Verification of the internal marketing relevance: relationship between internal marketing goals and productivity in a tourist environment.

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Abstract Important authors who have studied the Internal Marketing (IM) have concluded, there is still no common understanding of the available IM tools for dealing with internal clients, this is, the employees. Similarly, there is not a consensus on how to implement the IM in organizations. However, most authors agree that the IM must meet a set of goals and on these, there is a fairly general agreement. This investigation demonstrated through quantitative research in hotel sector that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the goals that seeks to achieve IM and hotel productivity. This result validates the IM concept itself and confirms the need for progress in developing a conceptual model for the IM that can reach a broad consensus.

Keywords internal marketing, internal marketing goals and productivity, tourist environment.

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The internal marketing

As Ahmed and Rafiq (1995) point out, the IM concept has its roots in the search for ways to increase the services quality offered by organizations, through the analysis and control the mechanism that primarily provides services, this is, the employees.

The first reference to the IM concept was given by Sasser and Arbeit (1976), who argued that employees are the most important market for the service companies. Although Sasser and Arbeit (1976) no specifically coined the term internal marketing in theirs publications, they point out that the work should be seen as a product offered to employees. Apparently the term IM was first used by Berry, Hensel and Burke (1976), then by George (1977), Thompson, Berry and Davidson (1978) and Murray (1979).

It was not until the Berry (1981) publication when IM concept has an initial definition, indicating this author that the IM is view employees as internal customers, looking to work as an internal product that meets the needs and desires of those internal customers while achieved the organizational objectives.

IM definitions

Even Kotler (1991), one of the most renowned authors in marketing, gives a definition of the IM to point out that it is a successful management of recruitment processes, training and motivating employees in order to serve consumers well.

Berry (1984) and Berry and Parasuraman (1991) propose the idea that not only exist a link between employee satisfaction and external customer satisfaction, but also that employees are actually internal clients of the organizations themselves.

Berry and Parasuraman (1992) point out that the IM purpose is mainly to attract, develop, motivate and retain qualified employees through a product called work that meets their needs. These authors point out that the MI is a philosophy that treats employees as internal customers with a strategic that meet the work-product to the human needs.

Quintanilla (1991) proposes in this sense that companies must become personalized organizations that has to consider the job satisfaction and self-esteem development for employees, to achieve the organization objectives. This perspective leads to see each employee as a domestic consumer who has needs that must be satisfied.

Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) point out that the IM concept was developed in phases. In the first phase, which consists in an early developmental stage, the IM literature focused mainly on motivation and employee satisfaction. These authors established that a second phase of IM development was produced mainly by Grönroos (1981), who noted that the IM should motivate workers, making them an awareness of external customers, creating what he called the sales-oriented minds.

Formers Research

Some studies such as Bansal and Sharma (2000) and Hubt, Chonko and Wood (1985) proposes that the employees attitude and behavior are related to customer satisfaction and enterprises profit, which is a basis of IM. Research in marketing and organizational behavior, such as those carried out by Arthur (1994) and Hartline and Ferrel (1996) have confirmed an increase in profitability and productivity in organizations that have adopted friendly IM practices to employees. Brown and Peterson (1993) found a positive correlation between sales performance of sales staff and the job satisfaction level.

Other investigations such as Bansal and Sharma (2000), Hubt, Chonko and Wood (1985), Arthur (1994), Hartline and Ferrel (1996) and Brown and Peterson (1993) have shown that the use of the tools proposed by IM may have a positive effect on the organization and employees performance. Authors like Gremler, Bitner and Evans (1994), indicate that the internal customer's satisfaction and external customer's satisfaction are significantly and positively correlated.

IM tools

There are many proposals about the IM tools provide for the academic literature. Among the IM variables considered by the authors are: internal communication, training, education and information, Gummesson (1991), motivation and development, Gronroos (1985), employee's attraction, recruitment and retention, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) and Foreman and Money (1995). Gronroos (1985), included within the elements of the IM to the work environment, point out its ability to motivate employees.

