

Is Internal Marketing Relevant Enough? Influencing Ethical Selling Behavior Of Sales Executives In Indian Fmcg Industry

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Abstract

The study investigates the influence of internal marketing on ethical behavior of on-field sales executives in Indian FMCG sector. Through extensive literature review it was found that four dimensions of internal marketing Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Communication and Internal Place have an influence on ethical behaviour. These dimensions were empirically tested on field sales executives, as they are much prone to ethical misconduct as indicated in literature. Exploratory factor analysis was applied on the primary data collected from 227 field sales executives working in FMCG sector from East Uttar Pradesh, India. Four factors of Internal Marketing and Two factors of Ethical selling behaviour are deduced to test the proposed hypothesized relationship. Eight sub-hypotheses are tested through linear regression analysis. Result suggests that Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Communication and Internal Place are positively associated with Ethical Actions of field sales executives. In contrast, Internal Price and Internal Communication positively influence the Ethical Consciousness. Findings may be used as guideline by FMCG sector to inculcated ethical culture and lessen the chances of Sales Executives indulging in unethical behaviour.

Keywords - Field Salespeople, Internal Marketing Mix, Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Communication, Internal Place, Ethical Action, Ethical Consciousness FMCG, Ethical Selling Behaviour

1. Introduction

A noticeable inclusion of ethics as an essential aspect of revenue generation can be witnessed in organizations. Since salespeople generate the majority and, in some instances, the only revenue in an organization they have a direct relationship to an ethical code of conduct. Providing an interface between inside and outside a company (Simintiras et al., 1996), they are a crucial part of existing marketing strategies, reaching out to their target market and generating revenue (Blythe, 2005). The interaction between a salesperson and a customer facilitates

trust and satisfaction, which leads to long-term relationships (Lagace et al., 1991; Román & Ruiz, 2005). It has been demonstrated that ethical salespeople are more effective in building customer relationships and enhancing customer satisfaction, commitment, and trust (Goff et al., 1997), concluding in regular revenue flow. In addition to affecting customer relationships, salespeople's attitudes and activities also affect the firm's success (Kuster & Canales, 2008). Using unethical sales practices can adversely affect a company's profitability (Tosun, 2020).

Trust and commitment are essential for building and maintaining long-term customer relationships. Additionally, it improves sales, customer satisfaction, retention, brand image, and rational selling behavior (Whysall, 2000). Therefore, if salespeople are perceived to be ethical, customers will also perceive their company as ethical. The performance of ethically sound firms is improved because of a good reputation and favorable response from their key stakeholders (Nguyen et al., 2020).

In India, the Fast Moving Consumer Goods industry (FMCG) is the fourth-largest, with Personal Care Products and Household Goods accounting for half of the sales of the industry. FMCG sales are expected to grow at a CAGR of 14.9% by 2025, reaching US\$ 220 billion (from US\$ 110 billion in 2020). This is expected to boost the revenue of FMCG companies in India (IBEF, 2021). Tough Competition in the industry due to plethora of variety in each product category, challenge to convince customers to buy, and unrealistic sales targets may temporarily or permanently push salespersons towards in a conflicting state of mind. As biggest asset for any organisation salespeople may be trapped in the dilemma of choosing ethically right or questionable behavior (Tuan, 2015).

Salespeople face ethical dilemmas because they work in a relatively unsupervised environment in highly competitive and complex environments (Dubinsky et al., 1980). Despite being physically, psychologically, and socially isolated from their supervisors (Belasco, 1966), they are frequently criticized for ethical reasons (Abratt & Penman, 2002). In the absence of affiliation integration and direct supervision, salespeople may not know how to conduct themselves in various situations. Consequently, they may engage in unethical behavior at risk of retribution from their employers. Management's failure to resolve ethical dilemmas in a timely manner may result in job tension, poor sales productivity, dissatisfaction at work, mockery by management, disappointed customers, higher turnover, reduced sales, and

company profitability (Levy & Dubinsky, 1983). Sales management strives to minimize ethical dilemmas as much as possible.

Existing literature on ethical behaviour of employees has recognized the crucial role of Internal marketing as an effective and practical method of addressing and resolving any dilemma and challenge faced by employees. Internal marketing primarily emphasizes on implementing marketing-like techniques internally to accomplish corporate objectives and goals and strive to achieve employee trust and commitment.

The study investigates possible sales-specific job factors that may impact the ethical behavior of field sales executives working in the FMCG sector in India and determine influence of internal marketing on ethical behavior of field sales executives.

2. Theoretical background

Every professional decision reflects ethical conduct and conscience culminating into success of an organization. Organizations are becoming more conscious of the ramifications of unethical activities and their impact on business. Although, it is difficult to distinguish between ethical and unethical behavior because the scope of the proposed action is determined by whether it is interpreted as right or wrong, good or evil, fair or unfair, just or unjust (Román, 2003); ethical culture of the organisation indicates sanctioned and non-sanctioned decision-making methods based on ethical guidelines (Knouse & Giacalone, 1992) to be followed by employees. Salespeople, however, are the most common target of ethical condemnation (Abratt & Penman, 2002). In dealing with competitors, customers, coworkers, and employers, salespeople face ethical dilemmas based on their individual and situational ethical conduct (Chonko & Burnett, 1983).

