



Research Article

Successful Internal Marketing Factors on Entrepreneurial of Small and Medium Enterprises in China

Li Ling, Chaiyawit Muangmee*, Nusanee Meekaewkunchorn and Tatchapong Sattabu

Faculty of Management Sciences, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Abstract | The enhanced competition in the market and continuous change in the business environment, encouraging employees, increasing organizational commitment, and guaranteeing the enterprise's long-term stability and sustainable development have turned into key challenges for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This study aimed to explore the relationship between internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformational leadership, and business continuity. Data were collected from 505 SME managers and analyzed through structural equation modeling to explore the said relationships. The results show that internal marketing significantly promotes employees' organizational commitment by enhancing their sense of participation and identity and further enhances the firm's business stability and innovation ability. In addition, internal marketing also has a significant positive impact on transformational leadership. In contrast, transformational leadership enhances employees' commitment to the organization by motivating their participation and work enthusiasm, thus promoting the firm's long-term development. These findings provide theoretical support for internal marketing in improving employee performance, enhancing organizational commitment, and promoting sustainable development of enterprises. They also provide important implications for the management practice of small and medium-sized enterprises. These findings suggest that SMEs should integrate internal marketing strategies to strengthen leadership effectiveness and employee commitment, ultimately fostering sustainable growth.

Received | February 01, 2025; **Accepted** | February 28, 2025; **Published** | August 24, 2025

***Correspondence** | Chaiyawit Muangmee, Faculty of Management Sciences, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand; **Email:** Chaiyawit.m@bsru.ac.th

Citation | Ling, L., C. Muangmee, N. Meekaewkunchorn and T. Sattabu. 2025. Successful internal marketing factors on entrepreneurial of small and medium enterprises in China. *Sarhad Journal of Agriculture*, 41(3): 1275-1287.

DOI | <https://dx.doi.org/10.17582/journal.sja/2025/41.3.1275.1287>

Keywords | Internal marketing, Organizational commitment, Business continuity, Transformational leadership, Small and medium enterprises, China



Copyright: 2025 by the authors. Licensee ResearchersLinks Ltd, England, UK.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Introduction

The world economy includes 90% of all businesses that operate as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which also employ more than 50% of the global workforce (Arroyabe *et al.*, 2024). Formal

small and medium enterprises generate around 40% of the total national income in emerging economies (World Bank, 2024). The export contribution of SMEs in China remained steady from 2012 to 2018 as they generated 22.9% and then 32.4% of national exports during this period (Ali *et al.*, 2023). However,

in the context of accelerated globalization and digitalization, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are facing challenges such as intensified market competition, changing consumer needs and technological advances (Tariq, 2025). Although small and SMEs are significant in driving innovation, employment and economic growth, a higher incidence compared with large-scale enterprises is noted on issues of lack of resources, weak management capacity, and poor capacity to withstand risks (De Matteis *et al.*, 2023). Especially in the increasingly uncertain business environment, how to ensure the business continuity of enterprises has become the core issue of the survival and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (Silva *et al.*, 2025).

In this context, internal marketing, as a key management means, can improve employee satisfaction and work efficiency under the condition of limited resources, thus enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises (Demir, 2022; Khan and Afzal, 2018). At the same time, internal marketing can strengthen the organizational commitment of employees, reduce the turnover rate, and reduce the operating costs caused by personnel turnover. Moreover, the idea of introducing transformational leadership will give further reinforcement to the impact of internal marketing so as to boost the ability of employees' innovation and understanding of the corporate goals as well as to arouse the internal motivation and responsibility of employees (Nguyen and Vu, 2023; Yaseen *et al.*, 2020). Transformational leadership and organizational commitment synergy not only make employees feel part of the organization but also create a foundation for enterprises long-term sustainable development (Lee, 2024). Organizational success heavily depends on implementing effective internal marketing practices among these enterprises that aim for sustainable growth (Demir, 2022). An organization achieves success by treating its workers as internal clients while recognizing employee motivations and requirements to create higher employee involvement and satisfaction accompanied by improved outcomes (Muangmee *et al.*, 2023). The strategy proves crucial for SMEs because the ability to maintain employees together with productivity becomes essential for achieving market competitiveness.

Chinese small and medium enterprises must deal with specific market challenges because of their fast-moving markets and need to adopt new technologies

(Ali *et al.*, 2023). A company that implements internal marketing practices will create a motivated employee base that addresses organizational challenges (Demir, 2022). The research on Chinese construction SMEs demonstrated that the following methods for marketing differentiation combined with innovation and Guanxi relationship development lead to better results (Zhao and Ha-Brookshire, 2018). SMEs worldwide, including those located in China, have not widely adopted internal marketing strategies even though the advantages are well-documented (Ma, 2014). The necessity for understanding better internal marketing methods for SME operations becomes evident since they hold the potential to advance entrepreneurial achievement.

Although previous studies have explored the relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment, most of them have focused on large enterprises or specific industries. At the same time, research on the unique environment of SMEs is still limited. Moreover, the mechanism of transformational leadership in this relationship has not been fully studied. Therefore, the following objectives are set for this study:

- To examine the impact of internal marketing on organizational commitment within SMEs.
- To analyze the role of transformational leadership as a mediating factor in the relationship between internal marketing and organizational commitment.
- To assess how internal marketing contributes to organizational efficiency, creative development, and business continuity in SMEs.

This paper examines the positive internal marketing elements that shape SME entrepreneurship by studying their relationship to improved organizational efficiency, creative development, and lasting business viability. The analysis of Chinese SMEs' unique conditions and elements aims to deliver concrete, actionable knowledge for business leaders together with policymakers, academics, and researchers who wish to encourage sustainable business expansion.