Tansuhaj Meanwhile, Randall and McCullough (1988) propose an IM model whose variables are: a) recruitment; b) training; c) motivation; d) communication and; e) retention. With the use of these IM variables they proposes that is possible to achieve finally the external customer loyalty, perceived quality of services that offered by the organization, and ultimately, the customer satisfaction.

Berry and Parasuraman (1991) propose the use of seven basic elements or variables of IM, namely: a) fight for talent; b) provide a vision; c) prepare people for results; d) team work; e) freedom to work; f) measurement and recognition and; g) meet internal customers.

IM challenges

Hales (1994) point out the IM can even be a metaphor, because is necessary to admit that in many cases there are differences between the employees and the company needs and interests.

It can be stated clearly that the IM concept is still in development and much of it are isolated ideas and proposals, sometimes unstructured and that vary greatly from one author to another. Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) clearly indicate that one of the main problems in implementing the IM concept is that there is no unified concept of what IM means. Gounaris (2006) notes that academic authors have failed to produce a single and unanimous definition of MI. Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006) have verified that the implementation of the IM concept in practice is still very low.

Most recent publications as Opoku, Atuobi-Yiadom, Chong and Abratt (2009) note that despite the numerous academic and business discussions there is still great confusion about the exact nature of IM, which has resulted in many different IM definitions.

This view is shared by Papasolomou and Vrontis (2006) who confirm that there is no agreement on the conceptual framework that explains the spectrum of IM, which the literature has a variety of meanings attributed to IM, different ways of implementing and therefore, variety of results.

IM goals

Although there is no a consensus on the IM conceptual model, there is a general agreement among the IM academics on the existence of internal customers and the objectives or goals pursued by the use of IM tools.

Tansuhaj, Randall and McCullough (1988) and Ahmed, Rafiq and Saad (2003) note a set of goals that the IM should seek to develop and which are mentioned by most authors. These goals are as follows:

1. Increase the effort that the employee is willing to do for the organizations.
2. Increasing employee commitment with the organizations.
3. Increasing employee involvement with the organizations.
4. Increase employee motivation.
5. Increased job satisfaction.

Without discussing the variables or tools that support the IM, this research will seek to establish the existence of relations between goals that the IM seeks and the organizational productivity.

Finding a positive and statistically significant relationship between these two elements will validate the IM itself, because the IM goals can effectively increase the productivity. Verified the IM concept, be justified in the future work to define a more definitive IM tools to achieve these IM goals.

Research Framework: Tenerife hotel sector

Tenerife, the biggest of the seven islands that make up the Canaries archipelago, is an established tourist destination with global importance, with a nearly 50 years trajectory that receive a figure close to five million tourists a year.

In general the tourism sector even when it has subjected to pressures that are leading to profound changes, it has the sufficient history and maturity to undertake research of the type that is looking for in this investigation. Tourism is the biggest product of international trade and in many countries is within its first three industries, as point out Cook, Yale and Mark (2002) and Lickorish and Jenkins (1997).

Additionally, the tourism industry being a labor-intensive as pointed out by Go and Pine (1995), is a suitable area for research related to the employees.

Tourism sector is the main driver of the Canary Islands economic, which is demonstrated as pointed Oreja, Armas and Garcia (2001), noting that the binomial tourism-trade and tourism-building accounted for more than 80% of regional GDP. Jimenez (2001) adds that tourism in the Canaries Island is the engine that drives the growth of other economy fields.

While Canary Islands are a established tourist destination, which usually has little fluctuating growth rates, indicating its maturity, its tourism model being one of the most controversial, characterized by the massive visitors arrival searching for sun, beach and sea as pointed out by Jimenez and Ramos (1995), although recently there have been betting for the development of other segments, mainly related to golf, spas and concerts.

The Canaries Island foreign tourist comes mostly from the United Kingdom, Germany and the Nordic countries, in addition to counting the visits of tourists from other regions of Spain. By its climate, that allows enjoyment the whole year, the Canary Islands even show great strength in the tourism winter months: November and March being stars. There is also a large arrival of tourists in the summer months, resulting in non-seasonal destination.

As Aguilo and Juaneda (2002) point out, Canary Islands are considered a traditional destination for masses, being an umbrella brand that covers the seven archipelago islands.