Situations determine ethical selling behavior (Lagace et al., 1991). Due to person-situation

interactions, salespeople may be forced to engage in unethical conduct during their selling process, resulting in compromises to comply with the situation and succeed. Due to the specificities of sales, referent groups, organizational culture, codes of conduct, industry norms, and affiliative separation from supervisory control all play a role in unethical behavior (Mishra & Tripathi, 2022). Salespeople may overlook ethical violations to obtain certain undue advantages from the company/customers or secure their jobs (Schwepker & Good, 1999).

Management behavior and attitudes regarding ethics, policies, practices, supervision, rewards, punishment, organizational structures, internal communication, autonomy, training, and leadership affect an organization's ethical environment (McClaren, 2013). An organization's culture can influence ethical decisions. A democratic environment is associated with increased ethical conduct, including a greater willingness to assume personal responsibility for one's actions (Trevino, 1992). Communicating ethical values within an organization is essential (Collier & Esteban, 2007). Internal Marketing practices can be implemented to solve salespeople's ethical dilemmas to achieve their desired ethical behavior. An ethical environment can be fostered within the company using internal marketing practices.

2.1. Internal marketing

The amalgamation of philosophies, procedures and strategies from two functional areas of Marketing and Human Resource Management to satisfy both internal customers (employees) and external customers to provide consistently high-quality service to both the customers (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2018). Effective Internal Marketing Practices may lead a congenial and ethical environment which is essential for success of any organisation (Kelemen & Pappasolomou, 2007).

Internal marketing practices aim to achieve corporate objectives and goals with marketing-like

techniques underpinned by Human Resource philosophy (Bansal et al., 2001). Internal marketing strategies are critically important for organizations to achieve their goals (Chang & Chang, 2009). Internal marketing tactics can overcome organizational inertia and inspire employees to engage in necessary behavior. Internal marketing aims to motivate, engage and retain employees. Internal marketing involves meeting employees' needs and expectations to align and achieve organizational goals (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993). Creating value jobs requires organizations to integrate the four Ps of the external marketing mix into their internal marketing mix (4Ps) (Yoo et al., 2000).

Internal Marketing Mix assumes employees like customers and job as a 'Product'; cost of employment/psychological cost of learning and adopting job methods is considered as 'Price' the employee has to pay to fulfill any given task. 'Place' is denoted by job location and work environment, and internal formal and informal communication and reward system is indicated as 'Promotion' (Flipo, 1986). The extent of employee satisfaction is significantly influenced by Internal marketing strategies like internal communication, training, inter-functional coordination, and incentives (Sarker & Ashrafi, 2018). The effectiveness of internal marketing facilitates establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with employees (Balta, 2018); contributing to employee happiness and percolating to consumer satisfaction, positively affecting business performance.

Internal Product: Employees are regarded as internal clients who, as external consumers, enter into an exchange arrangement with their company in the internal market. Jobs are thus comparable to goods or services purchased from an external marketplace in the internal market (Lings, 2004). Performers of these jobs, i.e., employees, consume/experience internal products and form specific values, beliefs, and attitudes. Product policies cover a variety of programs and facilities that enable management

to collaborate with employees (Paliaga & Strunje, 2011).

Internal Price: Employees share time, effort, and loyalty in the internal market. Therefore, they expect compensation, incentives, recognition, status, security, and other benefits in return (Lings, 2004) for the psychological cost of learning new methods of work and sacrifices made in the job's performance in return.

Internal Place: Internal distribution refers to the channels and places utilized to provide internal products to employees (Kasper et al., 2008). Distribution element of the internal marketing mix is concerned with the location where the job is offered, i.e., place of work, work environment to deliver a product, and its communication through any mode of formal and informal communications.

Internal Promotion: Effective internal communication helps engage employees, assign roles and responsibilities, support plans and strategies, and gain employee trust and commitment to achieve organizational goals (Mishra & Sinha, 2014). Meetings, committees, training, seminars, reports, plan summaries, face-to-face presentations, and informal communication are used to persuade and motivate employees and ensure their conducive attitude towards work (Piercy & Morgan, 1990). By sharing knowledge, companies can better align emotional intelligence and psychological capital to gain a sustained competitive advantage.

Several works have addressed the impact of codes of ethics on employee behavior (Valentine & Barnett, 2003). Employees are more likely to perceive employees' values as ethical if a code of ethics is implemented through various internal marketing interventions. Organizations with ethically conducive environments tend to have more ethically inclined employees. Employee perceptions are affected by several internal marketing mix tools, including what the ethical code contains, how it is communicated and how

the reward is administered (Schwartz 2000). Compliance with the code of ethics is more important than non-compliance. Stevens (2008) argues that ethical codes can effectively train employees on ethical behavior. To achieve a consensus, employees must understand the codes within an employee's shared values. Ethical Behaviour may be influenced by 'Ethical Action' and the ethical environment cultivated through Internal Marketing Mix Tools, and 'Ethical Consciousness' is influenced by an individual's moral values, beliefs, and attitudes.