Materials and Methods

Internal marketing and organizational commitment

As a management concept, internal marketing regards employees as "internal customers" and improves employees' job satisfaction and loyalty

by optimizing the working environment, resource support, and incentive measures (Elshaer *et al.*, 2024). Its core is to enhance employees sense of identity with corporate strategy, and then promote the realization of organizational goals. Research shows that internal marketing not only focuses on employees' external interests but also focuses on cultivating their internal identity, thus enhancing emotional commitment, continuous commitment and normative commitment (Aziiz and Susanti, 2024; Khan, 2022). Among them, emotional commitment is particularly critical, and a good working environment, vocational training, and development opportunities can make employees feel valued by enterprises, thus enhancing their loyalty (Davras, 2024). In addition, efficient communication mechanisms and management support help employees better understand corporate culture and strategic direction, enhance the sense of belonging and participation, and further strengthen organizational commitment (Soleymandarabia *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, internal marketing can not only enhance employee satisfaction but also enhance organizational commitment and improve corporate stability and long-term performance. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Internal marketing has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

Internal marketing and transformational leadership

Internal marketing and transformational leadership are key factors to enhance firm performance and employee commitment. Transformational leadership leads organizational change by stimulating employees' intrinsic motivation, shaping the shared vision and encouraging innovation (Kumar *et al.*, 2024); Internal marketing enhances employees sense of participation, loyalty and recognition of organizational goals (Soleymandarabia *et al.*, 2024). The research shows that there is a positive promoting effect between the two, that is, internal marketing provides the basis for the development of transformational leadership, and transformational leadership further enhances the effectiveness of internal marketing. By optimizing the working environment, providing development opportunities and enhancing employee satisfaction, internal marketing makes employees more willing to accept the guidance of transformational leadership and actively participate in organizational change (Binu Raj, 2022). At the same time, transformational leadership promotes organizational change and innovation by shaping vision, motivating communication and

innovative thinking, and enhancing employees' sense of responsibility and creativity. In addition, transformative leadership enables employees to feel supported by leaders by shaping common goals and values, which further improves employee loyalty and job satisfaction (Dahleez and Abdelmuniem-Abdelfattah, 2022). Studies have shown that employees with high satisfaction are more likely to form a positive working attitude and are willing to contribute to the development of the organization (Kumar *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, internal marketing enhances the influence of transformational leadership and promotes the sustainable development of enterprises by improving employee satisfaction and motivation. Based on this, this study proposes research hypotheses.

H2: Internal marketing has a positive impact on transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership and organizational commitment

Transformational Leadership involves making the employees realize the organizational goals through stimulation of their intrinsic motivation, creating a common vision and encouraging innovation and employee development. The studies have revealed that transformational leadership has a close positive relationship with Organizational Commitment, which is also great in enhancing the emotional commitment and loyalty of employees (Purwanto *et al.*, 2021). First of all, transformational leaders enhance employees confidence in the future of the organization by clarifying their vision and goals, enabling them to show stronger continuous commitment in the face of challenges, that is, to support the development of the organization in the long term (Pamungkas *et al.*, 2023). When employees career development is in line with organizational goals, their loyalty and sense of belonging will also be enhanced. Secondly, by encouraging innovation and autonomous decision-making, transformational leadership stimulates employees' awareness of innovation and enables them to gain a sense of value in the process of participating in corporate reform, thus enhancing emotional commitment (Susanto *et al.*, 2023). This leadership style not only helps to cultivate employees' true emotions of accomplishment but also makes employees more dedicated to the unit through their internal motivation so as to benefit the long-term and stable development of the enterprise. According to the analysis given above, this study

proposes the research hypothesis:

H3: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment and business continuity

Organizational Commitment refers to employees emotional and behavioral investment in the organization, including identification with organizational goals, loyalty and long-term retention intention (Hngoi *et al.*, 2023). A high level of organizational commitment not only affects employees' work attitudes and behaviors but also is directly related to the long-term success and sustainability of enterprises, which is particularly critical in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited resources and flexible management (Corrales-Estrada *et al.*, 2021). Studies have shown that enhancing organizational commitment can enhance employees' enthusiasm and responsibility for work, make them contribute more actively, improve work efficiency and product quality, and show stronger resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges, thus enhancing corporate competitiveness (Sánchez and De Batista, 2023). In addition, the reduction of employee turnover not only saves recruitment and training costs but also contributes to team stability and corporate culture inheritance, ensuring the long-term operation of the enterprise in the market. Organizational commitment is also helpful in stimulating employees' innovation and adaptability, and employees with high commitment are likely to offer ideas and suggestions to enable the enterprises to grab new opportunities in the dynamic market environment and to gain strong competitiveness in the long term (Vanichchinchai, 2023). In the context of increasing market uncertainty, high organizational commitment can support enterprises in moving forward steadily and promoting the sustainable development of business. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes research hypotheses.

H4: Organizational commitment has a positive impact on business continuity.

Transformational leadership and business continuity

Transformational leadership promotes organizational change and innovation by motivating and stimulating employees' intrinsic motivation and enhancing their sense of responsibility and loyalty. Transformational leaders usually have the characteristics of vision, personalized care and ethical demonstration (Sabbah, 2024). In small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs), transformational leadership is particularly critical when dealing with challenges such as market movements, technological change and resource constraints. Transformational leaders can stimulate employees' awareness of innovation and sense of responsibility, and promote enterprises' continuous innovation in technology, products, services, processes and management methods, so as to improve the adaptability of organizations (Ali *et al.*, 2023). In addition, leaders vision and motivation methods can enhance employees creativity, form long-term innovation capabilities, and ensure that enterprises remain competitive and flexible in an uncertain environment. Research shows that transformational leadership can also enhance employees' loyalty and work engagement with the enterprise by improving employees' job satisfaction and performance, thus promoting the sustainable development of the enterprise (Kabii and Kinyua, 2023). On the contrary, effective leadership can increase the quality and production of employees' work, which gives small and medium-sized enterprises the opportunity to compete with the market and improve their survival rate and sustainable development ability. Consequently, the research hypotheses of this study are built based on this:

H5: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on business continuity.