With the objective of having a homogeneous sample in relation to the characteristics of employees and thus able to make a better analysis of business performance, it was decided to use as part of the investigation the southern island hotel of five and four star category.

This geographical framework can reduce the distortions on the variables under study that may occur when analyzing together the hotels of the north and south of the island, both by the characteristics of its staff and because their productivity can be significantly affected by exogenous factors, arising from the location.

The south of Tenerife island had in 2008 over 340 accommodation establishments with a total of 65,729 beds (according to figures released by www.webtenerife.com), which leads to the conclusion that this is a sector with sufficient size and importance to serve as a framework for this research.

Productivity

In order to analyze the hotels productivity, there were taken as a first approximation, the variables considered by Barriuso and Munoz (2007) and its combinations, in the annual survey by Ernst & Young on economic indicators Spanish hotel industry, which include items such as occupancy rates, income by assets, revenue by number of employees and revenue by number of rooms available.

In the review of the measuring instrument by two industry executives, one belonging to a five star hotel in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and the other executive of the association of hotels in the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Ashotel), it can be concluded that hotels will not willing to deliver the kind of information offer by Barriuso and Munoz (2007) in the annual survey of Ernst & Young.

Both executives pointed out that the variable most likely could be obtained is the RevPar. The RevPar is a measure proposed by the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry or USALI that is widely used in the hotel sector. The RevPar is obtain dividing room revenue by rooms available, as shown in the equations presented in Figure 1, is equivalent to the average daily rate multiplied by the occupation.

In order to propose a measure to evaluate the employees productivity and addressing the operational performance measures proposed by Dyer and Reeves (1995), it will be used as a second variable to study the productivity, the relationship between hotel income and the number of employees. Multiplying the RevPar by the available rooms and multiplied this result by 365, it will get the total annual rooms income.

Divide the total annual room income by the number of employees will obtained the income per employee per year. In order to unify the period of time with respect to RevPar and offer smaller values and more understandable, is proposed for the analysis of productivity will calculated the revenue per employee per day, dividing the income per employee per year by 365. Figure 2 shows in detail the calculations outlined above.

In first place, all employees who are part of activities that are not part of the housing, such as golf and spa, were deleted from the study. And then, to homogenize and isolate the analysis of the influence of design effect of the hotel and additional service, will be taken as number of employees for each hotel that are obtained by using the average ratio of rooms per employee at hotels participating in this research.

This requires taking into account the point made by Camisón and Lapiedra (1999), in relation to the coefficient which measures the number of rooms per employee changes from hotels of five and four stars, being in Spain for 1.30 for the first case and 2.58 in the second case, according to research conducted by them.

With this objective and considering that the sample is taken at the hotels in South Tenerife and may have averages significantly different from Spain as a whole, it will calculate the average number of rooms per employees in the sample for four and five stars hotels and then multiplied by each hotel rooms will be obtained the "normalized" number of employees that will be using to calculate the income per employee.

Research objective

The research will try to verify the validly of the IM concept itself through the verification of the relationship between goals the IM seeks to develop and the level of productivity achieved by the hotels.

Methodology

Quantitative research was conducted through a questionnaire for data collection, which was supplied to employees of the hotels participating in the study. Similarly, a questionnaire was developed to collect the RevPar for the previous 12 months, which was delivered to staff. Information on the number of employees and rooms available was provided by ASHOTEL.

The research instrument uses the Likert scale described by Garson (2004), with five values ("1" to "5"), in addition to comparisons of ordinal type as this author points out, it is useful as metric scale, so which is the most used by studies to the application of statistical techniques.

Research hypothesis

Considering the above exposed, it is necessary to define a hypothesis to verify the existence of statistically significant relationships between the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop and the productivity. In this sense the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H_1: The greater the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop greater the productivity obtain by the organization.

Selection and sample size

As mentioned previously, it was decided to use as part of the investigation the Tenerife Island south hotels, with five and four stars category. The hotel offer in the south of the Tenerife Island is concentrated mainly in four-star establishments, given that seem better suited to the desires and expectations of consumers, as noted Oreja, Armas and Garcia (2001). That is why the importance of including in the sample this hotel category.

