THE MODERATING ROLE OF INTERNAL MARKETING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND JOB ENGAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM HOTELS AND TRAVEL AGENCIES

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Abstract: Employees play a crucial role in service firms, significantly influencing performance and value creation. Success in this regard depends on the efficient management of human resources as internal consumers. Therefore, this study examines the influence of organizational trust (OT) on job engagement (JE) and explores the moderating role of internal marketing (IM) on the relationship between organizational trust and job engagement. The study model was formulated and tested using data from 448 full-time employees in five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt, specifically, in the Greater Cairo area. Findings revealed that OT positively impacts JE. IM positively impacts OT and JE. In addition, IM has a positive moderating impact on the relationship between OT and JE.

Keywords: Organizational trust, job engagement, internal marketing, five-star hotels, category-A travel agencies

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INTRODUCTION

The turbulent hospitality and tourism industry demands a competitive workforce capable of exceeding expectations to ensure organizational survival and sustainability (Meynaar et al., 2021; El-Sherbeeny et al., 2023; Alshehri et al., 2024). Recognizing this critical need, the industry is strategically shifting its focus from conventional elements to cultivating passionate and engaged employees (Han et al., 2023; Khairy et al., 2023a; Khairy et al., 2023c). This shift prioritizes fostering a work environment that inspires dedication, vigor, and absorption, ultimately leading to superior performance and customer satisfaction (Liu et al., 2022; Kanjanakan et al., 2023). JE defined as a positive work-related state characterized by dedication, vigor, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006), is demonstrably linked to higher levels of employee motivation and performance (Ashour et al., 2023). Vigor reflects the willingness to invest sustained effort and persevere through challenges. Dedication signifies a strong sense of involvement and identification with the organization and one's role. Finally, absorption denotes a state of complete immersion and focus on work tasks (Kulikowski, 2019). Research has identified several factors influencing JE (Liu et al., 2022), with two emerging as particularly relevant: organizational trust and internal marketing (Khawaja and Ahmed, 2021).

While interpersonal trust thrives on personal interactions, OT delves deeper, examining the confidence and openness employees exhibit towards their organization (Berraies et al., 2021). The current study focused on OT, which is defined as encompassing employees' confidence in the organization's actions and their willingness to disclose themselves to another party (Hon and Grunig, 1999), and their overall perception of the organization's trustworthiness (Nyhan and Marlowe, 1997). OT transcends mere faith; it embodies employees' belief that the organization will operate with integrity, keep its promises, and deliver on its commitments (Berraies et al., 2021). Previous literature indicated three pillars that underpin OT: integrity, which reflects employees' belief that the organization adheres to ethical principles and acts justly, considering the needs of all stakeholders (Vanhala et al., 2016); dependability which is the belief that the organization will

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honor its promises and commitments (Connelly et al., 2018); and competence, which refers to the confidence employees have in the organization's skills, resources, and leadership to deliver on its promises and navigate challenges successfully (Lee and Li, 2021). Previous studies highlighted the interplay of various factors in cultivating OT, such as leadership style, employee empowerment, internal marketing, organizational structure, organizational culture, and perception of organizational justice (e.g., Kesen et al., 2017; Alshaabani et al., 2020; Berraies et al., 2021; Khairy et al., 2023b; Shuhua and Kanokporn, 2023).

The success of any hospitality or tourism enterprise hinges on its ability to deliver exceptional guest experiences (Bharwani and Mathews, 2021; Alsubaihi et al., 2023; Deac et al., 2023; Suksutdhi, 2024). This is profoundly influenced by the motivation, engagement, and customer-centricity of its employees. This is where the strategic philosophy of IM comes into play (Hashad et al., 2023). IM was defined as treating employees like valued customers, crafting jobs that fulfill their needs and aspirations while aligning with the organization's goals (Berry and Parasuraman, 2004). IM transcends traditional marketing practices. It recognizes employees as valuable internal customers whose needs and aspirations deserve consideration (Matanda and Ndubisi, 2013). IM goes beyond simple communication; it's about activating every employee as a brand ambassador (Narteh and Odoom, 2015). As Shazia (2017) stated, it's more crucial than external marketing because engaged employees become powerful allies in achieving organizations' marketing goals. Previous studies indicated that IM leads to virtuous outcomes such as increased motivation, improved job performance, stronger organizational commitment, and enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors (Joung et al., 2015; Duyan, 2021; Hashad et al., 2023). Previous research has extensively explored the connection between organizational trust and job engagement in various contexts, including higher educational institutions (Yildiz, 2016), the health sector (Al-Weshah, 2019; Ragab and Saleh, 2020; Håvold et al., 2021), and retail food businesses (Khawaja and Ahmed, 2021).