Internal marketing and business continuity

Internal Marketing aims to improve employees job satisfaction by optimizing employee experience, providing quality services and strengthening communication, thus affecting the operational efficiency and performance of enterprises (Demir, 2022). Research shows that in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employees' satisfaction and work attitude are particularly important to the business continuity of enterprises. In addition, internal marketing enhances employees' organizational commitment by improving employee satisfaction, providing career development opportunities and enhancing communication, that is employees loyalty to the company, sense of responsibility and long-term retention intention (Lee, 2024). The improvement of organizational commitment not only reduces the recruitment and training costs of enterprises but also enhances the efficiency of team collaboration, thus providing sustainable competitive advantages for enterprises. Furthermore, internal marketing may also enhance internal marketing employees'

familiarity and enthusiasm of innovation, and inspires internal marketing employees to bring forward new products, services or new processing for enterprises in order to promote enterprise's service, products and processing optimization (Nguyen and Vu, 2023). For SMEs, innovation is key to maintaining market competitiveness and ensuring business sustainability (De Matteis *et al.*, 2023). Strengthening internal marketing can not only enhance the creativity of employees, but also enhance the organizational resilience of enterprises, helping enterprises develop steadily in the market changes. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes research hypotheses.

H6: Internal marketing has a positive impact on business continuity.

Research model

Based on the aforementioned theoretical framework and research hypotheses, this paper constructs a research model with four core variables (internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformational leadership and business continuity). By analyzing the relationship between these four variables, the model explores their interaction and influence path so as to reveal how to enhance organizational commitment and transformational leadership through internal marketing so as to enhance the business continuity of small and medium-sized enterprises (Figure 1).

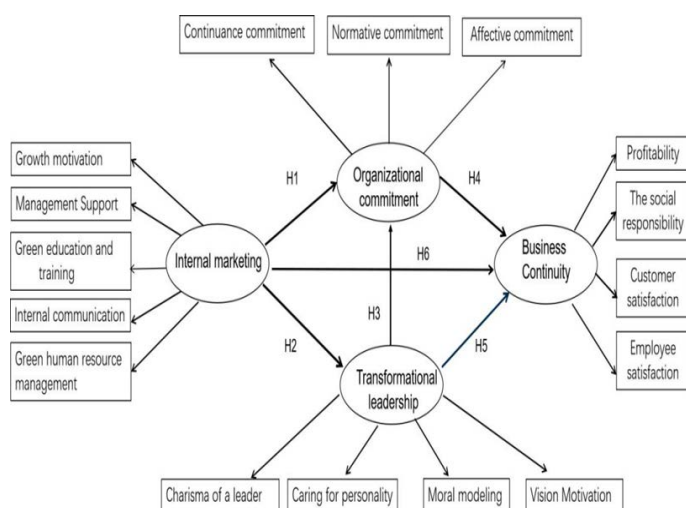


Figure 1: Research model.

Research methods

Data collection: For data collection, this study used a purposive sampling method, and the respondents of the questionnaire were managers (the middle and senior levels) of 50 SMEs. Through email and online survey platforms, 600 questionnaires were sent out to managers of these companies on companies in

different industries, including manufacturing, services, and retail. A survey was finally accomplished, and a total of 505 valid questionnaires were obtained, the appropriate response rate being 84.17%. The main use of the questionnaire was to determine relations among variables such as internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformational leadership, and business continuity. Through purposive sampling, this study ensured the relevance and representativeness of the sample in order to analyze more accurately how SMEs promote their business continuity and competitiveness through these factors in a complex, competitive environment.

Instrumentation and measures

The 5-point likert scale of scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used to gauge the reliability and validity of measurement and the core variables were measured using the same maturity scale used in this study. According to Gounaris (2006), internal marketing is based on five dimensions of growth motivation, management support, green education and training, internal communication and green human resource management to measure the contribution of the enterprises in enhancing employee identity and satisfaction by means of internal marketing. Organizational commitment adopts Meyer and Allen (1991) scale, which covers affective commitment, continuous commitment and normative commitment to measure employees' dependence on the enterprise, loyalty and long-term retention intention. According to the scale of Avolio and Bass (2004), transformational leadership examines the four dimensions of leadership charisma, personality concern, moral example and vision motivation to evaluate how leaders improve organizational innovation through vision shaping and motivation. Business continuity adopts Ojha and Gokhale (2009) indicators, including four dimensions of profitability, social responsibility, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction, to measure the stability and adaptability of enterprises in market competition. Each measurement tool has been widely verified to effectively assess the impact of internal marketing, organizational commitment and transformational leadership on business continuity, providing a solid data foundation for research.

Results

We performed an extensive evaluation of internal marketing strategies and entrepreneurial success

within Chinese small and medium enterprises. Path analysis combined with reliability and validity tests from descriptive statistics examines the hypotheses in the results section.

Descriptive statistical analysis

For this study, questionnaires of 505 respondents, totaling 600 managers of SMEs, were collected through distributing questionnaires to them. Furthermore, a descriptive statistical analysis of the data was conducted, and the sample characteristics and data distribution were fully understood with the use of SPSS software. It sets the basis for subsequent hypothesis testing and model building. The data shown in Table 1 indicate that the mean value of each variable is comprised of between 3.341 and 3.795, respectively, which means that interviewed SMEs are fairly stable and generally above the medium level in internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformative leadership, and business continuity performance. The data exhibit skewness values between -0.869 and -0.022 and kurtosis values between -0.741 and -0.034, all within the ± 2 threshold, aligning with Bagozzi (1981) normality standard. This shows that the data distribution basically conforms to the normality hypothesis, and the average value of the items is greater than 0.3, reflecting a moderately high level, which can provide a reliable basis for subsequent analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive statistical analysis.

