found positive relations among ES, job motivation, service quality, CS, and firms' profitability. Taking bank clerks as research objects to study the relationship between MO and job satisfaction, George (1990) concluded that IMO can lead to CS. Job satisfaction consists of multiple aspects, which include employees' satisfaction with their salary level, job performance, firms' policies, and interaction situation with employees.

The literature mostly focuses on the relationship between productivity and job satisfaction. In recent years, much of the research has shown that good service quality results from good interaction relationships between employees and customers, as well as job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a factor that influences employees' provision of a good service quality; job satisfaction and customer satisfaction are closely related (Mohr-Jackson, 1991; Tansuhaj et al., 1988, 1988, 1991). Hoffman and Ingram (1991) take a step further by suggesting that job satisfaction guides employees towards customer-oriented behavioral outcomes – so that employees are motivated to practice substantially the MO strategy of the firm (Piercy, 1995; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). Based on this, the study proposes a hypothesis as follows:

H₄: MO positively influences ES

Ruekert (1992) suggests that MO represents enterprises'

obtaining and utilizing of customer information to develop strategies matching customer demands in accordance with the acquired feedback information. Ruekert (1992) also indicates that the practicing effectiveness of MO is based on the enterprises' practicing results of the following aspects: 1) the information quantity that enterprises can acquire from customers; 2) the enterprises' responses to customers' demands in accordance with the information collected; 3) the enterprises substantially practicing the developed strategies and relevant activities for matching the customer needs. Based on the past research data, Day (1994) concludes that MO has three main features, which are described as follows: 1) customer benefit is the focus of the firm; 2) the company pays attention to the integration and application of cross-sectional competences in order to create advantageous customer values; 3) the organization effectively develops, distributes, and utilizes the customers' and competitors' information collected.

Jaworski and Kohli (1993) advise that MO is composed of three types of comprehensive organizational activities: 1) appropriate information about existing and future potential customer demands; 2) information regarding different markets that is distributed within different departments of the company; 3) information that sufficiently reflects the market situation – interaction and communication are the key process elements of MO. Besides, employees with a high level of customer orientation tend to have behaviors that positively provide good service and thus increase CS during the process of contacting customers (Bigne et al., 2005; Lai and Cheng, 2005). Based on the research results shown earlier, it is found that as employees possess MO characteristics, through employees' customer and competitor orientation, companies will obtain more market information and with the coordination and distribution of information between departments, the organization can acquire information on the market in a timely manner, which helps create much more value for customers and thus achieve the firm's goal in terms of a high CS level (Maydeu-Olivares and Lado, 2003). Therefore, the authors propose a hypothesis as follows:

H₅: MO positively influences CS

ES has a positive effect on CS (Lings, 2004; Piercy, 1995). That means that as employees are satisfied and identify themselves with the internal values and policies of the company, they are able to provide satisfactory services to the external customers. The research results of Hartline and Ferrell (1996) show that employees' job satisfaction is positively correlated with the service quality perceived by the customer; a high level of service quality perceived by the customer can effectively increase CS. The research result of Lings (2004) demonstrates that satisfied employees will remain in the company longer by expecting to develop their skills, so that employees have better competences and energy for understanding and

satisfying customer needs. Hence, this study proposes a hypothesis as follows:

H₆: ES positively influences CS

Research framework

This research was mainly to explore the effect of enterprises' use of MO strategies to achieve the organizational goals of MO, ES, and CS. Through IG, ID, and IR, IMO increases employees' focus on the external customers and the relevant MO level. Therefore, employees become customer- and competitiveness-oriented, and are willing to coordinate with other departments so that the external and internal CS can be effectively increased. Based on the research goal of this study, the authors constructed a research framework (Figure 1), which is built up in accordance with the review results of past research and in-depth interviews conducted with three managers of the top representative companies in the relevant industries. Through the deep insight of the case companies and the construction of an appropriate research framework, the authors evolved the related hypotheses and developed scales as the basis for the measurement of the variables. In addition, the authors further tested and verified the mediating effect between organizational MO and employee job satisfaction in order to clarify their relationships and contribute to establishing a complete theoretical framework.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Measurements and operational definitions of the variables

The research framework of this study is divided into four parts, which are IMO, MO, ES and CS, the four dimensions. The measurements and operational definitions of the variables of this study were adopted and modified from the literature based on the research goal of the study. According to the research results of Lings and Greenley (2001) and Lings (1999a, 2004), and the research goal of this study, the authors identified IMO as an internal marketing strategy that focuses on the human resource perspective and views employees as internal customers; enterprises use marketing-like methods to attract and motivate their internal customers for managing employees' attitudes, behaviors, and values. For instance, by using the job design as one tool, companies satisfy and motivate employees and strengthen employees' positive attitudes towards the organization. The ultimate goal of the organization is to enhance external customers' perception of the organizational increased service quality. Moreover, this study referred to the research results of Narver and Slater (1990), Lings (2004), Lings and Greenley (2005) and Gounaris (2006) in identifying MO, ES, and CS. To highlight the relationships between variables, this study utilized the firm size and years of establishment of the firm as the control variables. The firm size and the available resources of the enterprises are highly correlated and can influence the CS level. This research used large-scale enterprises as the research objects. However, the differences between these enterprises are apparent. For example, enterprises that have been established for more years have better business experience and

