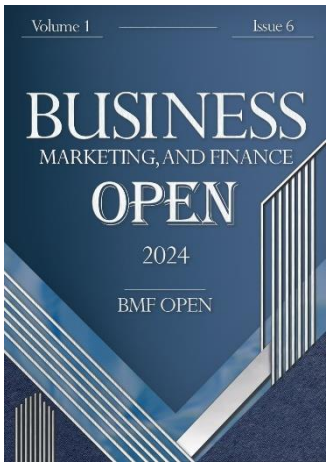
Explaining the Interactive Relationships Between Internal Marketing, Organizational Intelligence, and Organizational Innovation in the National Tax Administration



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Abstract: In the era of information and advanced technology, organizations must implement innovative and intelligent strategies to maintain competitiveness and enhance their performance. To achieve these objectives, understanding and analyzing the relationships among internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and innovation—as key factors in optimizing organizational performance—are of particular importance. Therefore, the present study aims to explain the interactive relationships between internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration. From a methodological perspective, this study employs a mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach. The qualitative phase utilizes thematic analysis, while the quantitative phase applies fuzzy Delphi and structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population in the qualitative phase consists of university professors and managers of the National Tax Administration. In the quantitative phase, the population includes all employees of the National Tax Administration, employed under contractual, probationary, or permanent official status in various departments. In the quantitative phase, the fuzzy Delphi technique was conducted using a snowball sampling method, selecting 19 experts. To test the model using structural equation modeling, a convenience sampling method was employed. Given that the total statistical population comprises 20,000 individuals, based on Krejcie and Morgan's table with a 0.05 precision level, a sample size of 377 participants was determined. The thematic analysis process was carried out in six stages following the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings identified two sub-themes and 13 base themes for internal marketing, two sub-themes and 10 base themes for open innovation, and two sub-themes and 11 base themes for organizational intelligence. After identifying and screening the indicators of internal marketing, organizational innovation, and organizational intelligence, these factors were categorized into clusters. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test and evaluate the validity and reliability of the relationships. Additionally, interpretive structural modeling (ISM) was employed to determine the interactive relationships among the variables.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Organizational Intelligence, Organizational Innovation, Thematic Analysis.

1. Introduction

Today, marketing is recognized as the most crucial function of any organization; without effective marketing activities, other organizational efforts would essentially be futile. The success of an organization depends on its

effectiveness and ability to meet the explicit and implicit needs and demands of customers. Organizations face more than one market (employees as the internal market and customers as the external market), and success is contingent upon the organization's ability to effectively manage the relationships between them [1]. According to scholars, employees are the internal customers of a company, and their satisfaction reflects the satisfaction of external customers. Marketing researchers have traditionally focused on external marketing to promote products and retain customers. However, in service organizations, services are directly or indirectly delivered by internal customers (employees) to external customers [2].

Internal marketing is one of the marketing concepts introduced approximately 30 years ago by Berry as a strategy to address organizational employee-related challenges and improve service quality. The dominant perspective among internal marketing scholars is that employee satisfaction is essential for delivering high-quality services; thus, employees are at the core of internal marketing activities. Internal marketing, as a management technique, aims to enhance internal services to achieve greater employee satisfaction [3].

Innovation in active sectors of today's society is among the most critical strategies studied in organizational management. Some scholars argue that organizational innovation, driven by creativity, is a key factor in achieving success and competitive outcomes in organizations [4]. Achieving such a mission, which translates managerial visions into reality, requires individuals who are remarkably creative. Creativity and innovation are fundamental elements for sustaining and progressing any organization. In this regard, social science scholars attribute low economic growth and development to a lack of creativity and innovation in societies and their organizations [5]. From this perspective, innovation and the resulting changes drive transformation and the formation of new structures in social systems. Innovation necessitates changes in individuals' thinking and behavior. It is considered a fundamental organizational process, as it fosters organizational growth, survival, and evolution [6].