Additionally, the inclusion of the five star hotels has its justification in the importance acquired in recent years for these kind of buildings, with the construction of a considerable number of them, mainly in the municipality of Adeje, becoming seen the future of the tourism on the island. It will not be part of this investigation lower hotels category, in order to achieve greater uniformity between the characteristics of the interviewed employees and hotels productivity measures, and to avoid distortions that might occur to analysis substantially different hotels.

Ashotel provide the lists of hotels and theirs database contained 52 hotels with five and four stars category, located in the south of the Tenerife Island. Similarly, for a more homogeneous sample of employees who completed questionnaires, it was requested that questionnaires were distributed among the employees who have completed at least the obligatory secondary education (ESO) and was asked to include only employees with at least one year in the hotel, in order that they could make a proper assessment of the concepts to study.

Because education and age data were not available, it was decided to take a conservative position and take as population size for all employees of the 52 hotels Ashotel associated in southern Tenerife, resulting in an overall total of 8950 people. This decision produce a larger population and thus to the sample, thereby seeking to ensure in any case that the research offers at least the confidence level established.

As the large employee population, the differences in the calculation of sample size will be very small for the procedure of finite population and of infinite population, thus was decided to use the last, which is more conservative and produces a sample slightly higher.

To calculate the sample size, was used a confidence level of 95%, and in this case the Z_{α} coefficient is equal to 1.96. Similarly, the amplitude of the confidence interval was set at 5%. The sample size required for the stated confidence level was of 120 valid questionnaires.

With the Ashotel support, the participation of 31 hotels has requested. To try to ensuring that the sample does not have a special bias for any of the hotels, it was decided to limit the number of questionnaires to be requested by any hotel to a maximum of 12, with which it obtained a number of 372 potential questionnaires.

Distribute questionnaire

The data collection questionnaires were distributed to a total of 31 hotels in South Tenerife between the 20th of December 2008 and 11 February 2009. After several follow up calls and visits, 16 hotels indicated their intention to participate in the research, four of which ultimately failed to deliver the questionnaires, resulting of 12 hotels finally participated, 7 of them were four-star and 5 were five stars.

A total of 141 questionnaires were received of which 16 were not considered valid because it contains some filled errors. Finally the research told with 125 valid questionnaires, as mentioned above it exceeds 120 questionnaires required as a minimum sample size, so that the research achieved a confidence level of 95%.

Data processing

The application used to statistically process the data was SPSS software version 13.0.

Data analysis techniques

In order to achieve the variables reduction as proposed by Díaz de Rada (2002), it has been used the Factor Analysis with Principal Component Method. This author argues that this procedure is most often used in commercial and social research.

In order to verify the null hypotheses to be tested was used Diaz de Rada (2002) proposal that suggests using the comparison of means method through analysis of one-way ANOVA. Santos Munoz, Juez, and Cortina (2003) note that the variance analysis (ANOVA) allows to study whether a set of independent variables could influence to dependent continuous variable.

Scales validation

Reliability

In order to determine the measurement scale reliability and its internal consistency has been used Cronbach's Alpha, described by Cronbach (1951), which is a procedure that evaluates the reliability measurement instrument using two dimensions, consistency and stability. As

pointed out by Garson (2004) Alpha Coefficient most commonly used in social sciences is 0.7 or greater.

The Cronbach's Alpha for the questions concerning to the goals that the IM seeks to develop was 0.915, indicating that the instrument has high reliability.

Validity

As Babbie (1995) and George and Malley (1995) point out that the measuring instrument validity refers to the capacity of the instrument to proper measure what it purport to measure. In that sense it was verified the content validity, performing the steps outlined by Carmines and Zeller (1979). And also through contrasts of means was verified the criterion validity, as reported by Sanabria (1999).

Research Findings

Goals that the IM seeks to achieve

The data of the IM goals reached by the hotels has studied first analyzing the average employees responses on five questions related to these goals (see Table 1).

All IM goals obtained an evaluation by employees equal or more than 4.05, it is between "Good" and "Very Good", which can be noted that through the activities directed to the employees, the hotels participating in research in general have achieved the IM goals. On average the IM goals obtained 4.12 points, it is a high evaluation.