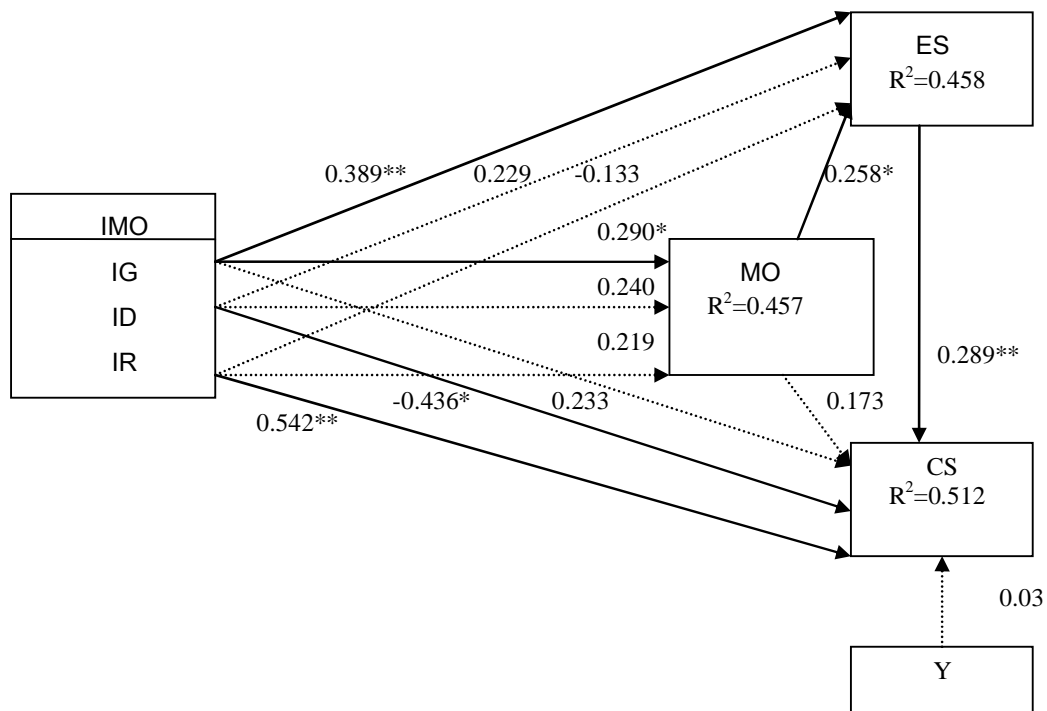


Figure 1. Research framework and the analytical result of PLS. IG: Internal intelligence generation; ID: Internal intelligence dissemination; IR: Internal intelligence response; The arrows indicate the path coefficient; *represents the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$; $\alpha = 0.01$); the dotted line (--->) represents the insignificant path.

can build up a better firm image and WOM (word-of-mouth) than their competitors, which respectively affect their CS level. Therefore, this study used the established years of the enterprises as the control variable, which was in turn a dummy variable within the analytical model of this study.

Questionnaire development

Based on the past research results of relevant theories and the study goal of this study, the authors adopted representative firms in the aeronautics, petrochemicals, and service management industries as the research objects in the first step. According to the interview results with the firms' managers, the authors developed a questionnaire. The draft version of the questionnaire was pretested in 30 firms located in mid-Taiwan as the part-one test, and in 45 customer firms as the part-two test. In total 25 matched questionnaires were collected. The test results showed that after removing the inappropriate questionnaire items, the Cronbach's α value was higher than 0.70, and the goodness of fit for the empirical test model was shown to be good.

Using the survey method to test the hypotheses, this study developed a questionnaire to measure different dimensions empirically. The developed measuring items include gender, age, educational level, job seniority, number of employees, years of establishment of the firm, industry and the like. There were four parts in total. The first part contained 18 items related to IMO. Part two contained 16 items on MO. Part three contained 6 items on ES. Part four contained 6 items on CS. Except for the items examining the personal information of the respondents, there were 46 items in total in the questionnaire, which used a five-point Likert scale ranging from

ranging from extremely disagree (1 point) to extremely agree (5 points).