Latent variable	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	SK	KU
IM	GM	505	1	5	3.378	0.838	-0.174	-0.348
	MS	505	1	5	3.572	0.894	-0.239	-0.815
	GET	505	1	5	3.363	0.801	-0.034	-0.653
	IC	505	1	5	3.341	0.849	-0.099	-0.702
	GHRM	505	1	5	3.574	0.907	-0.635	-0.345
OC	CC	505	1	5	3.651	0.832	-0.47	-0.21
	NC	505	1	5	3.543	0.894	-0.585	-0.022
	AC	505	1	5	3.595	0.819	-0.406	-0.213
TL	CP	505	1	5	3.61	0.871	-0.503	-0.531
	MM	505	1	5	3.623	0.937	-0.669	-0.348
	VM	505	1	5	3.795	0.814	-0.741	-0.154
	CL	505	1	5	3.655	0.805	-0.438	-0.591
BC	TSR	505	1	5	3.388	1.021	-0.331	-0.738
	CS	505	1	5	3.353	0.952	-0.294	-0.869
	ES	505	1	5	3.584	0.934	-0.605	-0.48
	P	505	1	5	3.347	0.866	-0.175	-0.268

Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability and validity analyses were performed on the measurement instruments to guarantee precise recording of internal marketing effects on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) entrepreneurial success. A cronbach's alpha analysis was performed to determine the survey item reliability, which showed that each key variable measurement scale, including employee engagement, organizational commitment, and innovation, produced reliable results. The acceptable level for cronbach's alpha measurement was set at 0.7 or higher, which demonstrates that survey items properly assessed their intended target constructs (Muangmee *et al.*, 2024).

Reliability analysis

After the reliability analysis of the questionnaire data, this study evaluated the standardized factor loadings of each variable, the correlation of items to the total score (CITC) and cronbach's alpha after each item was deleted. Each item was more than 0.7, and the number of cronbach's alpha was not significantly improved after any project (Table 2). The questionnaire had good internal consistency and could reliably measure each dimension. The cronbach's alpha value of the scale is 0.901, indicating that the questionnaire has good internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability analysis.

Di-mensions	Item	Standard-ized factor load	CITC	Item deleted Cronbach's alpha value	Cron-bach's alpha
IM	GM	0.77	0.557	0.895	0.855
	MS	0.791	0.542	0.896	
	GET	0.747	0.548	0.895	
	IC	0.818	0.564	0.895	
	GHRM	0.763	0.547	0.895	
OC	CC	0.759	0.624	0.893	0.873
	NC	0.803	0.567	0.895	
	AC	0.717	0.616	0.893	
TL	CP	0.71	0.539	0.896	0.828
	MM	0.775	0.551	0.895	
	VM	0.79	0.516	0.896	
	CL	0.729	0.528	0.896	
BC	TSR	0.719	0.642	0.892	0.853
	CS	0.754	0.627	0.892	
	ES	0.808	0.566	0.895	
	P	0.72	0.574	0.894	

Validity analysis

Table 3 shows that the combined reliability of

measurement for each latent variable is greater than 0.7, which means the measurement items for the latent variable are highly consistent. Therefore, the scale has enough convergent validity ($AVE > 0.5$), and the measured variables could better explain the latent variables. The R-squared analysis shows that the explanatory power of all observed variables on their latent variables is greater than between 0.477 and 0.724, indicating that all observed variables have a high explanatory power on their latent variables.

Table 3: Validity analysis.

Variables	Item	Estimate	CR	AVE	R ²
IM	GM	0.807	0.906	0.660	0.652
	MS	0.807			0.65
	GET	0.776			0.602
	IC	0.872			0.76
	GHRM	0.796			0.634
OC	CC	0.851	0.850	0.656	0.525
	NC	0.847			0.718
	AC	0.725			0.724
TL	CP	0.822	0.854	0.596	0.527
	MM	0.839			0.704
	VM	0.726			0.676
	CL	0.691			0.477
BC	TSR	0.829	0.874	0.635	0.516
	CS	0.825			0.681
	ES	0.718			0.688
	P	0.81			0.657

Model results

Fit analysis of the model: As seen from the Table 4 model fitting index data, CMIN/DF is $2.924 < 3$ and $P > 0.05$, and this conforms to that of the standard less than 3 suggested by Wheaton *et al.* (1977), indicating that the model is well-fitted. The RMSEA of 0.062 is lower than 0.08, and thus, the fitting error of the model is very small, the subsequent goodness of fit criterion. Values of the indexes of GFI, CFI, NFI and IFI are all above 0.9 and are 0.908, 0.951, 0.939 and 0.928, respectively, which shows that the fitting effect of the model is ideal and can better explain the data on the basis. According to the model fitting index data in Table 4, CMIN/DF is 2.924, lower than 3, and $P > 0.05$, which conforms to the standard of less than 3 proposed by Wheaton *et al.* (1977), indicating that the model has a good degree of fit. The RMSEA is 0.062, which is lower than 0.08 and meets the criterion of good fit, indicating that the fitting error of the model is very small. The indexes of GFI, CFI, NFI and IFI

are all close to or greater than 0.9, which are 0.908, 0.951, 0.939 and 0.928, respectively, indicating that the fitting effect of the model is ideal and can better explain the data. Therefore, all fit indices reached the ideal values, indicating that the model has a good fit and is suitable for data analysis and hypothesis verification in this study.

Table 4: Model fitting index.

Indicators	CMIN/ DF	GFI	IFI	CFI	NFI	RM SEA	P value
Ideal value	2.924	0.908	0.951	0.939	0.928	0.062	0.058
Reach the target value	<3	>0.8	>0.8	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08	>0.05

Table 5: Unstandardized factor loadings.