Despite the acknowledged importance of organizational trust in the hospitality and tourism sector (Khairy et al., 2023b), a significant research gap exists, as no prior studies have investigated its potential impact on employee job engagement within this sector. This notable absence underscores the need to recognize the direct link between Ot and JE in hospitality and tourism organizations. To date, there has been a dearth of research examining the direct relationship between OT and JE or the potential indirect correlation between these constructs, considering IM as a potential mediating/moderating factor. This gap in the literature is particularly pronounced within Egyptian hospitality and tourism organizations.

Consequently, the study aimed to address this gap by investigating the relationship between OT and JE. Additionally, it explored the moderating role of IM in the OT-JE relationship within Egyptian hotels and travel agencies. Through these efforts, the research endeavors to contribute valuable insights to the existing literature and advance our understanding of the dynamics influencing employee engagement in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Organizational Trust and Employee Job Engagement

JE transcend mere attendance; it embodies the investment of one's full self—cognitive, emotional, and physical—into their work roles (Schaufeli, 2006). This intensified commitment manifests as a willingness to contribute beyond formal requirements (Kazimoto, 2016). Engaged employees demonstrate enhanced job satisfaction, positive organizational emotions, and a strong alignment with the organization's mission and values (Knight et al., 2017). JE is not a uniform concept. It represents a complex interplay of attitudes towards work, organizations, and tasks, influenced by both organizational and personal factors (Nešić et al., 2020). Strong relationships, both personal and professional, thrive on a foundation of mutual respect and trust (Kandade et al., 2021). This principle extends to the workplace, where respect, trust, and performance form the cornerstones underpinning employee engagement (Melhem and Al-Qudah, 2019; Rahal and Farmanesh, 2022). The logical link between OT and JE is undeniable. Leaders bear a significant responsibility for shaping employee morale, providing guidance, and demonstrating reliable leadership (Stander et al., 2015). When employees perceive them as effectively fulfilling these roles, it energizes them to connect with their work, exhibit passion, and dedicate themselves fully, leading to predictable increases in job engagement (Khawaja and Ahmed, 2021). This positive influence extends to immediate supervisors as well. When they facilitate work, offer encouragement, collaborate in problem-solving, and recognize efforts authentically, employees trust them more, leading to predictable boosts in JE (Maximo et al., 2019; Basit, 2021). Social exchange theory (SET) provides a compelling lens to understand the link between OT and JE. This theory, proposed by Blau (1964, 2017), suggests that individuals view work relationships as a social exchange built on reciprocity. When employees perceive trust in their organization and management, they feel obligated to reciprocate that trust through enhanced dedication and engagement. They believe that if the organization treats them fairly, they should return the favor by being more dedicated and productive (Ugwu et al., 2014; Alshaabani et al., 2021). Hence, the study hypothesized that:

H1: Organizational trust increases employees' job engagement.

Internal Marketing and Organizational Trust

Trust was defined as a psychological state where individuals choose vulnerability based on positive expectations of another's intentions and actions (Rousseau et al., 1998). This trust can manifest in various forms, ranging from trust in colleagues to trust in management and the organization itself (Wildman et al., 2012). OT was defined as the extent to which employees confide in their organization's intentions and actions (Guzzo et al., 2021). OT serves as a cornerstone for positive employee attitudes and behaviors. Research demonstrates its crucial role in influencing various aspects of the workplace, including job satisfaction, job engagement, commitment, and turnover (Bieńkowska et al., 2018; Håvold et al., 2021; Mubashar et al., 2022). OT isn't simply a desirable attribute; it's a strategic imperative. OT influence is shaped significantly by the actions, behaviors, and communication of leaders, particularly managers (Dai et al., 2013). This is