Sampling design and questionnaire survey

The concept of internal marketing was developed from the field of service industry (Gronroos, 2000). Most scholars consider that internal marketing should be suitable only for the service industry; some scholars suggest that the concept of internal marketing can also be applied in the manufacturing industry, or even extended to all other types of industries (Lewis, 1993). However, many enterprises have developed their firms in both the service field and the manufacturing field together. Therefore, this study empirically adopted the perspective of Lewis (1993), and did not specifically distinguish the service and manufacturing industries. The authors selected big firms in Taiwan as the research objects, which focus on the industries of manufacturing, finance, service and research and development. The selection decision on the research objects was made because the persons in charge are the people who have sufficient knowledge to provide answers to the questions, which were formed according to the research framework of this study. Besides, many of the empirical research results in the past support the fact that people in charge are suitable as information providers, and were selected as interviewees for the study in this case (Rindfleisch and Moorman, 2001; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The goal here was to test and verify the goodness of fit level of the theoretical model and the hypotheses proposed by this study, which included multiple variables. There were originally 46 questionnaire items. However, after the pretest, to achieve an acceptable level of reliability and validity, the number of items was

Table 1. Statistical distribution of the industries.

Type of industry	Number of samples		(%)	
	Sample firms	Customer firms	Sample firms	Customer firms
Manufacturing industry	48	49	58.5	59.8
Financial industry	13	13	12.2	15.9
Firms have features of both manufacturing and financial industries	18	15	22.0	22.0
Others	6	2	7.3	2.4

reduced to 34. The authors used the structural equation modeling (SEM) method to test the overall level of the goodness of fit. The advantages of SEM are the ability to test the path relationships between variables, to measure parameters and errors, and to evaluate the goodness of fit of the overall model.

The sampling practice of this study was executed in two steps. The first step was to pretest the questionnaire for modification. In the second step, the questionnaires were distributed formally to the respondents. From the 1000 big firms announced by the Common Wealth Magazine, the authors randomly drew out 450 samples; the samples of this study included both the 450 sample firms and their customer firms. The questionnaire consisted of two forms (parts one and two). Part one was designed for the sample companies (seller firms) and part two for the customer companies. The dimensions for the part-one questionnaire include IMO, MO and ES. The part-two questionnaire only tested the CS of the firms. Four weeks after the questionnaires were mailed out, the researchers re-mailed or called the respondents to encourage the mailing back of the questionnaires. Four weeks later, the total number of collected questionnaires was 97. Deducting 15 invalid ones, the total number of collected valid questionnaires was up to 82 copies (matched questionnaires from both the service provider and its customer firms counted as 1 matched questionnaire). The response rate was only 18.2% and it took about 5 weeks to distribute and finish collecting the questionnaires.

DATA ANALYSES

Demographic statistics

The survey subjects of this study included workers of high job seniority or members of top management teams. For the 82 collected and valid questionnaires, 30 of the firms had been established for 15 to 20 years (36.6%), which was the highest portion, 25 of the firms had been established for more than 20 years (30.5%) and 24 firms had been established for 10 to 15 years. There were 2 firms that had only been established between 5 and 10 years. Only 1 of the firms had been established for fewer than 5 years (1.2%). The data aforementioned showed that most of the big firms had a long development history. Few companies were newly developed. Most of the companies employed more than 2000 people (30 firms, 36.6%); 22 firms employed between 1500 and 2000 people (26.8%); 16 firms employed between 1000 and 1500 people (19.5%); 7 firms employed 500 to 1000 people as their workers (8.5%); and 7 firms had fewer than 500

workers (8.5%).

The statistical distribution of industries of the sample companies is shown in Table 1. As regards the types of industries, 39 sample firms (the service providers) were in the manufacturing industry (54.9%), of which 43 of the collected questionnaires were their customer firms (60.6%); 10 of the sample companies were financial service providers (14.1%), of which 13 of the sample companies were their customers (18.3%); and the rest of the firms, which were in other types of industries, occupied a portion of 31%, of which 21.1% of the samples were their customers. The statistical distribution regarding the gender of the respondents in the sample firms was 64.6% males and 35.4% females, respectively Table 2. Compared with the 52.4% of female respondents in the customer firms, 47.6% of the respondents in the customer firms were male. Most of the respondents were aged between 36 and 40 years (40.2%), which was analogous to their customer firms (the respondents aged from 36 to 40 occupied a portion of 31.7%). Owing to the fact that most of the respondents were the top managers and administrators of listed companies in Taiwan, most of the respondents were aged 36 years and above. Most of the respondents in the sample companies held a master degree (54.9%). On the contrary, most of the respondents in the customer firms reported the educational level of university and college (68.3%).

The non-response bias test

To test the rate of non-response bias, this study separated the samples into two kinds: the questionnaires returned early or late. Then, the authors utilized the chi-square test in accordance with the features of the respondents such as gender (chi-square value=1.525; $p=0.887$), number of employees (chi-square value=1.222; $p=0.319$), number of years of the companies being established (chi-square value=0.218; $p=0.884$), educational level (chi-square value=2.207; $p=0.088$), and the like. The test results demonstrated that the hypothesis, presuming that these two tested groups are independent, is not valid. That means the non-response bias issue does not exist for this study (Armstrong and Overton, 1977).