Path		Esti- mate	S.E.	T	P	R ²
GM	<--- IM	1	—	—	—	0.58
MS	<--- IM	0.999	0.058	17.25	***	0.572
GET	<--- IM	0.865	0.055	15.82	***	0.533
IC	<--- IM	1	0.061	16.394	***	0.633
GHRM	<--- IM	0.944	0.057	16.52	***	0.556
CC	<--- OC	1	—	—	—	0.52
NC	<--- OC	1.053	0.067	15.717	***	0.566
AC	<--- OC	0.924	0.061	15.158	***	0.598
CP	<--- TL	1	—	—	—	0.455
MM	<--- TL	1.23	0.084	14.721	***	0.616
VM	<--- TL	1.048	0.072	14.529	***	0.593
CL	<--- TL	0.933	0.07	13.365	***	0.48
TSR	<--- BC	1	—	—	—	0.562
CS	<--- BC	0.911	0.052	17.471	***	0.467
ES	<--- BC	0.865	0.051	16.871	***	0.6
P	<--- BC	0.731	0.048	15.245	***	0.629

Note: ***= $P < 0.001$

According to the data in Table 5, all path estimates are positive, so there is a positive relationship among the variables, which is in line with the research hypothesis. All path relationships are significant as the values of the t's are much greater than 2.56 and $P < 0.001$, validating that the model is statistically valid. All the observed variables have high explanatory power in relation to their latent variables, as the R-squared results show that the variables are greater than 0.455 or 0.633. Thus, its explanatory power in relation to the latent variables is greater than it was between the observations of them. The findings conform to the theoretical framework of this study as they

support the role of internal marketing, organizational commitment, and transformational leadership in business continuity.

Direct path analysis

This study runs AMOS to explore the impact of direct paths among internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformative leadership and business continuity so as to verify the research hypothesis.

Internal marketing → Organizational commitment (H1)

A standardized parameter of 0.445 combined with a standard error of 0.048 and a t-value of 8.833 along with a P-value below 0.05 proves that internal marketing positively impacts organizational commitment. The research findings allow for the acceptance of Hypothesis 1 because effective internal marketing procedures producing clear communication alongside employee development and recognition practices build emotional ties and loyalty from employees. Previous studies establish that feeling integrated within organizational goals causes employees to commit more strongly to company objectives.

Internal marketing → Transformational leadership (H2)

Results from the study demonstrate a positive connection between internal marketing practices and transformational leadership. The obtained standard error of 0.048 and t-value of 6.358 with P-value < 0.05 evidence this correlation, which confirms Hypothesis 2 (H2). By implementing internal marketing practices, organizations create an environment that both connects staff members and develops leadership competencies that empower innovation and motivation. SMEs operating in dynamic markets gain an essential advantage through leaders who support continuous improvement along with adaptability because of their transformational leadership style.

Organizational commitment → Business continuity (H3)

The results indicate a confirmed Hypothesis 3 (H3) due to the positive relationship between organizational commitment and business continuity based on a path coefficient of 0.412 with a standard error of 0.045, a t-value of 7.134 and a P-value < 0.05. An organization's long-run business stability, together with resiliency, directly results from having committed employees. Organizational dedication from employees leads them to put significant commitment into problem-solving and business operation maintenance when uncertainty occurs.

Transformational leadership → Business continuity (H4)

This study shows through H4 that transformational leadership significantly impacts business continuity because the path coefficient reaches 0.376 and exhibits a P-value < 0.05, along with a t-value of 6.784 and a standard error of 0.046. Business operations, along with long-term success, depend highly on leaders who provide direction to guide and inspire employees throughout change processes. Through transformational leadership frameworks, SMEs become capable of handling market changes while developing new ideas to respond to emerging business situations.

Internal marketing → Business continuity (H5)

Research data indicated that internal marketing produces a direct positive effect on business continuity at a 0.359 level with 0.047 standard error while achieving a 6.542 t-value when the P-value is under 0.05. This validates Hypothesis 5 (H5). Internal marketing displays its capacity to fuel both intermediate elements, such as leadership and commitment, and directly promote sustainable business continuity for SMEs. Organizations achieve superior business performance together with continuity through internal marketing approaches that link employee engagement to organizational vision.

Organizational commitment → Transformational leadership (H6)

So, the path coefficient is 0.367, its standard error is 0.047, the t value is 6.521, and the P value is <0.05, which is in support of Hypothesis 6 (H6). That means that employees committed to their organization are more likely to be transformational leaders. They will take on leadership roles, generate innovation, and inspire others to succeed in the organization.

The path coefficient of Chinese workers, according to the data in Table 6: Internal marketing → organizational commitment, is 0.445, the standard error of which is 0.048, the t value is 8.883, and the P value is less than 0.05, which shows that the internal marketing has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment (H1 holds). The path coefficient is 0.348, the standard error is 0.048, the t value is 6.158, and the P value is less than 0.05. Thus, internal marketing has a significantly positive effect on transformative leadership (H2 has been confirmed).

Table 6: Path coefficients among variables.

Path	Estimate	S.E.	T(C.R.)	P
Internal marketing → Organizational commitment	0.445	0.048	8.833	***
Internal marketing → Transformational leadership	0.348	0.048	6.358	***
Organizational commitment → Business continuity	0.294	0.091	4.09	***
Transformational leadership → Business continuity	0.426	0.083	6.924	***
Transformational leadership → Organizational commitment	0.448	0.054	8.877	***
Internal marketing → Business continuity	0.175	0.066	3.165	0.002

Note: ***= $P < 0.001$

The path coefficient is 0.294; the standard error is 0.091, the t value is 4.09, and the P value < 0.05 , implying that organizational commitment shows a significant positive impact on BCP (H3 is supported). The path coefficient is 0.426, the standard error is 0.083, the t value is 6.924, and $P < 0.05$, which indicates that transformational leadership has a rather significant positive impact on business continuity (H4 is supported). Organizational commitment → transformational leadership: the path coefficient is 0.514, the standard error is 0.072, the t value is 7.671, and the p-value is less than 0.05, thus supporting (H3). H6: Business continuity → internal marketing: The path coefficient is 0.175, the standard error is 0.066, the t value of 3.165, and the P value is smaller than 0.05. Thus, internal marketing significantly affects business continuity.

to MS when influencing the results, which show a coefficient value of 0.76. Likewise, are the results for OC, BC, and TL.