Given the continuously changing environment and the increasing number of uncontrollable environmental factors and market threats, gradual improvements are no longer sufficient. All organizations and companies must embrace creativity and innovation to ensure their survival and active presence in the market [7]. Accordingly, the National Tax Administration, as the largest financial resource provider in the country, must gain the support of both taxpayers and employees in all aspects to achieve its objectives and enhance overall satisfaction, despite existing shortcomings.

Intelligence has emerged as a critical business strategy for enhancing companies' competitive advantages and improving the effectiveness of strategic planning processes. Organizational intelligence refers to an organization's ability and capacity to mobilize its intellectual resources and focus them toward achieving its mission [5]. A distinctive feature of highly intelligent organizations is their ability to integrate individuals who understand market needs into a comprehensive process of market data analysis, information gathering, and trend evaluation (Mosleh & Elhiyari Bouzanijani, 2014). This process ultimately converts raw data into business intelligence, which is strategically applied in decision-making to add value to organizational activities. Therefore, the objective of organizational intelligence is to accelerate knowledge acquisition, facilitate knowledge transfer, identify opportunities, and resolve business challenges more efficiently than before [8].

Recent studies have highlighted the crucial role of internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in enhancing organizational performance. Ahmadi (2024) developed a localized organizational innovation model, identifying key dimensions such as internal and external R&D, human resource competencies, strategic thinking, and knowledge exchange [4]. Taheri Hosseini et al. (2023) explored the impact of organizational intelligence and intellectual capital on business intelligence, confirming significant positive

relationships among these variables [9]. Similarly, Mirzaei and Vafaei (2021) examined the correlation between organizational intelligence and innovation in knowledge-based companies, finding that different dimensions of intelligence significantly influence innovation [10]. Taheri and Haji (2022) investigated the impact of internal marketing and organizational learning on employee performance, with organizational innovation as a mediating factor, and concluded that organizational climate enhances creativity and innovation at both individual and organizational levels [11]. Darisavi Bahmanshir et al. (2021) developed internal marketing measurement indicators based on corporate governance in the sugar industry, emphasizing the importance of structured governance for effective internal marketing [12]. Sarangal et al. (2024) examined internal marketing in higher education, demonstrating its positive impact on faculty engagement and innovative behavior [13]. Azizi and Naeli (2024) conducted a systematic review of internal marketing, categorizing its approaches into transactional, relational, and Guanxi-based marketing, and emphasizing the role of employee feedback in refining internal processes [14]. Agrawal et al. (2024) provided a bibliometric analysis of organizational innovation, identifying key drivers such as organizational learning, corporate culture, human capital, and senior management support [15]. Nguyen et al. (2024) analyzed the interactive effects of online knowledge sharing and organizational innovation, concluding that leadership styles influence knowledge sharing, which in turn enhances employee creativity [16]. Nasef et al. (2022) examined the impact of internal marketing on innovation in hotels, revealing that internal communication fosters employee participation in innovation processes [17]. Finally, Pavlidou and Stathis (2020) studied internal marketing in public secondary education in Cyprus, demonstrating how internal marketing strategies facilitate collaboration and resource alignment for innovation [18]. Collectively, these studies confirm that internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and innovation are interconnected factors that drive competitive advantage and employee engagement across industries.

Given this context, the National Tax Administration, as one of the largest financial resource providers in the country, must leverage the latest intelligent and innovative approaches to fulfill its objectives, improve employee satisfaction, enhance efficiency, and optimize overall organizational performance despite existing limitations. Based on these discussions, the present study aims to examine the interactive relationships between internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation within the National Tax Administration.

2. Methodology

The present study is an applied research in terms of its results and follows a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative). It falls under the category of descriptive research and was conducted using a survey method. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with experts, managers, and specialists in the fields of marketing and tax administration. Interviews with experts refer to discussions with individuals who are influential, well-known, and knowledgeable in their respective fields.

The statistical population in the qualitative phase consists of university professors and managers of the National Tax Administration. In the quantitative phase, the population includes all employees of the National Tax Administration who are employed under contractual, probationary, or permanent official status in various departments. For the fuzzy Delphi technique in the quantitative phase, 19 experts were selected using the snowball sampling method. To test the model using structural equation modeling (SEM), a convenience sampling method was employed. Additionally, interpretive structural modeling (ISM) was used to determine interactive relationships. Given that the total statistical population comprises 20,000 individuals, based on Krejcie and Morgan's table with a 0.05 precision level, a sample size of 377 participants was determined.