2.2. Ethical Selling Behaviour

Ethics is composed of ethical actions influenced by situational factors and ethical consciousness derived from a person's values and beliefs. Salespeople may engage in unscrupulous behavior when faced with certain situations during the selling process. Under such circumstances, salespeople may make unwarranted compromises to meet organizational pressures.

Ethical Actions: Salespeople's ethical actions depend on pressures encountered due to high sales targets and complex situations arising during customer dealing, compromising one's ethical behavior to achieve organizational goals (Cadogan et al., 2009). It often results in ethical misconduct like lying, exaggerating about the product, hiding information, unauthorized sharing of information, misrepresenting facts, misleading customers, etc. (Shaw & Barry, 2015). Ethical breaches may occur due to uncertainty in the code of conduct, lack of clarity, a weak management system, and inadequate information, a desire to get ahead in the workplace, and peer pressure (Cleek & Leonard, 1998).

Ethical Consciousness: Ethical consciousness is the desire of an individual to regard their value/belief system. An individual can comprehend situations and recognize the consequences of being unethical. Ethical consciousness impacts individual behavior and manifests itself in

their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and actions (Jones, 1991). Ethical issues create dilemmas and primarily affect all stakeholders associated with a situation; however, the propensity of an ethically conscious individual to make ethical decisions is high. An individual's ethical consciousness is reflected in their conduct under the guise of an organization's ethical code (Ramsey et al., 2007). Ethically conscious individuals easily cope with ethical dilemmas and pressures of any kind to achieve high sales revenue targets.

Reviewed literature on ethical behaviour and Internal marketing provides important insight into how any organization can influence employee attitudes and behavior to follow ethical codes, following primary hypothesized relationship is proposed for empirical validation (Hypothesis 1).

H1: Internal Marketing has an impact on the ethical sales behavior of field sales executives.

The literature indicates that there are several factors influencing ‘ethical actions of field sales executives’, considering these eight sub-hypotheses related to Ethical Action and Ethical Consciousness are proposed:

a) Internal Product- refers to the process of determining job analysis to develop job design and structure. As part of the job analysis, information is gathered on the job's nature, specific duties and responsibilities, desired qualities, qualifications, physical and mental capabilities. Every job calls for creating specific work conditions and environment, which is used in describing job descriptions, job specifications, recruiting and selecting employees, enhancing employee satisfaction, enhancing employee safety, and improving employee motivation. Identifying and assigning different tasks and activities associated with specific job aligning with strategic intent and employees' well-being culminating into enhanced productivity

of both the parties. Job design can improve employees' job satisfaction and motivation. Motivated employees are engaged with the organization due to job security offered through well analyzed and designed job (Hur & Perry, 2020; Taamneh et al., 2018). A well-crafted Internal product would encourage internal customers (employees) to follow ethical codes designed by organization. Understanding the relationship between internal product and ethical actions and consciousness following sub-hypothesis (H1a & H1e) is proposed-

H1a- Internal Product influences ethical actions of field sales executives.

H1e- Internal Product influences ethical consciousness of field sales executives.

b) Internal Price- Creating successful sales jobs involves compensating salespeople for the value they bring to sales and revenue generation. Employee performance and conduct incentives can ensure motivation and commitment to an organization's goals (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). The reward of achieving set targets would enhance desired behavior even though skills and abilities are constantly evolving at work. Mansoor et al., (2011) conclude that to acquire new skills and knowledge; employees must attend training programs at work, increasing employee stress and organizational costs. As a result, the employee may decide to quit his job. Organizations should consider the intangible costs of their employees and compensate for their efforts through financial and non-financial components. Increasing internal consumer satisfaction should be the top priority for organizations to ensure external consumer satisfaction. Keeping salespeople motivated and happy requires management support. The support of management prepares them for long-term and profitable sales. It leads to work behaviors that paybacks the organization, help employees provide guidance and resources for their job's adequate performance, and build an environment that makes them feel secure and

cared for. Support from management reduces turnover intention and facilitates job responsibilities and customer service commitment. Supportive work limited and role clarity motivate employees to lead to more outstanding organizational commitment.

Based on this relationship, it is proposed that there is a connection between employee satisfaction, compensating the costs incurred by employees while performing their tasks, and ethical behavior. Salespeople receiving support from their managers are more likely to pursue behavior consistent with the organizational values (O' Hara et al., 1991). The following sub-hypothesis (H1b & H1f) are formulated.

H1b- Internal Price influences ethical actions behavior of field sales executives.