Table 2. Demographic statistics of the samples.

Item		Number of samples		%	
		Sample firms	Customer firms	Sample firms	Customer firms
Gender	Male	53	39	64.6	47.6
	Female	29	43	35.4	52.4
Age	Younger than 20	0	0	0	0
	21~25	0	1	0	1.2
	26~30	0	10	0	12.2
	31~35	14	26	17.2	31.7
	36~40	33	26	40.2	31.7
	41~45	29	12	35.4	14.7
	46~50	5	6	6	7.3
	Above 51	1	1	1.2	1.2
Educational level	Below junior high	0	1	0	1.2
	Senior high	0	1	0	1.2
	University (college)	37	56	45.1	68.3
	(Master and above)	45	24	54.9	29.3

Test of the measurement model: 1) preliminary fit; 2) fit of the internal structure of the model; 3) overall model fit

Due to the respondents of this study being overall top managers of large firms in Taiwan, it is possible that the issue of common method variance (CMV) may occur and lead to a high or low estimate of the relationships between variables (MacKenzie et al., 2001). To prevent the CMV issue, the authors first tried not to ask the respondents more practical questions, instead of attitudinal questions. In addition, the questionnaire was designed to be executed in two steps. The first step was to use a dyadic style of questionnaire (the first three dimensions of the questionnaire were designed to be answered by the sample companies and the fourth dimension was to be filled out by their customer companies; then, the authors matched the answers from the two sides for comparison and analysis). The second step was to ensure that the number of questionnaires from both the sample firms and the customer firms matched each other. In this case, for sample firms and customer firms, three copies of the questionnaire were distributed, respectively, to three different persons in each firm to fill out. If the collected questionnaires from both sides of the companies did not total six copies, the questionnaires were viewed as invalid ones.

This research used PLS to analyze the coefficient of the model path as hypothesized, and the bootstrap method to calculate the significance level of the path coefficient. PLS, developed based on the concept of regression analysis, is an analytical tool for structural equation modeling (SEM). Before proceeding with the

PLS analysis, the structural model and the presumed correlations between constructs needed to be built. Normally, the constructs can be divided into two types: formative indicators and reflective indicators. The indicators and constructs are basically composed of different measures. The structured model is used to explain and predict the internal consistency, discriminate validity, path coefficient test results, explanation power of the model R^2 , and so on. This study utilized six variables to build the PLS structured model and to test whether the hypotheses built up were valid – through the measurement of the indicators' path coefficient, R^2 , and the like. Therefore, the authors were able to examine whether the explainability for the variables and the model established were significantly valid.

The research framework of this study included both the measurement model and the structural model, which were analyzed with the SEM and PLS methods. SEM has its limits regarding the number of samples, and multivariate normality (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982) suggests that the maximum number of samples and path patterns is best between 5 and 10. The number of samples for this study is 81; there are a maximum of 12 model paths in this study (81 is about 7 times 12). Thus, the number of samples is within the theoretically suggested range. That means it is appropriate to use the PLS analytical method – the authors used the PLS method (LVPLS 1.04b) to process the reliability, validity, hypotheses, and mediating effect tests as described in the following sections.

In short, this study utilized the PLS methods to test the path coefficient and hypotheses proposed by the authors, and the bootstrap skill to test the significance levels. PLS belongs to a type of SEM analytical skill, which is founded

Table 3. The correlations and coefficients of different dimensions for this study.

Dimension	α	CR	AVE	IG	ID	IR	MO	ES	CS	Y
IG	0.68	0.81	0.53	0.72						
ID	0.76	0.84	0.52	0.73	0.72					
IR	0.82	0.88	0.65	0.66	0.77	0.80				
ES	0.64	0.80	0.59	0.62	0.57	0.45	0.78			
CS	0.72	0.84	0.65	0.56	0.43	0.59	0.53	0.80		
MO	0.93	0.94	0.55	0.61	0.62	0.59	0.55	0.52	0.74	
Y	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.12	-0.10	-0.03	-0.04	-0.05	0.12	1.00

Y represents the established years of the firm.

founded on the theories of regression analysis. Building a structural model and the presumed relationships between constructs are the prerequisites of PLS analysis. In sum, the constructs can be separated into two types of indicators: the formative indicators and the reflective indicators, which are composed of a set of measures. The explainability and predictability of the structural model depend on the internal consistency, discriminate validity, path coefficient, and model explainability (R^2) that emerge. Based on the six proposed variables, the authors aimed to establish a PLS structural model and used the path coefficient and R^2 , the different indicators, to measure and test the validity of the hypotheses, in order to establish the level of the explainability between different constructs, as well as the explainability of the measurement model.