In the qualitative phase, all interviews were recorded and utilized for coding, refinement, and feedback collection. A total of 15 experts participated in comprehensive interviews, each lasting between 30 to 75 minutes. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning no new data emerged. In the initial stages, the researcher identified 213 preliminary codes. After eliminating redundant and incomplete codes, 35 selective codes remained. In interviews 13, 14, and 15, no new codes were identified due to saturation.

In the next stage, the researcher consolidated the selective codes into broader semantic categories, leading to the identification of six sub-themes. These sub-themes provided the foundation for naming the main themes. Thematic analysis in this study was conducted based on the thematic network approach, dividing themes into basic, organizing, and global themes. These categorizations were separately presented in tables for the three key variables: internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation. The extracted global themes included internal marketing with two components (organizational citizenship and intra-organizational relations), organizational intelligence with two components (intelligent interaction with the environment and intelligent human capital), and organizational innovation with two components (idea-generation and innovation culture in the organization and innovation support). A total of 35 basic themes were identified and introduced. The qualitative model of internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration was developed based on the output of MAXQDA software, which categorized the global and sub-themes at the final stage of analysis.

To validate the coding process and ensure quality control in the qualitative phase, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to assess the dimensions and components of the interactive relationships model among internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration. To calculate the Kappa coefficient, an expert in the field was asked to independently code and categorize the themes without prior knowledge of the researcher's coding. The researcher's themes were then compared with those provided by the expert using SPSS software. A high level of agreement between the two coders indicated strong reliability. The software output showed a Kappa coefficient value of 0.897, which falls within an excellent agreement level.

All thematic analysis stages in the qualitative phase were conducted based on the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and are detailed in the findings section. Following the completion of the thematic analysis, the examined indicators were refined using the fuzzy Delphi method. The application of the fuzzy Delphi method for group decision-making facilitates a shared understanding among experts. In this study, fuzzy Delphi was first used to screen alternative factors. The fuzziness in the experts' shared understanding can be addressed using fuzzy theory, allowing for problem-solving and assessment in a more flexible scale. Additionally, this method improves the efficiency and quality of the questionnaire, making the analyses more objective compared to statistical results.

Each variable and its associated indicators were tested for validity and reliability using the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique through SMART PLS software. The structural model for interactive relationships among internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration was determined using the interpretive structural modeling (ISM) technique in MATLAB software.

3. Findings

The findings of this study are presented in two sections: qualitative and quantitative. The first section pertains to the qualitative phase, while the second section focuses on the quantitative phase.

Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a six-step guide for thematic analysis, which provides a highly useful framework for data analysis. In this study, their method was employed to identify primary, secondary, and base themes. These themes, after thorough examination and processing, are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1. Comprehensive Theme of Organizational Innovation

Base Themes	Secondary Themes (Organizing Themes)	Comprehensive Themes
Idea exchange within the organization	Idea-generation and innovation culture in the organization	Organizational Innovation
Teamwork and collaboration		
Financial incentives to promote ideas		
Transforming knowledge and experience into service		
New perspectives on process content		
Enhancing research and development capacity	Innovation Support	
Research collaboration with other organizations		
Cooperation with startups		
Utilization of new technologies		
Managerial stability		

Table 2. Comprehensive Theme of Internal Marketing

Base Themes	Secondary Themes (Organizing Themes)	Comprehensive Themes
Adherence to organizational rules and regulations	Organizational Citizenship	Internal Marketing
Acceptance of job descriptions and personnel policies		
Loyalty to organizational interests		
Voluntary acceptance of additional responsibilities		
Punctuality in organizational matters		
Tolerance of unavoidable discomfort		
Face-to-face interaction with employees	Internal Organizational Relations	
Employee surveys		
Group activities		
Providing career guidance to employees		
Resolving workplace conflicts		
Responding to employee family-related requests		
On-site managerial presence		