H1f- Internal Price influences ethical consciousness of field sales executives.

c) Internal Promotion: Internal Promotion is significant in guiding, influencing, and motivating people to remember companies' products or services. According to Hoffman et al. (2003), a key component of internal Promotion is communication and guidance. Employees and management are motivated to perform better through effective and regular communication (Conduit & Mavondo, 2001). Internal Promotion is notifying, influencing, and reminding employees about important information. Management needs to understand their problems, complaints, ethical dilemmas, and requirements through regular meetings and training sessions (Bowen, 2005). Employee involvement, listening to their opinions, and implementing their suggestions are key communication components. Communication is an inseparable activity in the functions of any organization. It is one of the most tangible facets of internal marketing for internal exchange in the internal marketplace (Dolphin, 2005). Communication fosters a customer-oriented organizational culture (Longbottom et al., 2006), giving meaning to the job,

connecting employees, and increasing productivity. Having accurate information in an organization prevents mistakes and builds trust. Ineffective communication hampers market-oriented activities and leads to conflicts through "misunderstandings, incorrect strategies, and mutual feelings of frustration" (Etgar, 1976). Well communicated ethical codes and their impact on an organization's reputation are significant and well acknowledged; thus, this relationship is hypothesized (H1c & H1g) as follows;

H1c- Internal Promotion influences ethical actions of field sales executives

H1g- Internal Promotion influences ethical consciousness of field sales executives.

d) Internal Place: Managers wish to accomplish the firm's goals through internal customers (employees) (Harrell & Fors, 1992). Employees are provided with internal products through internal distribution (Kasper et al., 2008). Distributing ideologies, vision, mission, and goals to internal customers (employees) requires internal relationships. Teamwork and synchronization are key to the relationship. Informed and engaged employees about organizational goals are committed and feel they belong to the organization. Clarity about roles and behaviors is determined by how well individuals feel they have guidance about their roles and behaviors (Kahn et al., 1964). Clarifying roles implies the follower understands their responsibilities, tasks, and functions within the organization and on the team (Rizzo et al., 1970). Role clarity is essential for field sales executives since their roles are dynamic and change based on circumstances. Since salespeople and their managers are affiliated, the company's strategies, plans, and products constantly evolve, resulting in roles and job changes. Sales personnel's role is revisited and evolves. Role clarification is essential to developing, strengthening, and growing the values and culture of the company.

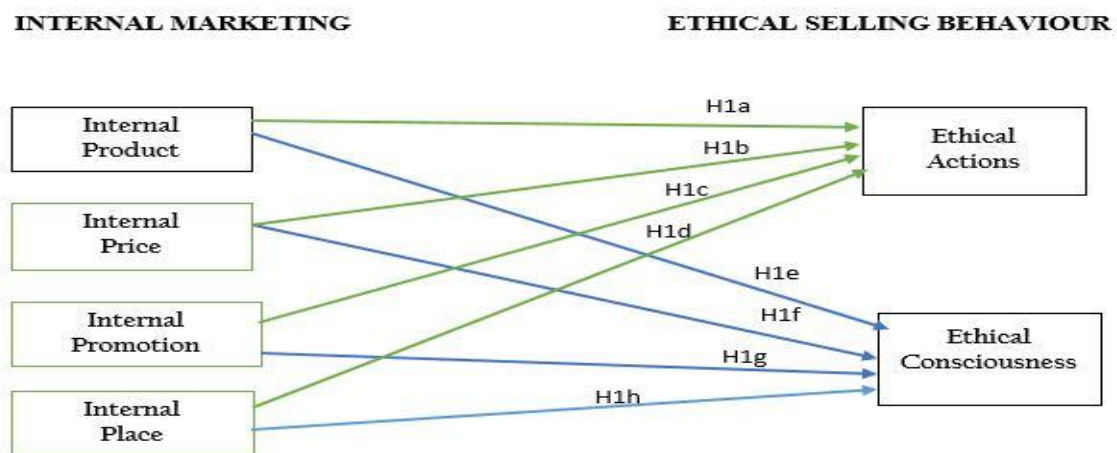
From above literature the relationship between dissemination of information and knowledge (Internal Place) with clarity and ethical behaviour is interpreted and following hypotheses (H1d & H1h) are constructed:

H1d- Internal Place influences ethical actions of field sales executives.

H1h-Internal Place influences ethical consciousness of field sales executives.

2.3 Conceptual model

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model



3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

The study investigates possible sales-specific job factors that may impact the ethical behavior of field sales executives working in the FMCG sector in India and determine influence of internal marketing on ethical behavior of field sales executives.

3.2. Participants

To test proposed hypothesized relationships, primary data was collected through a survey from area field salespeople working in the FMCG home & personal care products industry from East Uttar Pradesh, India. The districts of East Uttar Pradesh considered for the study

The literature review revealed factors contributing to ethical selling behavior influenced by internal marketing. Reviewed literature revealed that four dimensions of the internal marketing mix, Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Communication, and Internal Place, influence the ethical behavior of on-field sales executives in the Indian FMCG sector. Based on this, we conceptualize a model showing the relationship between antecedents and consequences

were Lucknow, Kanpur, and Allahabad. Respondents were chosen through the convenience sampling method from salespeople working in the field and directly interacted with customers, intermediaries, or both. Data was collected through email as well as directly from the respondents. Two hundred eighty questionnaires were distributed with 244 completed questionnaires returned; 17 questionnaires were excluded due to missing information, leaving 227 effective questionnaires giving a valid response rate of 81%.