where effective internal marketing strategies become instrumental in shaping employee perceptions of trust (Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2015). IM empowers employees with the knowledge, skills, and engagement they need to become advocates for the organization's mission and brand. This involves providing training and development opportunities, fostering clear and regular internal communication, and implementing strategic initiatives that deepen their understanding of the overall marketing orientation (Shazia, 2017). The impact of communication goes beyond mere messaging. Fuoli et al. (2017) highlight the nuanced effects of different communication approaches on trust, particularly in its rebuilding phase. This underscores the critical role of leaders in intentionally fostering organizational trust through their communication. OT, the bedrock of positive employee-management relationships, hinges on effective internal communication; internal communication is one aspect of internal marketing (Huang and Rundle-Thiele, 2015). It also thrives on two-way, symmetrical communication. This communication style emphasizes reciprocity, employee voice, responsiveness, and empowerment, fostering a workplace environment where employees feel heard, valued, and trusted in the organization (Kang and Sung, 2017). This crucial link becomes evident when considering that both trust and reliable information are essential for fostering mutual understanding, cooperation, and ultimately, job engagement. Based on SET, viewing employees as valued stakeholders fosters trust and belief in the organization (Akroush et al., 2013). This customer-centric approach emphasizes respectful internal communication and investment in employee development. By providing training and skills enhancement, organizations can motivate employees to perform better and stay loyal (Kesen et al., 2017). Furthermore, reciprocal communication fosters a culture of joy, pride, and appreciation strengthening trust and organizational success (Yue et al., 2021). This virtuous cycle demonstrates that treating employees as internal customers is not just ethical, but also leads to improved organizational trust. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: Internal marketing increases employees' organizational trust.

Internal Marketing and Employee Job Engagement

In today's competitive landscape, organizations are recognizing the strategic importance of a satisfied and engaged workforce (Mansour, 2020). This understanding fuels the growing adoption of IM, a managerial philosophy that acknowledges the direct link between employee well-being and customer satisfaction (Kimura, 2017). IM, essentially, is a direct marketing strategy that views employees as internal customers whose needs and aspirations deserve focused attention (Kimura, 2017). By offering fulfilling internal jobs and addressing employee concerns, organizations aim to achieve their overall objectives while fostering a motivated and loyal workforce (Li and Ko, 2021). IM initiatives hold the key to unlocking employee ownership, a powerful force that drives increased effectiveness and job engagement. IM fosters a sense of personal responsibility and commitment among employees, ultimately boosting their job engagement (Al-Weshah, 2019). The relationship between IM practices and employee JE is a critical area of research, with the SET offering a compelling perspective for this correlation (Imani et al., 2020). SET posits that individuals engage in social exchanges based on perceived fairness and reciprocity (Blau, 2017). Organizations that invest in IM practices create a favorable social climate to motivate and satisfy employees' needs, encouraging employees to reciprocate through increased JE (Yildiz, 2016; Ragab and Saleh, 2020). Contemporary research underscores the strategic significance of IM in fostering employee JE, particularly within the realm of cognitive engagement (Črnjar et al., 2020). This targeted approach, focused on motivating employees, cultivating loyalty, implementing effective internal communication, and investing in training, demonstrably enhances employee focus, and dedication (Yildiz, 2016). Drawing upon SET, the current study posits that hospitality and tourism organizations that treat their employees as valued internal customers and design tasks that fulfill their needs will foster a sense of obligation within employees to reciprocate replies through more job engagement. Consequently, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3: Internal marketing increases employees' job engagement.

The Moderating Role of Internal Marketing

Employee marketing, also known as IM, is a strategic practice of communicating a company's goals, mission, culture, and brand directly to its employees (Joung et al., 2015). This approach aims to create a knowledgeable and engaged workforce that feels deeply connected to the organization (Kimura, 2017). Numerous studies have highlighted the direct correlation between robust IM practices and elevated employee JE (e.g., Al-Weshah, 2019; Črnjar et al., 2020). For example, Črnjar et al. (2020) investigated the impact of various IM elements on employee JE. Their findings revealed that internal communication held the strongest link to all engagement dimensions, particularly emotional engagement. Further analysis showed that motivation and loyalty, among other elements of IM, also had a strong association with emotional engagement. In the same vein, Yildiz (2016) concluded that there is a positive link between IM and JE. When treated like valued "internal customers", employees exhibited increased motivation, satisfaction, and resilience. They displayed greater enthusiasm and pride in their work, demonstrating a stronger emotional connection and focus.