Table 3. Comprehensive Theme of Organizational Intelligence

Base Themes	Secondary Themes (Organizing Themes)	Comprehensive Themes
Adaptability	Intelligent Interaction with the Environment	Organizational Intelligence
Linking and transferring information within and outside the organization		
Predicting changes and rapid learning		
Quick response to environmental challenges		
Utilizing environmental opportunities through knowledge creation and application		
Level of expertise among organizational knowledge workers	Intelligent Human Capital	
Effective application of knowledge by employees		
Updating employee skills		
Increasing knowledge-sharing participation among employees		
Presence of specialized teams for leveraging information systems		
Development of structured and documented training programs for new employees		

In this section, the findings derived from structural equation modeling using Smart PLS software and interpretive structural modeling (ISM) are presented.

Table 4. Measurement Model Results for Organizational Innovation

Component (Latent Variables)	Indicator	Factor Loading	t-Statistic	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Idea-generation and innovation culture in the organization	C1	0.582	5.184	0.535	0.850	0.793
	C2	0.672	7.519			
	C3	0.733	12.419			
	C4	0.797	17.158			
	C5	0.845	27.152			
Innovation Support	SI1	0.922	59.211	0.662	0.886	0.829
	SI2	0.839	29.688			
	SI3	0.762	17.790			
	SI4	0.717	12.344			

According to Table 4, all standardized factor loadings are greater than 0.4, indicating an acceptable correlation between the indicators (observed variables) and components (latent variables) with the main construct (dimensions). The t-statistic values for all indicators exceed the critical threshold of 1.96, confirming that these indicators accurately measure the construct.

Table 5. Measurement Model Results for Internal Marketing

Component (Latent Variables)	Indicator	Factor Loading	t-Statistic	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Citizenship	OC1	0.863	40.757	0.709	0.936	0.916
	OC2	0.858	38.326			
	OC3	0.776	22.356			
	OC4	0.762	18.550			
	OC5	0.987	194.12			
	OC6	0.785	21.874			
Internal Organizational Relations	I1	0.770	12.200	0.552	0.895	0.862
	I2	0.786	14.629			
	I3	0.791	12.510			
	I4	0.771	12.557			
	I5	0.824	14.428			
	I6	0.595	5.831			
	I7	0.634	5.880			

As shown in Table 5, all standardized factor loadings exceed 0.4, confirming an acceptable correlation between indicators and components. The t-statistic values are also above the critical threshold of 1.96, indicating that these indicators effectively measure the construct.

Table 6. Measurement Model Results for Organizational Intelligence

Component (Latent Variables)	Indicator	Factor Loading	t-Statistic	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Intelligent Interaction with the Environment	IE1	0.679	9.176	0.547	0.857	0.793
	IE2	0.750	11.012			
	IE3	0.676	9.709			
	IE4	0.769	15.984			
	IE5	0.812	23.461			
Intelligent Human Capital	Sh1	0.810	22.846	0.622	0.908	0.879
	Sh2	0.803	19.574			
	Sh3	0.819	25.076			
	Sh4	0.725	14.721			
	Sh5	0.784	24.402			

	Sh6	0.787	26.094

Following the model testing, interpretive structural modeling (ISM) was used to determine the interactive relationships among variables. This analysis utilized questionnaire data from 10 experts processed through MATLAB software. The interpretive structural model for the relationships between internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation is presented as follows:

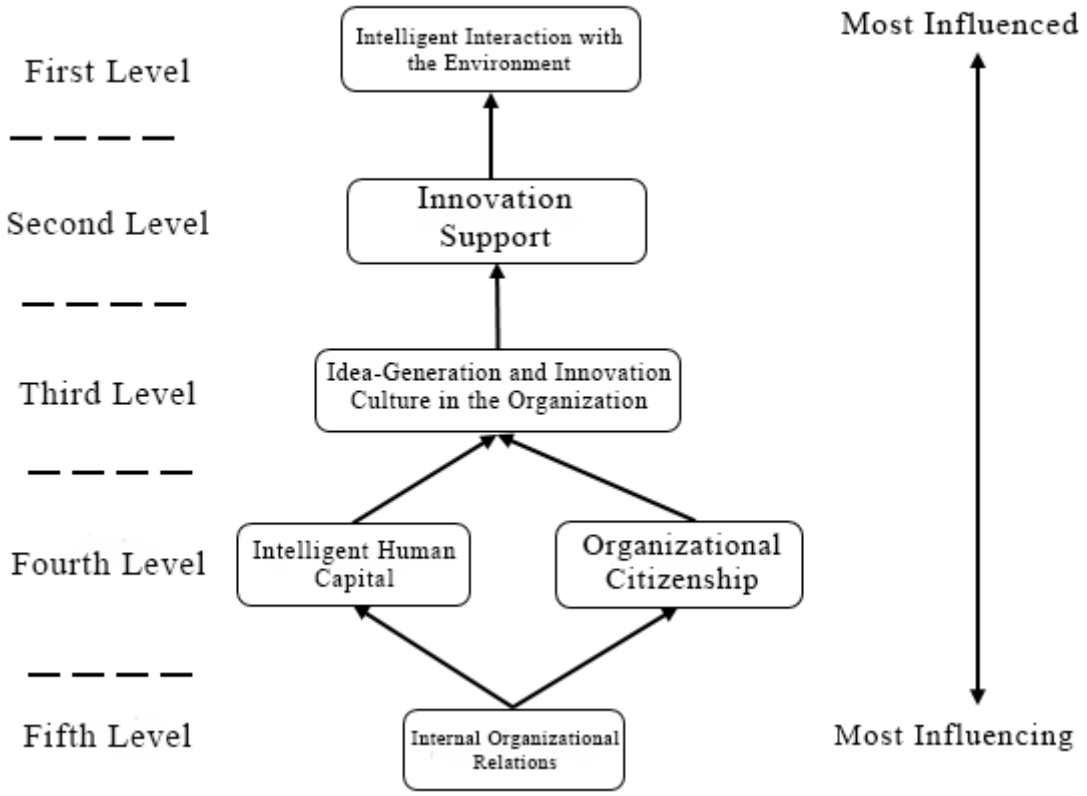

Figure 1. Interpretive Structural Model of Interactive Relationships among Internal Marketing, Organizational Intelligence, and Organizational Innovation

Additionally, the MICMAC analysis diagram was employed to analyze the influence and dependency of these relationships.

Table 7. Influence and Dependency Power (MICMAC Diagram) of the Interactive Relationship Model Among Internal Marketing, Organizational Intelligence, and Organizational Innovation

Factors	Internal Organizational Relations	Intelligent Interaction with the Environment	Organizational Citizenship	Intelligent Human Capital	Idea-Generation and Innovation Culture in the Organization	Innovation Support
Influence Power	6	1	5	5	4	2
Dependency Power	1	6	2	2	3	4