Reliability and validity analyses

Reliability is the measurement of the accuracy of the measurement tool, which is the test-retest consistency and internal consistency. Using the Cronbach's α as the standard, this research tested the consistency of the measurement tool. Generally speaking, when the Cronbach's α is higher than 0.7, the measurement tool is viewed as having high consistency. On the contrary, if the Cronbach's α result is less than 0.4, it suggests that the measurement tool has low reliability and should be rejected (Rindfleisch and Moorman, 2001). The data analytical result (Table 3) demonstrated that the reliability (Cronbach's α) of each dimension adopted in this study was 0.68 for IG and 0.64 for ES, respectively. The rest of the dimensions were all above 0.7. Therefore, the measurement tool was viewed as having good reliability. Validity itself helps to find out whether the measurement tool designed by the researchers can really measure the questions that the researchers would like to ask. The questionnaire development procedure of this study included reviewing the literature and ensuring the content validity of the variables and the designed questionnaire. After the questionnaire draft had been completed, the authors carried out the pretest for revision and testing in

order to ensure the content validity of the measurement tool. Regarding the convergent validity, the literature shows that the following methods enhance the validity of research: 1) the items' reliability; 2) the composite reliability of different constructs (CR); and 3) the average variance extracted (AVE) for assessment (Komiak and Benbasat, 2006). The factor loading of the items in this study was overall higher than 0.6 (Table 3), which is close to the very good level. The CR value of different dimensions in this study was between 0.80 and 0.94, which was overall higher than the normal acceptance level of 0.70, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Fornell and Larcker (1981) believe that the AVE of each dimension should be overall higher than 0.50 to support acceptable convergent validity. The dimensions of this study had AVE from 0.52 to 0.65, which matched the criterion aforementioned. In short, from the acquired data regarding the convergent validity of this study, it is proved that the measurement model of this study has a good level of convergent validity.

The discriminant validity of a study can be evaluated through its factor loading, correlation coefficient of different variables, as well as the square root of AVE (Komiak and Benbasat, 2006). According to the research result (Table 3), we can see that the factor loadings for the latent factors and their corresponding items were higher than average, and the factor loadings for the other factors were relatively low – which just matched the criterion for the judgment of discriminant validity. The criterion for judging the quality of AVE and its relevant coefficient is up to the square root of AVE, which has to be higher than the correlation coefficient of the variables. From the research result of Table 3, we can see that the measurement model proposed by this study achieved the required standards of discriminant validity.

The model test

This research used the PLS analytical tool to develop its research framework, in which the explainability of the model can be assessed through the R^2 of each endogenous variable (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982; Komiak

and Benbasat, 2006). The R^2 of each dimension for this study was between 0.457 and 0.512, which means the model can be explained in the variance level of 45.7 to 51.2% of explainability (Figure 1).

According to the analytical result of PLS (Figure 1), the internal information of enterprises can influence the MO level (coefficient=0.290; p -value<0.05); the distribution of internal information has effects on the MO level (coefficient=0.240; p -value>0.05); and the company's feedback on the internal information obtained has effects on the MO of the firm (coefficient=0.219; p -value>0.05). Thus, H_1 was partially supported. The research results indicated that the internal information has effects on the ES level (coefficient=0.389; p -value<0.01); the distribution of the internal information has effects on ES (coefficient=0.229; p -value>0.05); and the feedback of the firm on the internal information can influence the ES level (coefficient=-0.133; p -value>0.05). Thus, H_2 was partially supported, which empirically validated the suggestions made by the scholars Conduit and Mavondo (2001), Lings (1999b; 2004), etc. The production of internal information has effects on CS (coefficient=0.233; p -value>0.05); the distribution of internal information has effects on the CS level (coefficient=-0.436; p -value>0.05); and the feedback on the internal information has effects on the CS level (coefficient=0.542; p value<0.01). Thus, H_3 was partially supported.

The path coefficient between enterprises' MO and employees' satisfaction was 0.258 (p -value<0.05), which achieved the significance level statistically. H_4 was then supported. However, the path coefficient between the enterprises' MO and their ES was 0.173, which was not statistically significant - H_5 was not statistically supported; the research result of this part was inconsistent with that of other researchers (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Van Egeren and O'Connor, 1998). Therefore, this study later provides an in-depth discussion on this part. On the contrary, the satisfaction level of the enterprises' employees significantly influenced the CS level of enterprises, in which the path coefficient was 0.289 (p -value<0.01). Thus, H_6 was statistically supported. In addition, the control variable of this study (the established year of the firm and the number of employees) had no influence on its operational performance.