Then check the result of the KMO coefficient, it was 0,851 and the PEB test it was 456,113 that indicates the applicability of factor analysis on data collected.

The data were processed using the factor analysis technique and obtained a single component that explained 74.91% of the variance. Being composed of all the variables, this component has a Cronbach Alpha equal to 0.915 thus concludes that it has sufficient internal consistency. The variable with the highest coefficient is the commitment that the employee feels for the company. This component was named as " IM Goals ".

Productivity data analysis

For one of the hotels and because it was closed for renovations during the first six months of 2008, due to management recommendation, it was decided to work with RevPar of the 2007, increased by the annual increase in tariff. This was justified because the hotel has an occupancy rate for the months it was operating, virtually unchanged from the previous year.

The preliminary data review showed that the RevPar of one four-star hotels has a value that was less than half what it would expect. To verify this information it was necessary to contact the administration head of the hotel. This executive said that RevPar was actually much lower than what would correspond to a hotel of this category, due to specific problems of this hotel that had been forced to undertake aggressive campaigns offers to compensate the low level of customer demand, resulting from the relatively poor location, to be located in one of the less attractive areas, far from the beach and main entertainment centers.

These problems have deepened in recent years because the hotel has received a significant number of bookings for a single person, often being obliged to make available double rooms with a single room rate. After this analysis, the executive recommend that in the current situation may not be appropriate to compare this hotel RevPar with another four star hotels for the purpose of measuring productivity.

For that reason it was necessary to eliminate these hotel questionnaires for productivity analysis. To verify whether this was possible, it was calculated the level of confidence that the investigation has for the remaining number of questionnaires, subtract to the 125 valid questionnaires the 12 questionnaires of this hotel, for a final total of 113 questionnaires. In that sense, it was calculated the Z_{α} necessary for all the questions require a sample of 113 questionnaires and this Z_{α} was 1.88. This indicates that the elimination of these hotel questionnaires for the purpose of productivity analysis, producing a confidence level of 94%. That is, it loses 1% in the confidence level of research for the measurement of productivity, which this research ultimately will have a confidence level of 94% and not 95%.

The preliminary data study also indicated that the RevPar of the other hotels had a great relationship with the hotel star, clearly higher RevPar in five star hotels. It was proceeded to perform ANOVA analysis among the hotels stars, five and four, and RevPar, as the null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between two variables. The ANOVA analysis gave a significance level equal to 0.00 and this being less than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis must be rejected.

Additionally, the coefficient R^2 was 0.621 verified the preliminary observation of the important relationship between hotel stars and the RevPar, concludes that the RevPar may not be a useful measure to analyze the productivity from the use of IM tools, at least in a joint study of five and four stars hotels. For this reason it was decided to introduce a coefficient that starts of the RevPar, but will be independent of the stars number, looking not to be forced to conduct a separate analysis for five and four stars hotels, with the consideration that this would have in relation to the number of calculations and data analysis and could even require modifying the sample size.

In this sense, it was proposed to obtain a "normalized" RevPar that will be independent of the number of hotel stars. The coefficient proposed for each hotel is theirs RevPar divided by the highest RevPar of this hotel category, five or four stars. This ratio or normalized RevPar has values between 0 and 1, and the greater coefficient would be closer to the highest RevPar of the category. Again it was proceeded to perform ANOVA analysis among the hotels stars, five and four, and the normalized RevPar, proposing as a null hypothesis that there is no relationship between two variables. The ANOVA analysis gave a significance level equal to 0.014 and this being less than 0.05 also indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected.

However, in this case the R^2 coefficient value was 0.054 which can be considered as very low, noting that while exists relationship between both variables, the hotel category has a minimal effect on the value of the normalized RevPar. In this sense, for the productivity analysis with five and four star hotels was used normalized RevPar and not RevPar.

The second variable to be used to study the hotels productivity as mentioned above will be the average income per employee per day, taking into consideration the number "standard" employee, as described before. The sample has an average ratio of the rooms number per

employee of 1.67 for five-star hotels and 2.20 for the four-star hotels, a difference that is lower than verified by Camisón and Lapiedra (1999) of 1.30 and 2.58, respectively.