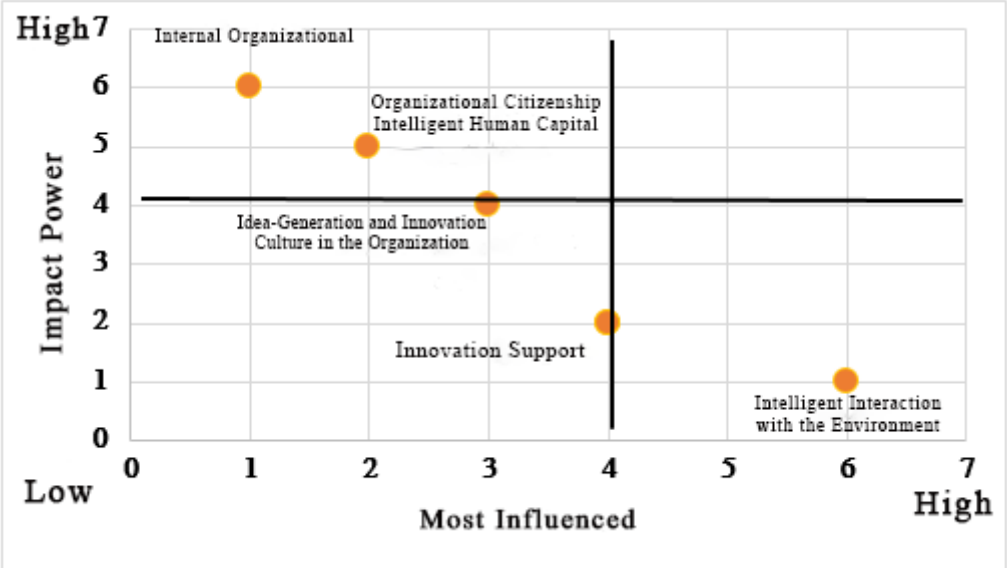

Figure 2. MICMAC Diagram for Influence and Dependency Analysis

4. Discussion and Conclusion

To extract the indicators and components of internal marketing in the National Tax Administration, thematic analysis following the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed, with data analysis conducted using MAXQDA software. The qualitative research sample consisted of managers from the National Tax Administration and university professors who had conducted research on the subject. The sampling method followed a snowball approach, leading to the selection of 15 experts until theoretical saturation was reached. Among these 15 participants, 53% (8 individuals) held a PhD, while 47% (7 individuals) had a master's degree. In terms of work experience, 13% (2 individuals) had 1 to 10 years of experience, 54% (8 individuals) had 11 to 20 years of experience, and 33% (5 individuals) had over 21 years of experience. Regarding age distribution, 27% (4 individuals) were aged 30 to 40 years, 46% (7 individuals) were aged 41 to 50 years, and 27% (4 individuals) were aged 51 years and above. The sample consisted of 93% (14 individuals) male and 7% (1 individual) female participants.

For data collection and analysis, unstructured open-ended interviews were conducted. All recorded interviews were transcribed manually, reviewed against the recordings to ensure accuracy, and then digitized in Microsoft Word. The transcribed interviews were subsequently imported into MAXQDA software for coding, resulting in an initial set of 213 open codes. Researchers eliminated incomplete, irrelevant, and duplicate codes, refining them to 35 selective codes. By clustering these selective codes into broader semantic categories, six sub-themes were identified, leading to the conceptualization of the main themes. These six sub-themes were categorized under three primary research variables.

In this study, internal marketing was identified with two key components: organizational citizenship and internal organizational relations. Organizational citizenship included indicators such as adherence to organizational rules and regulations, acceptance of job descriptions and personnel policies, loyalty to organizational interests, voluntary acceptance of additional responsibilities, punctuality in organizational matters, and tolerance of unavoidable discomfort. Internal organizational relations encompassed indicators such as face-to-face interaction with employees, employee surveys, group activities, career guidance for employees, conflict resolution, responsiveness to employee family-related requests, and managerial field presence.

The measurement model test using structural equation modeling (SEM) demonstrated that the measurement model for each variable and the overall proposed model exhibited high quality. According to the results, the dimensions of internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration showed standardized factor loadings greater than 0.7 across all indicators, indicating a strong correlation between observed indicators and latent variables with the main constructs. The t-statistic values exceeded the critical threshold of 1.96, confirming the validity of the indicators in measuring their respective constructs.

In evaluating the interactive relationships among internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration, innovation support accounted for 60%, idea-generation and innovation culture 27%, internal organizational relations 35%, organizational citizenship 30%, intelligent interaction with the environment 27%, and intelligent human capital 53% in explaining the model. According to the Stone-Geisser (Q^2) criterion, the predictive accuracy of innovation support was 37%, idea-generation and innovation culture 12%, internal organizational relations 7%, organizational citizenship 20%, intelligent interaction with the environment 13%, and intelligent human capital 30% in modeling the interactive relationships among internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation in the National Tax Administration. The calculated GOF values of 0.405 for organizational innovation, 0.396 for internal marketing, and 0.395 for organizational intelligence indicated a strong overall model fit in this research.

For analyzing questionnaire data in the interpretive structural modeling (ISM) process, MATLAB software was used, incorporating input from 10 experts. A 6x6 matrix representing the interactive relationship factors of internal marketing, organizational intelligence, and organizational innovation was developed as a questionnaire for expert validation. Experts provided their insights based on ISM principles, leading to a five-level hierarchical structure of the model.