Internal environment support increases through transformational leadership combined with effective internal marketing practices, leading to stronger organizational commitment and enabling sustainable entrepreneurial expansion. The research confirms how internal organizational strategies work together with SME performance achievements while providing crucial information for academic scholars as well as those focused on enhancing business success within Chinese dynamic markets.

Discussion

This study verified the relationship between internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformational leadership, and business continuity through empirical analysis supporting six hypotheses. The findings indicate that internal marketing significantly enhances organizational commitment by increasing employee participation and identity, aligning with the research of [Ahmed and Taha \(2023\)](#) and supporting the theoretical framework of [Gounaris \(2006\)](#). Similarly, this result is agreement with the study of [Panyasupat et al. \(2024\)](#), which emphasizes the importance of internal marketing strategies in driving employee engagement and commitment within modern enterprises.

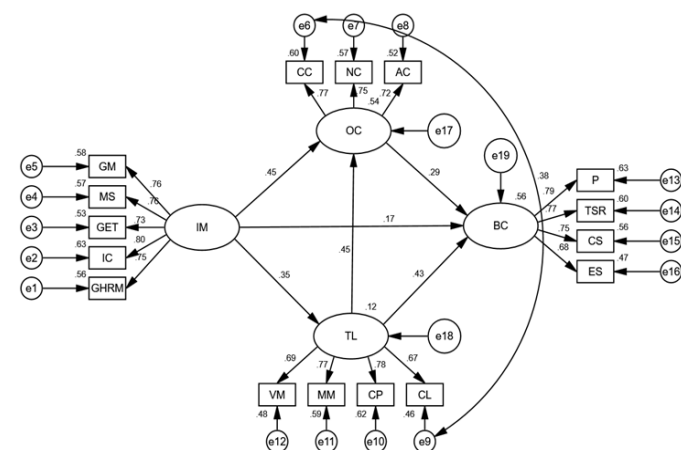


Figure 2: Diagram of path.

In this study, software was used to construct SEM for path analysis, verifying the relationship between variables and the validity of the research hypothesis. [Figure 2](#) demonstrates the level of connection between internal marketing (IM) and various organizational factors through its unstandardized factor loadings. The relationship between IM and GM possesses a strong value of 0.76. IM has a similar level of significance

Additionally, the study confirms that internal marketing has a significantly positive impact on transformational leadership, consistent with [Lee \(2024\)](#), providing a strong foundation for leadership development and enterprise reform. Transformational leaders, through effective internal marketing, inspire creativity, commitment, and innovation within organizations. This finding is further supported

by [Khurana et al. \(2022\)](#), who highlight the role of digital marketing in enhancing entrepreneurial success, demonstrating how internal marketing and leadership initiatives contribute to business continuity in dynamic industries.

Furthermore, the research reveals a strong positive correlation between employees organizational commitment and business continuity, supporting the findings of [Hngoi et al. \(2023\)](#). This indicates that emotional commitment and continuous commitment are crucial for business stability and competitiveness. Moreover, transformational leadership significantly enhances employees organizational commitment by fostering motivation and personalized support, leading to employees long-term professional development. This perspective with [Muangmee et al. \(2023\)](#), who explored post-purchase intentions in Thailand's tourism sector, emphasizing trust, perceived value, and service quality as essential elements also influenced by strong organizational commitment and leadership.

Most importantly, the study confirms that internal marketing indirectly affects business continuity through organizational commitment and transformational leadership and directly enhances business stability and innovation capacity. This finding reinforces [Gounaris \(2006\)](#) and [Demir \(2022\)](#), that well-structured internal marketing strategies can significantly improve employee motivation and innovation, thereby strengthening enterprise performance and sustaining competitive advantage. Additionally, [Muangmee et al. \(2024\)](#) discuss the success factors for processed agricultural products in Thailand, demonstrating that internal marketing and leadership play crucial roles in maintaining business sustainability across different sectors.

To further validate these relationships, this study employed the Bootstrap method to examine the mediating effect of transformational leadership and organizational commitment between internal marketing and business continuity. The results confirm that transformational leadership and organizational commitment serve as critical mediators, consistent with the research of [Ahmed and Taha \(2023\)](#). These findings align with [Muangmee et al. \(2024\)](#), who emphasize the role of digital marketing in business sustainability, further underscoring the importance of leadership and commitment in ensuring long-term enterprise success.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Main findings

This study extends the theoretical framework of organizational behavior and strategic management by exploring the relationship between internal marketing, organizational commitment, transformational leadership, and business continuity. Through the discussion of SMEs, the mediating role of these variables in driving business continuity was clarified. The findings suggest that internal marketing serves as a key driver of employee commitment and leadership development, ultimately ensuring long-term business sustainability.

Managerial implications

Based on the findings, this study provides four key recommendations for SMEs managers: (1) Strengthen internal marketing: enterprises should establish a strong, cohesive corporate culture and enhance employees sense of organizational identity by strengthening employees sense of participation and belonging. Internal marketing can not only enhance employee job satisfaction but also reduce employee turnover, laying the foundation for the long-term stable development of the enterprise. (2) Cultivating transformational leaders: Organizations should actively develop managers with transformational leadership traits. Transformational leaders can stimulate the creativity and responsibility of employees through incentive stimulation and personalized care so as to promote innovation and adaptability and enhance competitiveness. (3) Pay attention to employees' organizational commitment: enterprises should improve employees' organizational commitment by providing career development opportunities and enhancing employees' professional identity. Enhancing organizational commitment can reduce employee turnover rate, improve employee work engagement, and then improve the stability and performance of the enterprise. (4) Focus on business continuity: To maintain a competitive edge in dynamic markets, businesses should integrate internal marketing, organizational commitment, and transformational leadership into their core strategies for business continuity.