3.3. Questionnaire design

A structured questionnaire was developed with focus on the items to measure field salespeople's perception of the organization's execution

of internal marketing and its influence on ethical selling behavior. Measurement of internal marketing construct was based on instruments developed by Chang & Chang, 2009; Longbottom et al., 2006; Conduit & Mavondo, 2001; Gronroos, 2000. The scale developed for this study consists of 34 items with four components: Internal Product (15 items), Internal Price (10 items), Internal Promotion (5 items), and Internal Place (4 items). In this study, salesperson ethical behavior was measured using the scale adopted from Lagace et al., 1991 Ramsey et al., 2007. The questionnaire was submitted to industry experts with extensive field experience and subsequently revised. The questionnaire was given to 35 field sales executives who visited retailers and distributors on a regular basis as a pilot run. Thirty-one valid questionnaires have been collected, fulfilling the acceptable standard of more than thirty as per the recommendation of Hair et al., (1998). All deduced factor loadings were higher than 0.5, with Cronbach's alpha value derived as greater than 0.7; therefore, following the criterion suggested

by Hair et al., (1998) none of the items were deleted. A five-point Likert scale was used to collect responses through structured questionnaire. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the constructs and items. Reliability and validity were examined and found within acceptable threshold.

4. Data analysis and Results

Statistical analysis was done using SPSS (Version 21.0). Demographic profile of the respondents is presented through descriptive statistics.

4.1 Respondent demographics:

According to the demographic data, 38.8% of respondents were under 30 years old, and 66.1% are males. 44.1% are Post-Graduate, and 44.9% are having sales experience of more than 5 years. 36.1% of employees have over five years' experience in their current organization, 45.4% employees lie in salary ranging between Rs. 25,001 to 50,000 (Table 1).

Table 1- Demographic profile of the Respondents (n=227)

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 30 yrs.	88	38.8
	31-45 yrs.	84	37
	Above 45 yrs.	55	24.2
Gender	Male	150	66.1
	Female	77	33.9
Education	Matriculation	18	7.9
	Graduation	93	41
	Post-Graduation	100	44.1
	Any other	16	7
Total experience	Less than 1 year	49	21.6
	1 to 5 years	76	33.5
	More than 5 years	102	44.9
Experience in present company	Less than 6 months	36	15.9
	6 months -1 year	38	16.7
	1-2 years	28	12.3
	3-5 Years	43	18.9
	More than 5 years	82	36.1
Income	Below 25,000 Rs.	65	28.6

	25,001- 50,000 Rs	103	45.4
	Above 50,000 Rs	59	26

Exploratory factor analysis was incorporated to identify the instrumental factors for internal marketing and ethical selling behavior, primarily to develop a set of variables that could investigate the relationship between internal marketing measures and ethical selling behavior. After the rotation to identify common factors, in order to maximize the difference in factor loadings Varimax rotation was used.

Normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity assumptions were confirmed before the data was treated with factor analysis. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index (0.869 for internal marketing and 0.880 for ethical selling behavior) and the Bartlett test of sphericity were found to be highly significant for internal marketing and ethical selling behavior. These indices were also used to test data for factor analysis, and both were found to be satisfactory (Hair et al., 1998).

After confirming that no assumptions had been violated, factor analysis was used for both internal marketing and ethical selling behavior. As suggested by Hair et al., (1998) variables with factor loading less than 0.50 have been ignored; Eigen value for all these factors was also less than one (Kaiser, 1960). Factor loadings > 0.5 of all the items (except one < 0.5 of internal marketing construct) and ethical selling behavior construct are illustrated in Table 2. The table states factor loadings for four factor deduced for internal marketing explaining 62.4 % variance. The item (I clearly comprehend the methods adopted by my company to evaluate my performance) with factor loading $0.46 < 0.5$, is deleted. Ethical selling behavior deduced 2 factors explaining 82.2 percent variance. Cronbach's α - value (>0.7), for all the deduced factors are satisfactory as per the threshold value suggested by Hair et al.,(1998).

Table 2- Factor naming and Reliability Analysis Results

Constructs/Factor naming/Questions	Factor loading (>0.5)	Cronbach's α - value (>0.7)
Internal Marketing		
Factor 1- Internal Product		0.91
My job has variety	0.76	
I have the option to do variety of different things in my job.	0.73	
Most of my interests are centered around my job	0.65	
I am allowed to use my own personal judgement in carrying out tasks	0.61	
I am free to decide how to complete my task	0.57	
I feel secured in my present job	0.73	
I am sure that I will continue to work for long with my organization	0.57	
Physical work environment in my office is favorable.	0.71	
Physical work environment in my office is comfortable.	0.55	
I have flexibility to take time-off when I need to	0.70	
I am provided with adequate facilities to perform my job.	0.80	
I receive a clear explanation of how to perform my job.	0.72	