At Level 1, intelligent interaction with the environment was positioned as the most dependent factor, influenced by all other factors.

At Level 2, innovation support impacted the first-level factor while being influenced by lower-level factors.

At Level 3, idea-generation and innovation culture in the organization was positioned, influencing higher-level factors while being affected by lower-level factors.

At Level 4, organizational citizenship and intelligent human capital were identified as factors that influence upper-level factors while being affected by lower levels.

At Level 5 (the highest level), internal organizational relations was identified as the most influential factor in the study, directly impacting all other factors in the model.

According to the MICMAC analysis diagram, internal organizational relations, organizational citizenship, and intelligent human capital were the least dependent but most influential variables (upper-left corner of the diagram), making them the key driving forces in the model. Intelligent interaction with the environment had the highest dependency and lowest influence (lower-right corner of the diagram), making it the most affected factor in the model. Changes in intelligent interaction with the environment were often the result of modifications in internal organizational relations, organizational citizenship, and intelligent human capital. Idea-generation and innovation culture in the organization and innovation support (lower-left corner of the diagram) had low influence and low dependency, making them the least critical variables in the model.

Internal marketing enhances interactions and relationships within an organization, fostering a positive and creative work environment. Internal marketing systems include programs to improve job satisfaction, employee

training and development, and effective intra-organizational relations. Given that the National Tax Administration interacts with various governmental and public sectors, improving internal relations can facilitate processes and enhance service efficiency.

Similar findings were reported [9, 11, 12, 17-21] which concluded that employee performance is a function of ability, motivation, and opportunities for participation. A positive social environment encourages employees to align their efforts with organizational goals. Organizational climate, internal marketing, and learning enhance innovation at both individual and organizational levels, leading to creative ideas from employees that ultimately improve performance. Similarly, Azizi and Naeli (2024) found that considering employee needs and feedback in internal marketing processes helps identify and refine internal processes, enhancing innovation effectiveness [14]. Moreover, internal marketing through employee training on customer needs and behaviors fosters innovative ideas for product and service development, leading to improved customer experience and increased loyalty.

Organizational intelligence involves gathering and analyzing internal and external organizational data to support strategic decision-making, including market trends, customer feedback, and stakeholder needs. In the National Tax Administration, organizational intelligence can help better understand taxpayer needs, anticipate regulatory and economic changes, and improve service quality.

Organizational innovation entails developing and implementing new ideas in processes, products, and services. In the National Tax Administration, innovation can improve registration processes, data management, digital communications, and service delivery, ultimately leading to higher taxpayer satisfaction and improved financial management.

Recommendations for Future Improvement

- Formation of cross-functional teams: Establishing teams composed of members from different departments, such as marketing, IT, and innovation, can foster knowledge exchange and generate new ideas.
- Implementation of information management systems: Utilizing customer relationship management (CRM) and business intelligence (BI) software enables employees to access essential information for informed decision-making, facilitating internal communication and transparency.
- Specialized training programs: Conducting workshops on innovation, organizational intelligence, and marketing techniques enhances employee knowledge and skills, empowering them to actively contribute to innovation initiatives.
- Feedback systems: Implementing regular employee feedback mechanisms helps identify organizational weaknesses and improvement opportunities.
- Incentives for innovation: Establishing a reward system for innovative ideas can motivate employees and encourage positive competition.
- Customer data analysis: Utilizing taxpayer data for trend analysis and service enhancements ensures marketing strategies and innovations align with taxpayer needs.
- Collaborative digital platforms: Using online tools for internal collaboration enhances knowledge sharing and communication among employees.
- Internal marketing strategies: Developing internal campaigns and events that promote organizational values and goals fosters employee engagement.
- Transparency in operations: Ensuring employees have access to relevant information encourages participation in decision-making and innovation processes.

- Taxpayer surveys: Conducting regular taxpayer surveys helps identify service gaps, enabling the organization to refine its services and implement customer-driven innovations.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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