Regarding the test of the mediating effects, the authors, in accordance with the suggestions of Baron and Kenny (1986) as described further, took a step to test the mediating effect: 1) the independent variables significantly influenced the independent variable; 2) the independent variable significantly influenced the mediating variables (the mediator); 3) the independent variable and mediating variable, through the regression analysis, influenced the dependent variables at the same time - if the mediating variable achieved its significant level in terms of the coefficient, the independent variable's coefficient was then reduced or even achieved the level of insignificance. Thus, the fully mediating effect was proved to be true. If

the mediating variable and independent variables are proved to be both significant with the effects of the independent variables' coefficient, it means that the partial mediating effect is proved to exist.

This study used the PLS analytical tool to examine the effects of the independent variable, which were the generation of the dissemination of internal intelligence (IG), the dissemination of internal intelligence (ID), and the companies' response on the internal intelligence (IR), on the dependent variables, which were the levels of ES and MO. Furthermore, this study examined the mediating effect. The research result demonstrated that the independent variables IG, ID, and IR had effects on the dependent variables, which were the CS, ES, and MO, by using a two-step analysis. However, for testing the mediating effect, the authors found that as the mediators and independent variables were included in the regression models at the same time, the variables IG (through MO), ES, and CS had a mediating effect. Other tests within the framework only demonstrated a partial mediating effect (Table 4).

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to explore the relations between IMO, MO, ES and CS. The authors expected to construct a complete theoretical framework. After the empirical test and analysis, most of the hypotheses proposed by this study were proved to be true. The hypotheses and test results of this study are summarized in Table 5.

The empirical test results of this study (Table 4) showed through the test of the structural model that regarding the MO effects, except for the fact that the IG had positive effects on MO, ID and IR, both have no significant correlations with MO, which means as the enterprises practice IMO, high levels of ID and IR cannot effectively increase the company's MO. Therefore, this study suggests that enterprises should first start from IG, which is to lay emphasis on the demand of the employees. For instance, the administrators of the companies should understand how their competitors (of other companies) maintain their ES, such as assigning jobs to employees in accordance with the employees' characteristics and needs, as well as having sufficient communication with their employees. As the key human resource policies are able to fulfill the employees' demands, their performances can be successfully promoted. That is to say, firms should find out suitable ways to satisfy employees' needs. Thus, employees will become more willing to perceive customers' needs and adopt activities to respond to customers' demands, which will lead to the promotion of enterprises' strategic outcome such as the increasing of the MO level.

The IMO positively influenced the practice results of ES, and indirectly influenced the CS level of the enterprises (through ES). In the beginning, this study

Table 4. The test result of the mediating effect.

IV	M	DV	IV→DV	IV→M	IV+M→DV		Mediating effect
					IV	M	
IG	MO	ES	0.392**	0.559**	0.141	0.450**	Fully
IG	ES	CS	0.447**	0.580**	0.203	0.421**	Fully
ID	MO	ES	0.559**	0.584**	0.371*	0.322**	Partially
ID	ES	CS	0.640**	0.578**	0.494**	0.254*	Partially
IR	MO	ES	0.504**	0.640**	0.281*	0.348**	Partially
IR	ES	CS	0.585**	0.447**	0.435**	0.334*	Partially

* $\alpha=0.05$; ** $\alpha=0.01$.**Table 5.** The empirical test result of the hypotheses proposed by this study.

Hypothesis	The content of the hypothesis	The test result of the hypothesis	The empirical test result
H ₁	IMO has a positive effect on MO.	Significant and positive effect	Partially supported
H ₂	IMO has a positive effect on ES.	Significant and positive effect	Partially supported
H ₃	IMO has a positive effect on CS.	Significant and positive effect	Partially supported
H ₄	MO has a positive effect on ES.	Significant and positive effect	Supported
H ₅	MO positively influences CS.	Not significant	Not supported
H ₆	ES positively influences CS.	Significant and positive effect	Supported

proposed that when an organization adopts an IMO strategy (IG, ID, and IR), its ES level will be positively promoted. Nevertheless, the research results of this study demonstrated that only the hypothesis of IG had significant effects. That means that an organization should make efforts towards the execution of the strategy of IMO. To be specific, the organization should play an active role in understanding the employees' needs and expectations of the companies, exchanging values with employees, and concerning the labor market situation in terms of a distinguishable internal market and the companies' internal goals. In addition, the companies should motivate their employees to express their needs and demands through different channels in order to promote employees' internal satisfaction level, which in turn pushes up the CS level of the enterprises. Therefore, this study suggests that enterprises should appropriately strengthen their strategy in regard to the execution of IMO, which is to treat their employees as the internal customer, focus on communication and coordination with the employees (Webb and Lambe, 2007), and respond to the questions raised by the employees at the right time. To reach such an extent regarding the IG, the company can think of promoting the ES level in order to increase the satisfaction level of its customers. On the other hand, the research results of this study indicated that the IMO positively influences the company's CS level. That means that when an organization adopts IMO, the CS level of the company can also be effectively raised.