I am motivated to achieve sales targets.	0.72	
My company has well defined promotion system.	0.58	
I clearly comprehend the methods adopted by my company to evaluate my performance.	0.46	
Factor 2- Internal Price		0.85
My sales manager emphasizes the necessity of understanding customers' needs.	0.54	
My sales manager identifies my training needs to improve my sales performance.	0.54	
Sufficient marketing support (advertising, sales promotion) is provided by my company to enhance my sales performance	0.66	
Sales quotas, expenses and budgets are sufficiently and clearly allocated by my manager before assigning any territory.	0.60	
Continuous and Ongoing field assistance is provided by my sales manager during my field visit.	0.69	
I regularly receive reimbursement of my expenses by the company.	0.75	
Sufficient TA and DA is provided by my company for my field visit.	0.76	
Sales contests are done time-to-time to encourage sales performance.	0.63	
My company provides lucrative incentive on achieving sales targets.	0.63	
I am given due recognition for achieving sales targets	0.59	
Factor 3- Internal Promotion		0.87
My company passes on information to me after customer survey and analysis for improving my sales performance.	0.75	
I receive timely information about new products/schemes launched by the company	0.77	
My sales manager encourages open and regular communication.	0.80	
Before assigning any sales territory my manager discusses with me.	0.80	
My manager schedules my sales calls and field visits to help me in maintaining balance in my work and personal life.	0.81	
Factor 4 - Internal Place		0.78
I am aware about my responsibilities	0.85	
I know what is expected from me.	0.87	
I understand my company's sales policies.	0.76	
I have clear understanding of incentives/commission that I can earn on sales deals	0.54	
Ethical Selling Behavior		
Factor 1 -Ethical Actions		0.94
Sometimes I reduce price without informing my manager to make sale.	0.93	
Sometimes I do not give exact information about availability of products to make sale	0.92	
Sometimes I do not give full information about the competitors even if customers ask	0.83	

I pressurize customers to buy even though I know that the product is not right for him/her.	0.82	
Sometimes I am overpromising to new customer or to overcome seasonal sales slumps.	0.78	
Sometime I lie in order to sell new, high-margin or slow moving goods	0.90	
Factor 2- Ethical Consciousness		0.72
Ethics get in the way of success in sales	0.76	
According to me following ethics is not an important concern for sales-person.	0.92	

4.2 Test of Hypotheses:

Primary Hypothesis of the research is

H₁: Internal Marketing Influences Ethical sales behavior of field sales executives.

The hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis. The model below was used to represent the interaction between ethical selling behavior (ethical actions, ethical consciousness) of field sales executives and internal marketing dimensions (Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place).

$$Y_i = \alpha_i + \beta_a X_a + \beta_b X_b + \beta_c X_c + \beta_d X_d + \gamma_i$$

Where Y_i represents the dependent variable (ethical selling behavior), α_i represent the intercept which explains the level ethical selling behavior if internal marketing practice is zero (no involvement of internal marketing). X_a , X_b , X_c and X_d represents the independent variables- Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place while β_a , β_b , β_c , and β_d represent the slope of independent variables. Each of these represents the change in the dependent variable if the independent variable changes by one unit. γ_i represents the stochastic term that explains other unexplained variables that account for the ethical selling behavior of field sales executives.

The proposed sub hypotheses **H_{1a}**, **H_{1b}**, **H_{1c}** and **H_{1d}** are tested with the help of Regression.

Table 3- Summary of the Model				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.751	0.564	0.556	0.667
Note: a Predictors: (Constant), Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place b dependent variable: Ethical Actions				

Table 3 represents the model summary showing the coefficient of determination [R²], indicating the model fitness by 55.6%.

Table 4- ANOVA ^a						
Model 1		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	127.379	4	31.845	71.684	0.000 ^b

	Residual	98.621	222	0.444		
	Total	226.000	226			
a. Dependent Variable: Ethical Actions						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place						

Table 4 illustrate ANOVA test result which further affirms the explanatory effect of independent variable, indicating the overall significant

($F=71.684$, $p < 0.05$) effect of Internal Marketing dimensions (Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place) on the Ethical Actions of field sales executives.

Table 5- Statistical Results of Regression Analysis

Coefficients ^a					
Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-statistics	Sig
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-2.254E-016	0.044		0.000	1.000
Internal Product	0.172	0.044	0.172	3.882	0.000
Internal Price	0.542	0.044	0.542	12.229	0.000
Internal Promotion	0.311	0.044	0.311	7.008	0.000
Internal Place	0.379	0.044	0.379	8.545	0.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Ethical Actions

The test findings from the table-5 indicate that the relationship between Internal Marketing dimensions and Ethical Actions of field sales executives is significant and positive. Internal Product. ($\beta=0.172$, significant at 0.000), Internal Price ($\beta=0.542$, significant at 0.000), Internal Promotion ($\beta=0.311$, significant at 0.000),

and Internal Place ($\beta=0.379$, significant at 0.000). Thus hypotheses H_{1a} , H_{1b} , H_{1c} , H_{1d} are accepted.

The proposed sub hypotheses H_{1e} , H_{1f} , H_{1g} and H_{1h} are tested with the help of Regression.

Table 6- Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	0.776	0.602	0.595	0.636

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place
b. dependent variable: Ethical Consciousness

Table 6 represents the model summary showing the coefficient of determination [R²], indicating the model fitness by 59.5%.