Effective internal communication is the cornerstone of successful IM (Huang and Rundle-Thiele, 2015). IM focuses on regularly sharing company news, updates, and achievements, which fosters transparency and builds employees' OT (Kesen et al., 2017). Organizations prioritizing communication and training foster a more satisfied and engaged workforce. By prioritizing these IM elements, organizations cultivate a more engaged, satisfied, and ultimately trusting workforce. Additionally, IM encourages open communication and feedback, creating a two-way dialogue that strengthens employee JE and commitment (Yildiz, 2016; AlWadi et al., 2023). Building trust between organizations and employees is crucial for fostering JE (Yildiz, 2016). The current study argues that IM plays a key role in moderating this relationship, drawing from the principles of SET (Blau, 2017). Based on SET, when organizations invest in their employees through IM practices, they

offer valuable "rewards" like open communication, advancement chances, empowerment, constructive feedback, training, and development. These investments foster employees' OT (Kesen et al., 2017). This trust, in turn, leads to increased satisfaction and JE, as evidenced by research (Håvold et al., 2021; Khawaja and Ahmed, 2021; Mubashar et al., 2022).

Consequently, the study hypothesized that:

H4: IM moderates the relationship between OT and JE; it strengthens the OT→JE relationship.

The conceptual framework of the study is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
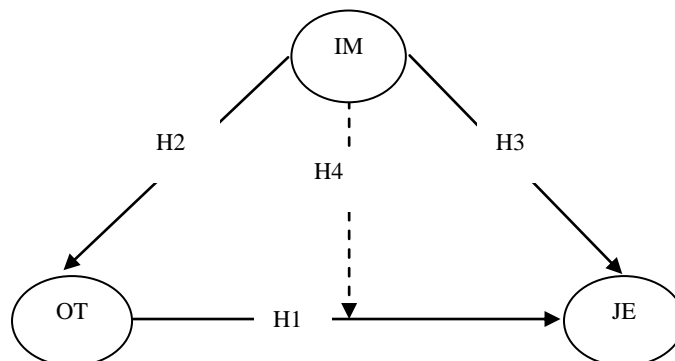

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

METHODOLOGY

Measures and Instrument Development

The study utilized a self-administered questionnaire divided into two sections, one examining latent variables and the other focusing on study sample characteristics like gender, age, education, experience, and work organization. The study assessed organizational trust using a 9-item scale suggested by Pearce et al. (1994). For instance, "The performance appraisal system shows that this organization trusts its employees" and "The personnel policies suggest that this organization has confidence in its employees". The study also used a 5-item scale from Jung et al. (2021) to measure job engagement. For example, "My job inspires me" and "I am enthusiastic about my job". Lastly, the study utilized a 12-item scale developed by Wu et al. (2013) for measuring internal marketing. For example, "Two-way information flow across management levels is encouraged" and "I am made aware of the overall policies and goals of my company".

Sampling, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

The study model was tested using data from full-time staff in five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt, which dominate the hospitality and tourist industry and both deal with international visitors. This study used a convenience sample technique and included personnel from 22 five-star hotels and 52 travel agencies category-A in the Greater Cairo area. In the Greater Cairo area, there are 30 five-star hotels and 1666 category-A travel agencies, according to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (2022). To acquire permission to distribute the surveys inside their workplace, the human resources managers of the properties that are the subject of the investigation were contacted. A total of 800 questionnaires were issued, however, 448 (56% response rate) made up the research sample. The study employed PLS-SEM, a popular analytical technique in tourism and hospitality research, to assess research hypotheses via the usage of statistical software namely, WarpPLS 7.0. PLS is a technique used when theory is insufficiently grounded, variables or measures don't fit a specific measurement model, and the researcher primarily focuses on predicting the dependent variable.