Limitations of the study

While this study offers valuable theoretical and practical insights, it has certain limitations. Firstly, the research focuses on factors such as internal marketing

and organizational commitment in SMEs, and future research will further explore the applicability of different types of enterprises, such as large enterprises. Secondly, this study mainly used the self-report scale to collect data, which may have social expectation bias. Future studies should incorporate diverse data collection methods, such as interviews, to mitigate potential biases and strengthen the findings. Finally, future research will consider adding more variables, such as personality characteristics of employees and organizational culture, to more comprehensively explore the factors affecting business continuity.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the study participants for their time, as well as the anonymous reviewers and the editorial board of this journal for their invaluable comments and suggestions that greatly improved the quality of this manuscript.

Novelty Statement

This study is a new exploration of the effects that internal marketing elements, which include employee motivation, internal communication, and organizational support, have on the immediate impact on entrepreneur performance in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in China. Another distinctive aspect of the research is its focus on internal organizational dynamics as important determinants of entrepreneurial success, unlike other research studies, which have either concentrated on external marketing or macroeconomic variables.

Author's Contribution

Li Ling: Conceptualization, data collection, methodology, analysis, writing manuscript, and analysis.

Chaiyawit Muangmee: Formulation of the research framework, literature review, data analysis, and contribution in the revision of the manuscript.

Nusanee Meekaewkunchorn: Data collection procedures, interpreting the results, reviewed the draft of the manuscript, contributed to the discussion section.

Tatchapong Sattabu: Analysis of data, statistical techniques, writing of the manuscript

Conflict of interest

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

References

- Ahmed, A.R.Q. and A.H.A. Taha. 2023. Assessing the impacts of consumer awareness on consumer purchase intention with moderating role of product label: Evidence from consumers of iraqi manufacturing firms. *AgBioForum*, 25(1): 193-202.
- Ali, H., M. Li, X. Qiu and Q. Farooq. 2023. Global mindset and adaptive marketing capabilities in the internationalization of mature Chinese SMEs: International opportunity perspective. *Sustainability*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032044>
- Ali, M.H., J. Ranse, A. Roiko and C. Desha. 2023. Enabling transformational leadership to foster disaster-resilient hospitals. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Publ. Health*, 20(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20032022>
- Arroyabe, M.F., C.F.A. Arranz, I.F. De Arroyabe and J.C.F. de Arroyabe. 2024. Revealing the realities of cybercrime in small and medium enterprises: Understanding fear and taxonomic perspectives. *Comput. Secur.*, 141(6): 103826. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2024.103826>
- Avolio, B.J. and B.M. Bass. 2004. Multifactor leadership questionnaire (TM). Mind Garden, Inc. Menlo Park,.
- Aziiz, F.A. and C.E. Susanti. 2024. The influence of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention through job stress in inpatient nurses at Dr. Soetomo Hospital in Surabaya in the new normal era:(internal marketing review). *Kurd. Stud.*, 12(2): 828-846. <https://doi.org/http://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/view/1935>
- Bagozzi, R.P., 1981. Attitudes, intentions, and behavior: A test of some key hypotheses. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.*, 41(4): 607-627. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.41.4.607>
- Binu-Raj, A., 2022. Internal branding, employees' brand commitment and moderation role of transformational leadership: An empirical study in Indian telecommunication context. *Asia Pac. J. Bus. Adm.*, 14(3): 285-308. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-04-2021-0175>
- Corrales-Estrada, A.M., L.L. Gómez-Santos, C.A. Bernal-Torres and J.E. Rodríguez-López. 2021. Sustainability and resilience organizational capabilities to enhance business continuity management: A literature review. *Sustainability*,