Regarding the effect of the MO effects of an enterprise

on ES, the empirical test result demonstrated that ES has positive influences on CS. Therefore, the authors suggest that enterprises should pay a great deal of attention to the balance situation between the development of the employees' professional skills and knowledge and the tasks assigned to them, so that employees are able to learn effectively and achieve growth in their jobs. In order to increase the ES level with their jobs, the administrators of the company can also consider: 1) using a job design featuring autonomy to replace employees' routine job contents with the purpose of increasing employees' social activities within the organization, 2) raising the support stemming from the leadership, supervisors, and colleagues, 3) designing jobs with appropriate workloads, 4) coordinating the role conflicts between employees, 5) offering a safe and comfortable working environment for employees, and 5) setting up a motivating system for performance management and a payment system for employees (Currivan, 1999; Gaertner, 1999). Besides, the company should establish a good working environment and pay attention to the employees' social intercourse situation, so that the employees are able to build up good relationships with other colleagues, which in turn lead to the promotion of the employees' retention rate and customers' satisfaction and commitment levels.

MO was proved to have no significant and positive influences on CS, a research result that is inconsistent with the research outcome of researchers in the past (Narver and Slater, 1990; Ruekert, 1992; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Slater and Narver, 1995; Pelham and Wilson, 1996

and Van Egeren and O'Connor, 1998). The possible reason could be that MO only focuses on the importance of the customers, and emphasizes that enterprises should view customer benefits as the first priority (Hunt and Morgan, 1995) - or consider customers to be the important assets of a company (Hunt and Morgan, 1995).

However, customers are won by employees. Satisfied customers are accessed by satisfied employees. If employees identify themselves with the product and services offered by their own companies, they are able to create satisfied external customers (Gronroos, 2000). That is to say, it is not an easy task to increase CS from the activities generated from the organizational level. Therefore, this study suggests that enterprises should be more concerned with the demands of employees, and practice internal market orientation, competitiveness orientation, and cross-sectional coordinating strategies, in order to increase the ES and then the CS levels of the firms.

This research finds that MO plays the role of mediator for both IMO and ES. That means IMO influences MO and ES. The possible reason for the production of the mediating effect can be that when an enterprise uses its IMO feature to increase the ES level, the culture that makes employees become market-oriented is also generated at the same time, and thus leads to the positive effect of MO on CS. The research result summarized above demonstrated the significance of MO as well as the fact that IMO has to be put into effect through MO so that ES can be effectively increased. This study suggests that enterprises should first practice IMO with their employees, who will guide the organizational market orientation. Finally, the CS level can be successfully raised through the promotion of CS and employees collecting customer information well, which increase the firms' comprehensive understanding of their competitors' customers. Besides, the research results of this study indicated that ES is the mediator of the IMO and CS of the firms. This study suggests that enterprises should adopt appropriate IMO strategies to enhance ES and then ultimately approach a CS good level. At the same time, the research result of this study was consistent with Lings (2004), in which ES's mediator status is proved to be true.

Finally, the authors use Baron and Kenny's (1986) three steps test to prove the mediating effect of ES and MO within the theoretical connections between IMO, ES, and CS. The analytical results indicate the existence of the mediating effect: the ES and MO of the firms play the role of partial mediator - the enterprises' activities in collecting and responding to the internal information from employees will reflect indirectly in the increase in the ES and MO levels. As for the generation (IG), distribution and collection (ID), and feedback (IR) of the internal information, even when companies are positively and actively involved in these activities, ID, IG and IR seem not to contribute to the effect of CS; only with the effect

generating from ES can CS effectively be significantly promoted.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Looking back at the relevant research of the past decade, MO strategies have helped companies to improve their operational performances, and have become one of the most important topics in the field of marketing (Slater and Narver, 1995). However, the issues of IMO have not been widely explored. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the implications brought up by the issues of IMO, and expected to contribute to the development of a symmetric MO model (Pitt and Foreman, 1999) and fill the gap in the theoretical development of marketing strategies. This research found that to improve CS, enterprises and their managers first have to think of how to improve their ES and consider adopting an MO strategy, which should be accomplished by the practice of IMO. Enterprises can also increase the level of CS by influencing employee behaviors - for instance, increasing ES and motivating the employees in contacting and providing good-quality services to their customers. Therefore, companies need to focus more on their employees' demands and satisfy those demands. To be specific, firms have to increase the companies' levels in the aspects of generation and distribution of internal market information, as well as having efficient feedback on internal market information. Besides, the company can put IMO onto the strategic level, and assess the effectiveness for practicing IMO - that is, to integrate IMO into the organizational strategies. Owing to the fact that IMO will increase and motivate the employees' commitment to their organization, the employees tend to have a higher job satisfaction level, which leads to a higher employee retention rate. Employees who have long-term commitment to their organization are able to understand well and satisfy customer needs. Therefore, those highly committed employees are able to produce satisfied customers.