Participants' characteristics

The study involved 448 employees, with men comprising 76.8%. 59.4% had a bachelor's degree, 40.2% aged 18-30, and 43.8% had one to four years of experience. More precisely, 45.5% were employed by category-A travel agencies, while 54.5% were employed by five-star hotels. The detailed participants' profile is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics (N=448)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	344	76.8
	Female	104	23.2
Age	18:< 30 years	180	40.2
	30 : <45 years	174	38.8
	≥45 years	94	21.0
Education	Other (High schools/institutes etc.)	98	21.9
	Bachelor	266	59.4
	Master/PhD	84	18.8
Tenure	1:< 4 years	196	43.8
	4 to ≤8 years	178	39.7
	>8 years	74	16.5
Enterprise	5-star hotels	244	54.5
	Category-A travel agencies	204	45.5

RESULTS
Reliability and validity

According to Table 2, the study's confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated acceptable item loadings (>0.50), reliability (>0.70), and validity (AVE>0.50). In addition, with a value of ≤3.3, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is computed to show pathological collinearity and the absence of common method bias in the model. According to data presented in Table 3, the discriminant validity of the current study is established because the square root of each AVE value for each latent construct is significantly greater than any correlation between any pair of latent constructs.

Table 2. Item loadings, Cronbach Alpha, CR, AVE, and VIF
(CR: Composite reliability; CA: Cronbach's alpha; AVE: average variance extracted; VIF: variance inflation factors)

Construct	Item loading	CR	CA	AVE	VIF
Organizational Trust (OT)	-				
OT .1	0.682				
OT .2	0.747				
OT .3	0.751				
OT .4	0.666	0.834	0.774	0.513	1.093
OT .5	0.673				
OT .6	0.748				
OT.7	0.626				
OT.8	0.837				
OT.9	0.691				
Job Engagement (JE)	-				
JE .1	0.782				
JE .2	0.949				
JE .3	0.941	0.940	0.917	0.758	1.187
JE .4	0.737				
JE .5	0.923				
Internal Marketing (IM)	-				
IM .1	0.601				
IM .2	0.625				
IM .3	0.822				
IM .4	0.794				
IM .5	0.819				
IM .6	0.772	0.945	0.936	0.590	1.512
IM .7	0.778				
IM .8	0.809				
IM .9	0.781				
IM .10	0.753				
IM .11	0.788				
IM .12	0.834				

Table 3. Discriminant validity results

	OT	JE	IM
Organizational Trust (OT)	0.611	0.123	0.209
Job Engagement (JE)	0.123	0.871	0.274
Internal Marketing (IM)	0.209	0.274	0.768

The research model fit

As illustrated in Table 4, the study research model successfully met all model fit and quality indices recommended by Kock (2021).

Table 4. Model fit and quality indices

Model fit indices	Results
"Average path coefficient" (APC)	0.341, P<0.001
"Average R-squared" (ARS)	0.246, P=0.003
"Average adjusted R-squared" (AARS)	0.230, P=0.004
"Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.186
"Average full collinearity VIF" (AFVIF)	1.315
"Tenenhaus GoF" (GoF)	0.409
"Sympson's paradox ratio" (SPR)	1.000
"R-squared contribution ratio" (RSCR)	1.000
"Statistical suppression ratio" (SSR)	1.000
"Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio" (NLBCDR)"	0.750

The Multi-group analysis

The Multi-group analysis confirmed no significant changes in path coefficients were observed between employees of travel agencies and five-star hotels due to workplace differences.
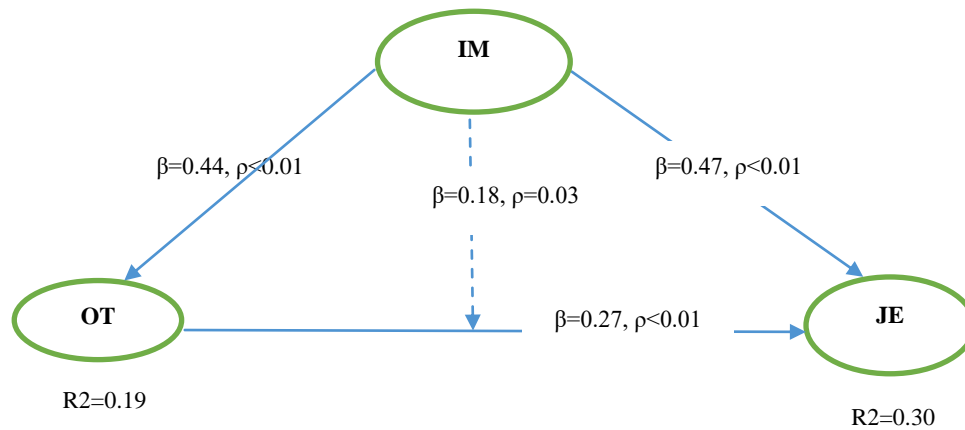
Figure 2. Final study results