Table 7- ANOVA ^a

Model 2		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	136.153	4	34.038	84.104	0.000 ^b
	Residual	89.847	222	0.405		
	Total	226.000	226			
a. Dependent Variable: Ethical Consciousness						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place						

Table 7 illustrate ANOVA test result which further affirms the explanatory effect of independent variable, indicating the overall significant

($F=84.104$, $p < 0.05$) effect of Internal Marketing dimensions (Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Promotion, Internal Place) on the Ethical Consciousness of field sales executives.

Table 8- Statistical Results of Regression Analysis

Coefficients ^a					
Model 2	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-statistics	Sig
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.156E-016	0.042		.000	1.000
Internal Product	-0.477	0.042	-0.477	-11.283	0.000
Internal Price	0.184	0.042	0.184	4.342	0.000
Internal Promotion	0.581	0.042	0.581	13.725	0.000
Internal Place	0.058	0.042	0.058	1.373	.171
Note: a. Dependent Variable: Ethical Consciousness					

The test findings from the Table 8 show a significant relationship of Internal Product ($p < 0.05$), Internal Price ($p < 0.05$), Internal Promotion ($p < 0.05$), with Ethical Consciousness of field sales executives while Internal Place does not have significant relationship ($p = 0.171 > 0.05$) with Ethical Consciousness of

field sales executives. Internal Price ($\beta = 0.184$), Internal Promotion ($\beta = 0.581$) are positively influencing Ethical Consciousness of field sales executives whereas Internal Product shows negative influence on Ethical Consciousness of field sales executives. So hypotheses H_{1e} , H_{1f} , H_{1g} , are accepted and H_{1e} is rejected.

Table 9- Regression Analysis Summary

Hypothesis	Independent variables	Relationship	Dependent variables	Standardized Coefficients (β)	Accepted/ Rejected

Hypothesis 1 _a	Internal Product	+ve	Ethical actions	0.172	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _b	Internal Price	+ve	Ethical actions	0.542	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _c	Internal Promotion	+ve	Ethical actions	0.311	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _d	Internal Place	+ve	Ethical actions	0.379	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _e	Internal Product	-ve	Ethical Consciousness	-0.477	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _f	Internal Price	+ve	Ethical Consciousness	0.184	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _g	Internal Promotion	+ve	Ethical Consciousness	0.581	Accepted
Hypothesis 1 _h	Internal Place	No impact	Ethical Consciousness	0.058	Rejected

4.5 Results and Discussion

Salespeople are the major revenue generators of an organization. The differentiating aspect of field sales job is that, it is regulated by unanticipated situations; making it an essential responsibility of the management to structure sales jobs which could match and align the organisational goals with that of individual goals of each employee. The task of the field sales executive is to attract and develop new clients, generate new business maintain and expand client database while serving existing ones to the fullest by putting forward new offers and proposals. They operate outside the premises of the company and face affiliative separation from peers, supervisors and managers which may keep them ignorant of many of the company policies and guidelines.

The main finding of the study reveals significant influence of internal marketing mix on ethical selling behavior of field sales executive. Effective internal marketing efforts such as Internal Product, Internal Price, Internal Communication and Internal Place positively influence the ethical actions of salespeople.

According to survey findings '**Internal Product**' is positively related to ethical action of field sales people but negatively influences an ethical consciousness of a sales person. Unethical behavior is likely to occur where management fails to structure sales jobs keeping in mind the needs and goals of salespeople and volatility of sales situations. The sales manager should be responsive to stress faced by salespeople and help them in coping with such situations. They should be showing their willingness to assist salespeople in their task roles, encouraging them to share their field experiences (Anderson & Huang, 2006). Rational Internal Product brings sparks to sales personnel's motivation affecting their actions and commitment towards their organization. Job design examines the sensible structure of the jobs (Latham & Pinder, 2005) and supports ethical actions of salespeople contributing to performance effectiveness. As evident in the survey findings Internal Product (Job Design) impacts employees' actions but not their consciousness; therefore, management should design jobs as per job requirement and within reasonable ethical boundaries, limiting salesperson opportunities to engage in unethical conduct.

Findings of the survey indicate that effective **'Internal Price'** (Compensation, Training and other employee growth plans like motivation plans) makes employees perform their work effectively and follow the guidelines. Management may create training programs, motivation plans and attractive compensation plans to retain employees and drive them to conduct sales activities ethically. They must be familiar with different sales techniques governed by field situations, keeping them at ease to forecast and develop sales strategies for any questionable situations and evaluating the developed strategy's effectiveness. Favorable perception towards management makes salesperson behave as per organizational values and policies.

Field sales executives rely on sales managers for their problems and seek advice and direction while sorting out their field challenges. According to the survey **'Internal Communication'** influences ethical behaviour of salespeople. Regular ongoing communication plays an essential role in solving ethical dilemmas and providing ethical solutions to problems (Mikesell et al., 2013). Internal communication helps to understand the employees' needs and requirements for performance effectiveness (Conduit & Mavondo, 2001). Therefore, organizations must seriously consider internal communication strategies and policies that promote open, honest, regular, job-related and mutual communication between managers and employees at all organization levels. The sales managers must ensure a deep understanding of the organization's ethical values and principles and design strategies and plans that are ethically driven and communicate to the salesperson with expecting the most ethical solutions to the problems. Management should take strict actions regarding unethical conduct and generous reward for moral acts, showcasing an example for other coworkers.