Through ways of education, training, communication, and motivation, enterprises develop appropriate human resource programs to fulfill workers' demand and retain workers who have good performances. IMO is actually a kind of managerial philosophy, which guides the enterprises in the right ways to treat their employees, and aims to satisfy workers' needs to obtain their organizational commitment (Tansuhaj et al., 1988; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). The empirical research result of this study demonstrated that by adopting MO strategies, the companies' ES, MO, and CS levels increase significantly overall. That is to say, firms' strengthening of their relationships and dyadic communication with their internal customers (employees) is a must. Instead, companies should not require their workers to receive one-way messages (or follow-up rules) from the company only, but should also pay attention to the aspects of IG, ID and

IR, which are the necessary methods for collecting information about and listening to the employees, so that the firm is assured of the smooth running of a value exchange process with its employees, continuously receiving information about the market, and achieving internal goals in making employees feel suited to and comfortable in their work (Gounaris, 2006).

When a company tries to use innovation performance as a tool to increase its competitiveness, the factors of employees' involvement and satisfaction and CS levels play a significant role. That is because enterprises have to increase ES by promoting employees' commitment, which leads to a higher retention rate of employees with good performance. The ultimate goal of the firm's activities described above is the higher productivity and competitiveness of the company. If the company can accomplish these goals by satisfying employees' demands and needs in terms of building up the matching value systems of the employees with the firms, it should be able to promote its overall ES and performance. The empirical research result of this study proved that a company that is directed according to MO strategies has a significantly higher ES level (Lings, 2004). Thus, ES promotion is dependent on enterprises' practicing their MO strategies.

Using big firms from the manufacturing, financial and service industries as the sample object to process the empirical research, in combination with the literature review results, this study tested and verified the enterprises' affecting of CS through the promotion of ES and MO and thus proposed a theoretical model. The empirical result supported that when a company practices IMO, the outcome variable of the firm, the CS level, is then positively influenced. The research result can be the reference data of the administrators and managers within the company. Hence, the authors suggest that the enterprises in Taiwan should be more active and positive in pushing the IMO strategy to maintain their competences of innovation, acquiring sustainable competitiveness and strengthening their substantial capabilities to compete with other international companies worldwide. Then, the overall competitiveness of the industries in Taiwan can be increased.

RESEARCH LIMITATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The reliability for the dimensions of IG and ES was 0.68 and 0.64, respectively, in this study, which shows rooms for improvement. On the other hand, MO's effect on ES was not significant; were the insignificance sources from distinctive characteristics or other moderators' effects? This is a question that future studies can go a step further to explore.

The research result regarding IMO in this study contributes to filling the gap in the literature in terms of

companies ignoring their employees as their important internal customers. Also, IMO has been little studied in the past. IMO's guidance of enterprises' development is a kind of dynamic process, which includes three phases - IG, ID, and IR - of IMO, which in short form an interactive process between enterprises and employees. The CS of a company refers to a company's long-term relationship with its customers. That means enterprises have to make a great effort to build relationships with their employees in the long run. However, the researchers of this study collected the data in a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal way to explore the causal correlations between the variables, which may result in the fact that the dynamic correlations between different variables and their relevant content may not be able to be explained well and understood in depth. Hence, for future studies, the authors suggest that researchers use a case study or longitudinal type of research to explore the relevant topic and its relationships in depth. Finally, this study utilized the internal perspective of the enterprises to ensure the dynamic correlations of some variables, but for future studies, researchers could adopt different theoretical perspectives, variables or contexts to explore the process and infrastructure of those variables. That is to say, if future studies can be conducted from a longitudinal perspective, their research results in terms of the causal relationships of the variables should be more persuasive.

To sum up, the research result of this study demonstrated that the hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , and H_3) proposed by the study regarding the correlation between IMO, MO, ES, and CS were partially supported. However, the influences of MO on CS were proved not to be significant (H_4). A possible reason is that some important variables have not been included and are required for future discussions. For instance, Conduit and Mavondo (2001) even suggested that the cross-departmental conflicts within firms may result in variations of MO within the firm, or that some other control variables such as the employee characteristics may also have different influential results. However, those presumed hypotheses need further exploration, and the research range can be extended by adding other external perspectives. For example, the researchers can add external environmental factors to test their influences on the model proposed by this study.

Finally, other researchers can consider adding the effect of external environmental factors to the model proposed by this research to test the effects. For example, prior research (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Slater and Narver, 1994; Han et al., 1998) has even suggested that the external environmental factors such as the changes in the market and in skills, the insensitivity of the competitiveness, and the market growth can have a moderating effect on the relationship between MO and the operation performance of the organization, for which there is no consistent conclusion in the literature yet. Therefore, future efforts are requested to invest in adding those

environmental factors into the research framework for further exploration and validation of the empirical data.

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