Results of testing hypotheses

As shown in Figure 2. The study revealed that organizational trust (OT) positively impacts job engagement (JE) ($\beta=0.27$, P<0.01). Therefore, the study supports the hypothesis that higher OT leads to higher JE. In addition, internal marketing (IM) positively impacts OT ($\beta=0.44$, P<0.01) and JE ($\beta=0.47$, P<0.01). This means that higher IM leads to higher OT and JE, thus, H2 and H3 are supported. Moreover, IM has a positive moderating impact on the relationship between OT and JE ($\beta=0.18$, P=0.03), thus H4 is also supported. Figure 2 also revealed that IM interprets 19% of the variance in OT (R2=0.19), while OT and IM interpret 30% of the variance in JE (R2=0.30).

DISCUSSION

Employees are crucial for service firms, influencing performance and value creation. Effective management of human resources as internal clients is essential for their success (Huang et al., 2019). However, the impact of internal marketing on organizational trust and job engagement has not been thoroughly examined before. Therefore, this study examines the influence of organizational trust (OT) on job engagement (JE) in the tourism and hospitality industry and explores the moderating role of internal marketing (IM) on the relationship between organizational trust and job engagement. Findings revealed that organizational trust (OT) positively impacts job engagement (JE), internal marketing (IM) positively impacts OT and JE, in addition, IM has a positive moderating impact on the relationship between OT and JE. The results align with and can be interpreted based on the findings of previous studies. Pascual-Fernández et al. (2020) claimed that internal marketing involves treating employees as valuable customers, generating information about their needs, and implementing strategies to meet their requirements, thereby building internal market knowledge. In addition, internal marketing involves understanding employee needs and implementing strategies to respond to internal market wants. This includes employee participation in decision-making and leveraging market knowledge in service development. It also creates customer-oriented employees who are motivated and trained to provide superior value and excellent service. It fosters an environment where employees can solve problems and empower tourism and hotel employees (Huang et al., 2019).

Organizations that communicate their objectives and vision to employees boost performance, satisfaction, and engagement (Back et al., 2011; Kanyurhi and Akonkwa, 2016). Developing personnel is a central element of internal marketing orientation, involving training, materials, courses, and supervisors, which significantly increases job satisfaction and individual performance (Nemteanu and Dabija, 2021). In addition, organizations that treat employees as internal clients maintain and increase satisfaction over time (Frye et al., 2020). Supporting employee development through appreciation and recognition leads to increased job satisfaction. Psychosocial support and mentoring quality directly impact employee development (Nemteanu and Dabija, 2021).

Internal marketing focuses on addressing the needs and concerns of employees fairly and equally within an organization. Organizational commitment stems from employees' emotional response to internal marketing practices, including value exchange, market segmentation, communication, management concerns, work/family incentives, and job development (Moreira et al., 2020). Moreover, internal marketing practices can enhance employee trust and relationship development between organizations and employees; it fosters a culture of joy, pride, and appreciation, ultimately increasing trust and trust in the organization (Kang and Sung, 2017). Organizations should communicate timely, accurate information to employees, involve them in decision-making, and consider their impact on work and life to build trust and authentic intentions (Men et al., 2021; Qin and Men, 2023).