In order to study the relationship between average income per employee per day and the hotels stars, it has proceeded to perform ANOVA analysis between both variables, suggesting null hypothesis that there is no relationship between them. The ANOVA analysis gave a significance level equal to 0.000 and this being less than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis should be rejected.

However, the R^2 obtaining is a relatively low, equal to 0.124, indicating that although both variables are statistically related, the hotels stars influence on average income per employee per day is low.

Finally, ANOVA analysis was performed between the normalized RevPar and average income per employee per day, proposing as a null hypothesis that there is no relationship between two variables. The ANOVA analysis gave a significance level equal to 0.00 and this being less than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Additionally, the coefficient R^2 was found that turned out to be high, 0.682. The correlation between these two indicators of productivity of the hotels noted the consistency between the two measures. The high R^2 obtained could indicate that both systems to measure productivity are nearby. However, with the objective of maintaining the highest level of prudence in the analysis, both indicators will be used as a measure of hotels productivity with the aim of studying the hypothesis.

Verification of Hypothesis 1

It proceeded to the verification of Hypothesis 1 (H1).

Recalled that Hypothesis 1 is as follows:

Hypothesis H_1: The greater the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop greater the productivity obtain by the organization.

In order to test the hypothesis H1, it was proposed the following null hypothesis:

Hypothesis H_{01}: Variations in the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop produce not variations in the organization productivity.

Following ANOVA analysis was performed to verify the null hypothesis described above. The ANOVA analysis was performed to analyze the relationship between variables that measure the goals that the IM seeks to develop and organization productivity, as measured by normalized RevPar and the normalized income per employee per day.

In the case of normalized RevPar, ANOVA analysis provides a significance level equal to 0.004 and this being less than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis should be rejected. The R^2 obtained than 0,150 indicates that the relationship between these two elements is positive.

In the second case, for the income per employee per day, the ANOVA analysis provides a significance level equal to 0.003 and this being less than 0.05 indicates that this time the null hypothesis is rejected. Also in this case, linear regression produced a R^2 equal to 0.151 indicating that exists a positive relationship between both variables.

It is important to note that the hotels productivity depends additionally and perhaps in a more important way on other aspects outside the IM, as the hotels marketing policies and relationships with tour operators. However, despite the correlation between the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop and organizations productivity is relatively small, the research reveals that both variables are significantly and positively related, thus accepting the hypothesis H_1.

Conclusions

This research has verified the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop and hotels productivity.

Verification of this aspect is crucial because it validates the IM concept, to verify that the achievement of goals that the IM seeks to develop, as developed in the literature, is directly related to the companies' productivity. It finally confirms the need for progress in developing a conceptual model for the IM that can reach a broad consensus.

Research Limitations

This research has several limitations. First of all, it was performed only in hotel sector, so it will be appropriate to conduct further research, to extend or complement the scope of this investigation, to other sectors (including other activities within the service field), as can be primary sector, industry and public administration.

Secondly, also is a limitation of this research, that it was subscribes to study the hotel sector of the southern of Tenerife Island. It would be useful in future, to verify the findings obtained by research to be undertaken in other regions or countries.

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Annexe

Figure 1. - RevPar Study

RevPar = Room Revenue
/ Rooms Available

Room Revenue = Average Daily Rate
* Rooms Available
* % Occupation

⇨ RevPar = (Average Daily Rate
* ~~Rooms Available~~
* % Occupation)
/ ~~Rooms Available~~

⇨ RevPar = Average Daily Rate
* % Occupation

Source: The authors.

Figure 2. – Calculation of income per employee per day

Total Annual Room Income
= RevPar * Rooms Available * 365 days

Income per Employee (annual)
= Total Annual Room Income
/ Number of Employees

Income per Employee (day)
= Income per Employee (annual) / 365

Source: The authors

Table 1. - Responses average of on the IM goals

Items	**Average**
a.- The effort that the employee is willing to do for his organizations.	4,14
b.- The employee commitment with his organizations.	4, 18
c.- The employee involvement with his organizations.	4,11
d.- The employee motivation for his work in the organizations.	4, 05
e.- The job satisfaction.	4,10
General average	4,12

Source: The authors