A committed and engaged workforce feels belonged to the organization. How the information is disseminated **'Internal Place'** is

equally important as designing a communication plan is. Multiple roles, responsibilities, and duties of sales executives lead them to face enormous challenges of role transitions. Field sales executives' roles are complex, and the expectations and responsibilities placed on them are significantly different. Lack of role clarity is one of the most common causes of dubious conduct in field sales jobs. Due to a lack of or insufficient information about handling ethical challenges in an unsupervised setting, a field sales executive's job may be uncertain, resulting in behavior that violates the organization's code of conduct.

In addition to providing overall guidance and support to salespeople, managers can assist employees with contributing more effectively to the organization's goals. For increased motivation and effectiveness, all employees need to be informed and included in all communication. It is important to communicate all information to all employees and to include all action items in order to increase motivation and effectiveness. Therefore, they must be very clear about their organization's priorities/strategies, ethical code of conduct, culture and value system, and underlying meaning to them and their jobs, key responsibilities, performance expectations measurement, and effectiveness. **'Internal Place'** has no impact on one's ethical consciousness; diverging views about what creates acceptable and professional behavior might contribute to consciousness depending upon individual beliefs, values, and outlook towards work.

An organization's performance should be linked to its overall goals. However, managers require a single set of guidelines on variables affecting business performance and how businesses may manage their performance to stay relevant. By providing managers with any possible assistance in dealing with ethical issues and adopting ethical selling behavior in their actions and consciousness, internal marketing dimensions can be used to build a culture that is ethically driven, rather than forcing salespeople to follow behaviors, laws, and principles.

5. Managerial implications

The study is among the few to examine the influence of internal marketing mix on the ethical selling behavior of field sales executives, influencing their actions and their consciousness. The study results have several managerial implications in sorting out the ethical dilemmas faced by field sales executives and their expectations for dealing with these challenges in their job performance.

Management may design sales jobs considering sales field challenges, and draw guidelines on how to cope with such situations, in order to prevent salespeople from indulging in unethical conduct for meeting their assigned roles and targets.

While developing their jobs, managers should not be too rigid towards sales targets, creating pressure leading to questionable means of success. Reasonable targets may be fixed considering marketing conditions, competition, and individual capacity.

Regular and ongoing communication with their sales manager in new situations/challenges necessitates the development of new policies and a code of conduct, articulated in directives of the organization's principles. The rationale for the policy's emergence and operationalization should be communicated with a periodic reminder to the sales personnel.

Salespeople's judgment and interest are essential to handling situations arriving in the sales field, so management must provide an environment where ethical conduct is cultivated through training. Salespeople must be ethically sound to kindle ethical consciousness. A prospective employee's ethical consciousness can be gauged through background checks, psychometric tests, and interviews.

6. Conclusion

This study is among the few to investigate the influence of internal marketing on the ethical

behavior of field sales personnel in the FMCG sector. Identifying the ethical challenges and situations faced by field sales executives may influence the role played by management in dealing with such challenges by implementing an internal marketing mix to mitigate the ethical dilemma, summarizing the main findings of this work. The result of the study suggests ways to reduce ethical dilemmas faced by field sales personnel by implementing internal marketing mix tools. Not all ethical situations are clear-cut; therefore, the organization may identify that there are ambiguous, grey areas where ethical trade-offs may be required. Proper implementation of internal marketing practices makes employees feel less burdened and happy in their job resulting in enhanced responsiveness and effective performance (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). An ethical atmosphere is a developing feature of any organization. Global competition and integration have produced many ethical concerns, necessitating essential efforts to improve the organization's ethical climate. Employees' counterproductive behavior reduces when senior management supports them. Management support, regular communication, job design, and role clarity contribute to ethical action and the consciousness of field sales executives. Salespeople's judgment and interests are crucial in dealing with situations in the field; management must develop an environment that instills an ethical code of behavior through sales training. For good and successful sales performance, sales managers must display high ethical standards.

7. Limitations and Future Research directions

The results and implications of this study must be interpreted in light of several limitations. Firstly, the FMCG industry is fragmented, and various categories under FMCG are sub-industries in themselves that have specific characteristics, varying degrees of competition, and challenges for salespeople; thus, the results cannot be generalized to the entire FMCG industry. Replication of the study using samples from

other industries is suggested. Cross-cultural studies are also recommended to gain comparative insight into the validity of the proposed model. A second limitation of the study is that it focuses only on the direct impact of internal marketing mix on field sales behaviors. Other factors influencing ethical selling behavior, like the influence of demographic characteristics, and situational factors, await further investigation. Thirdly our sample is limited to specific cities; therefore, results should be extra carefully extrapolated to other populations. A consideration worthy of future research is to use a larger sample size for more generalized results for other populations. Finally, the data were self-reported, and various factors such as misrepresentations, personal emotions, and attitudes could have influenced the data. The investigation span is limited; therefore, it is not revealing the aspects having long-term impacts on ethical selling behavior. Therefore, the use of a longitudinal approach in future research is encouraged.

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