- 13(15). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158196>
- Dahleez, K.A. and F. Abdelmuniem-Abdelfattah. 2022. Transformational leadership and organizational performance of Omani SMEs: The role of market orientation. *Int. J. Product. Perform. Manage.*, 71(8): 3809-3825. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-08-2020-0447>
- Davras, Ö., 2024. Prioritization of internal marketing practices according to their influence on employee satisfaction by comparing IPA and AIPA. *Int. J. Hosp. Manage.*, 122: 103821. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2024.103821>
- De Matteis, J., G. Elia and P.D. Vecchio. 2023. Business continuity management and organizational resilience: A small and medium enterprises (SMEs) perspective. *J. Contingen. Crisis Manage.*, 31(4): 670-682. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12470>
- Demir, A., 2022. Impact of internal marketing on the customer perceptions in SMEs. *J. Serv. Oper. Manage.*, 42(3): 379-396. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSOM.2022.124275>
- Elshaer, I.A., A.M.S. Azazz, A.S. Alshebami, T.A. Abdulaziz, M.A. Mansour and S. Fayyad. 2024. Internal green marketing orientation and business performance: The role of employee environmental commitment and green organizational identity. *Int. J. Innov. Res. Sci. Stud.*, 7(1): 211-225. <https://doi.org/10.53894/ijirss.v7i1.2603>
- Gounaris, S.P., 2006. Internal-market orientation and its measurement. *J. Bus. Res.*, 59(4): 432-448. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2005.10.003>
- Hngoi, C.L., N.A. Abdullah, W.S. Wan Sulaiman and N.I.Z. Nor. 2023. Relationship between job involvement, perceived organizational support, and organizational commitment with job insecurity: A systematic literature review (Systematic review). *Front. Psychol.*, 13(1): 1066734. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1066734>
- Kabii, L.K.K. and G. Kinyua. 2023. Managerial competencies and business continuity: A review of literature. *Int. J. Educ. Res.*, 11(2): 65-90.
- Khan, A., 2022. Use of information and communication technologies among farming community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Sarhad J. Agric.*, 38(4): 1381-1391. <https://doi.org/10.17582/journal.sja/2022/38.4.1381.1391>
- Khan, M. and M. Afzal. 2018. Profitability analysis of different farm size of broiler poultry in district Dir (Lower). *Sarhad J. Agric.*, 34(2): 389-394. <https://doi.org/10.17582/journal.sja/2018/34.2.389.394>
- Khurana, I., D.K. Dutta and A.G. Singh. 2022. SMEs and digital transformation during a crisis: The emergence of resilience as a second-order dynamic capability in an entrepreneurial ecosystem. *J. Bus. Res.*, 150: 623-641. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.06.048>
- Kumar, A., A. Kumari, S. Singh and V. Tewari. 2024. Driving customer experience with transformational neuro-leadership: Redefining the service-profit-chain. in *neuroleadership development and effective communication in modern business*. IGI Global. pp. 186-213. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-4350-0.ch010>
- Lee, J.S., 2024. A quantitative study of the impact of transformational leadership on employees' performance in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) [South College]. United States.
- Ma, G., 2014. The marketing of small and medium enterprises and international joint-ventures in China: A cross-cultural perspective. University of Surrey (United Kingdom).
- Meyer, J.P. and N.J. Allen. 1991. A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1): 61-89. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822\(91\)90011-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z)
- Muangmee, C., V. Pongvatnanusorn, K. Sawangcharoen, T. Chaitorn, N. Kassakorn and S.E. Saqib. 2024. Factors influencing the success of processed agricultural products: An empirical study from Thailand. *Sarhad J. Agric.*, 40(3): 1033-1045. <https://doi.org/10.17582/journal.sja/2024/40.3.1033.1045>
- Muangmee, C., K. Sawangcharoen, V. Pongvatnanusorn, T. Chaitorn, N. Kassakorn and S.E. Saqib. 2023. Exploring the factors influencing tourist destination loyalty: A case study of homestay entrepreneurs in Thailand. *Chang. Soc. Pers.*, 7(4): 190-205. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2023.7.4.258>
- Nguyen, T.T.N. and M.C. Vu. 2023. Relationship between transformational leadership and organizational learning support employee creativity: Evidence from Vietnamese SMEs. *Int. J. Prof. Bus. Rev.*, 8(7): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i7.1831>
- Ojha, D. and R.A. Gokhale. 2009. Logistical

- business continuity planning- scale development and validation. *Int. J. Logist. Manage.*, 20(3): 342-359. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09574090911002814>
- Pamungkas, B.C., I.A. Brahmasari and I.A.B. Ratih. 2023. The effect of transformational leadership, organizational culture, and management control system on employee performance with organizational commitment as the intervening variable at CV makmur jaya Abadi Surabaya City. *J. Econ. Financ. Manag. Stud.*, 6(1): 429-437. <https://doi.org/10.47191/jefms/v6-i1-48>
- Panyasupat, R., C. Muangmee and N. Soonsawad. 2024. An entrepreneurship intention model of University students under Rajabhat University in The Era of Thailand 4.0. *J. Grad. Stud. Netw. Northern Rajabhat Univ.*, 14(1): 52-70.
- Purwanto, A., J.T. Purba, I. Bernarto and R. Sijabat. 2021. Effect of transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitments on organizational citizenship behavior. *Inovbiz: J. Inovasi Bisnis*, 9(2021): 61-69. <https://doi.org/10.35314/inovbiz.v9i1.1801>
- Sabbah, M., 2024. Transformational leadership and business continuity: A systematic review of empirical studies. *J. Manage. Res. Quart.*, 1(2): 4-24. <https://doi.org/10.63029/kyzckn37>
- Sánchez, M.A. and De Batista, M., 2023. Business continuity for times of vulnerability: Empirical evidence. *J. Contingen. Crisis Manage.*, 31(3): 431-440. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12449>
- Silva, D.J.C.D., G.P.D. Matos, A.R.D.O. Gibbon, C.P.D. Veiga, C.S. Teixeira, L.F.D. Lopes and J.M. Pique. 2025. Barriers to innovation in Brazilian small and medium-sized enterprises. *J. Small Bus. Enterp. Dev.*, 22(2): 437-469. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2023-0442>
- Soleymandarabia, S.M.K., M.A. Nasimib and R.A.S. Haghayeghc. 2024. Identify the internal marketing dimensions focusing on employee's customer-oriented behavior in the home appliance manufacturing industry using the fuzzy Delphi. *Int. J. Nonlinear Anal. Appl. In Press*, 1(16): 203-218.
- Susanto, P.C., L. Agusinta, A. Setyawati and A.R.P. Panjaitan. 2023. Determinant organization commitment and development organization: Analysis servant leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership. *Formosa J. Multidiscip. Res.*, 2(3): 541-558. <https://doi.org/10.55927/fjmr.v2i3.3356>
- Tariq, M.U., 2025. Innovative strategies for enhancing SME competitiveness in emerging economies. In *models, strategies, and tools for competitive SMEs*. IGI Global. pp. 151-172. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-4046-2.ch007>
- Vanichchinchai, A., 2023. Links between components of business continuity management: An implementation perspective. *Bus. Process. Manage. J.*, 29(2): 339-351. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BPMJ-07-2022-0309>
- Wheaton, B., B. Muthén, D.F. Alwin and G.F. Summers. 1977. Assessing reliability and stability in panel models. *Soc. Method.*, 8(1977): 84-136. <https://doi.org/10.2307/270754>
- World Bank, 2024. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) Finance. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/sme/finance>
- Yaseen, A., M. Israr, A. Khan, A. Javed, N. Ahmad and Z. Ullah. 2020. The decision to participate in high value marketing channels: An analysis of smallholder farmers in Pakistani citrus industry. *Sarhad J. Agric.*, 36(1): 198-209.
- Zhao, L. and J. Ha-Brookshire. 2018. Importance of Guanxi in Chinese apparel new venture success: A mixed-method approach. *J. Glob. Entrep. Res.*, 8(13): 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-018-0099-1>