Theoretical and practical implications

Our study findings offer valuable insights into the relationship between organizational trust, internal marketing, and job engagement, enriching the understanding of these concepts within the framework of social exchange theory. Firstly, the results resonate with the core tenets of SET, demonstrating that organizations work to facilitate work, offer encouragement, collaborate in problem-solving, and recognize efforts justly. When employees perceive these behaviors as consistently practiced, it fosters trust in their organizations. This trust, in turn, ignites a sense of job engagement. Secondly, the study

highlighted the role of internal marketing in increasing employees' organizational trust and job engagement. Building organizational trust is no accident. It requires a deliberate approach that shapes employee perceptions of leadership, values, and commitment. In this context, internal marketing emerges as a powerful and strategic tool by empowering employees with knowledge, fostering trust through communication, and providing training and development opportunities. Furthermore, internal marketing transcends mere communication; it recognizes employees as valued internal customers. Focusing on motivation, loyalty, clear communication, and investing in training cultivates job engagement. Organizations adopting this approach design tasks that fulfill employees' needs, fostering a sense of reciprocity. This translates to increased job engagement as employees feel valued and connected to the organization's goals. Thirdly, the study highlighted the potential of internal marketing as a moderator between organizational trust and employee job engagement. The study proposed that internal marketing serves as an effective communication channel for conveying the organization's commitment to fairness, respect, and appreciation for employees. This, in turn, fosters increased levels of trust, which ultimately leads to enhanced employee engagement. This implies a positive cycle where effective internal marketing fosters trust, which in turn leads to higher engagement, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organization.

Besides the theoretical contributions, the study provides important practical implications for managers and practitioners. First, our research emphasizes organizational trust as a critical driver of employee job engagement within the hospitality and tourism industry. It's crucial to remember that building trust is not solely a managerial responsibility but a shared endeavor between managers and employees. Regarding employees' roles, they must proactively communicate their changing needs and concerns to managers, take initiative in their personal and professional development, deliver excellent work to showcase their commitment to the organization's success and collaborate effectively with colleagues to achieve shared goals. For managers' roles, they must keep employees informed and foster open communication, ensure fair treatment and respect for all employees, invest in training and opportunities for employee growth, and acknowledge and appreciate employee contributions to build morale. Second, the hospitality and tourism industry thrives on engaged employees. Our study suggested that organizations should prioritize job engagement as a key selection attribute when recruiting employees. By prioritizing engagement in recruitment, hospitality and tourism organizations can secure motivated and enthusiastic employees who contribute significantly to the team and the organization's success.

This translates to a positive work environment that benefits both employees and the organization. Third, utilizing internal marketing strategies serves as a crucial tool for fostering trust within an organization, facilitating collaboration, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge among various parties. This, in turn, promotes organizational trust and has a positive impact on the engagement of employees. In the context of hospitality and tourism organizations, the adoption of internal marketing practices involves significant investments in training and development programs designed to enhance the skills and competencies of their workforce. The focus on employee development not only leads to heightened organizational trust but also contributes to increased levels of employee engagement. Organizations demonstrate a strong commitment to nurturing their employees by providing avenues for professional growth and advancement. This dedication, in turn, becomes a catalyst for building trust within the organization and bolstering employee engagement. Continuous training initiatives not only keep employees updated on industry trends but also contribute to ongoing improvement in their job engagement, ultimately benefiting the whole organization.

Limitations and future research

While this study offers valuable insights into organizational trust, job engagement, and internal marketing in the hospitality and tourism sector, there's ample room for further exploration. The initial investigation focused on the impact of OT on JE within the hospitality sector, specifically in hotels and travel agencies, with IM as a moderating factor. To deepen our understanding, future research could explore the broader implications of OT, extending beyond JE to include green organizational attitudes and behaviors. This expansion might encompass areas such as green innovative work behavior, green job engagement, green citizenship behaviors, and green commitment, offering fresh perspectives. Moreover, the study primarily concentrated on five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. To enhance applicability, future research should replicate the study in diverse settings, considering various hotel star ratings, exploring other segments of the hospitality industry (such as restaurants or airlines), and extending the geographical scope to include regions beyond Egypt, such as the Middle East and Africa. This broader approach would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between organizational trust, job engagement, and internal marketing. Additionally, while the study investigated the moderating role of IM in the OT-JE relationship, future research could explore alternative factors. Examining the mediating or moderating influence of variables like job insecurity, nepotism, transformational leadership, distributive injustice, etc., would provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in OT and its impact on employee outcomes. Lastly, by exploring these avenues, future research can build on the valuable foundation laid by this study, providing a more comprehensive understanding of OT, JE, and IM in diverse contexts, and ultimately leading to practical benefits for organizations and employees alike.

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