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Business Resilience and Social Inclusion: A Critical Reflection on Internal Marketing

Resiliencia e inclusion social: Reflexión crítica sobre el Marketing Interno

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to identify the dimensions of the *Internal Marketing* that contributes to business resilience and social inclusion. Marketing is approached as a tool for social transformation. The documentary and data analysis focused on the relevant theoretical and practical models proposed in the last decades. It concludes with the proposal of four dimensions of internal marketing that stimulate business resilience and social inclusion which are: 1) the attraction and development of talent through the competitiveness of the workplace; 2) organizational change; 3) leadership development and empowerment; and 4) communication for the exchange of knowledge and motivation.

Keywords: Sustainable development goals, Internal marketing, resilience, social inclusion

JEL CODE: M31, M51, O15



RESUMEN

El objetivo del artículo es identificar las dimensiones del *marketing* interno que contribuyen a la resiliencia empresarial y a la inclusión social. El análisis documental y de datos se centró en los modelos teóricos y prácticos propuestos en los últimos cuarenta años. Se concluye con cuatro dimensiones del marketing interno que favorecen a la resiliencia empresarial y a la inclusión social: El objetivo del artículo fue identificar las dimensiones del marketing interno que contribuyen a la resiliencia empresarial y a la inclusión social. Se abordó al Marketing como una herramienta para la transformación social. El análisis documental y de datos se centró en los modelos teóricos y prácticos propuestos en los últimos cuarenta años. Se concluyó con cuatro dimensiones del marketing interno que favorecen a la resiliencia empresarial y a la inclusión social: 1) atracción y desarrollo de talento; 2) cambio organizacional; 3) Liderazgo y empoderamiento; 4) comunicación para la creación del conocimiento y la motivación..

Palabras clave: Objetivos del desarrollo sostenible, Marketing interno, resiliencia, inclusión social.

JEL CODE: M31, M51, O15

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to identify the dimensions of the *Internal Marketing* that contributes to business resilience¹ and social inclusion². Marketing was approached as a tool for social transformation. There is also Internal Marketing for companies in the industrial sector. It is possible that its application will gradually reverse the inertia of the maquila, from hiring of cheap labor, and move towards production activities with a greater contribution to the well-being of the employees.

In order to support this, the writing is divided into five sections. The first is this introduction. The second presents the theoretical and contextual framework on business tools aimed at increasing productivity through the internal promotion of the company's image: Internal Marketing. This second section was built with the idea that the technique has led the tool to yield results that are far from the well-being of the employee, also affecting the resilience of the company. The third section is the methodology. The fourth one exposes Internal Marketing as transformation tool taking on consideration "the constant" as the "change is the only constant"; Three models are presented for *Internal Marketing* with their business resilience indicators; as well as the relationship between the descriptive-explanatory model and the prescriptive model in companies. All this in order to establish which dimensions contribute to both business resilience and social inclusion (Sabatino, 2016; Sheffi, 2005; Starr *et al.* 2003). Based on the latter, the conclusions presented in the fifth and last part of the work are derived.

THEORETICAL-CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

Some research indicates that the reconciliation between the interests of the employee with the needs and expectations of the client increased the productivity, commitment and well-being of the employee (Cali *et al.* 2018; Gil and Ospina, 2018; Perilla and Gómez, 2017; González, 2017; Rodríguez and Suárez, 2016; Barth and Negri, 2015; Guzmán, 2013; González and Hernández, 2012; Cequea *et al.* 2011; Sinn, 2008; Gracia *et al.* 2006; Hernández *et al.* 2003; Rodríguez and Sanz, 2011; Berry, 1981). There was even a decrease in work stress (Goodman, 2014; Garrosa and Carmona, 2011). However, the models applied to achieve this conciliation in recent decades have focused only on productivity at the

¹ The quality of being able to return quickly to a previous good condition after problems (Cambridge University, 2020).

² The idea that everyone should be able to use the same social facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences, including people who have a disability or other disadvantage (Cambridge University, 2020).

expense of employee well-being (Drucker, 1999). The decrease in production costs has led to a drop in wages and job insecurity (Borderías and Martini, 2020) worldwide. This situation makes it possible to declare that the technique of senior management has led the tool to offer results that are far from the well-being of the employee, also affecting the resilience of the organization in times of greater change in the environment.

Business tools aimed at increasing productivity based on cost reduction need to be modified in the face of global changes. No matter how competitive and old companies are, they all face uncertain scenarios, the main characteristics of which are usually: climate change, migratory flows and new poverty profiles (Rangel and Campos, 2018; Marí-Klose Pau and Marí-Klose Marga, 2017; Stefoni *et al.* 2017, Salgado, 2015; Climent, 2015; Villaseca and Padópulos, 2011, Medialdea and Álvarez, 2005).

Climate change is not the only cause of migratory flows; but it is a factor that has intensified them; in turn, high-income countries and large cities have not had the capacity to absorb these flows, encouraging the existence of new poverty profiles (Martín and González, 2016).

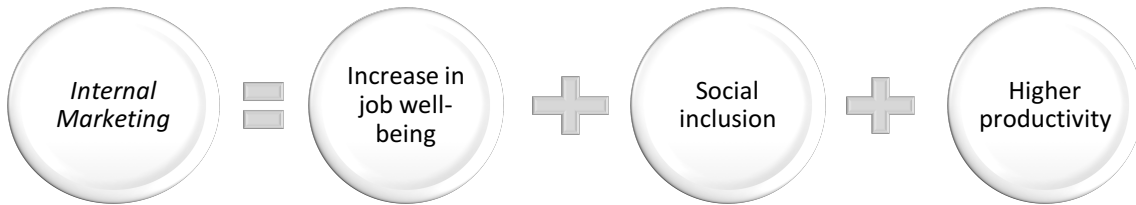
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On the one hand, the logic driven by a greater reduction in production costs through labor flexibility and outsourcing (Hernández, 2016; Vélez and Granda, 2016; Vesga, 2011; Sánchez, 2010; Gallego and Vargas, 2006) has contributed to the erosion of the world economic system, which no longer guarantees the long-term sustainability of global businesses (Martín and González, 2016).

On the other hand, the Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2020) consider social inclusion and an increase in the employee's welfare as means for greater sustainability. One of the 17 goals of sustainable development is to achieve full, productive and decent employment for all. In the capitalist system, work is one of the main mechanisms for social inclusion (Sisto, 2009). If this is analyzed superficially, it seems ambitious, contradictory and little complementary to the current logic of large companies and the prevailing modes of production. However, if it is considered that business tools are dynamic and that it is the vision of decision makers that determines them, then this development objective does not seem so contradictory and much easier to achieve, benefiting in parallel the company and the employee. The basis of this rests on the reorientation and adaptation of the tools towards the new scenarios. In this way, Internal Marketing is an example in the reorientation of its tools towards the construction of a more sustainable economic system (Kortam and Mahrous, 2020), increasing productivity and reducing costs, without detriment to the employee's welfare, and even, building more resilient organizations in the face of adverse scenarios (González and Martín, 2013).

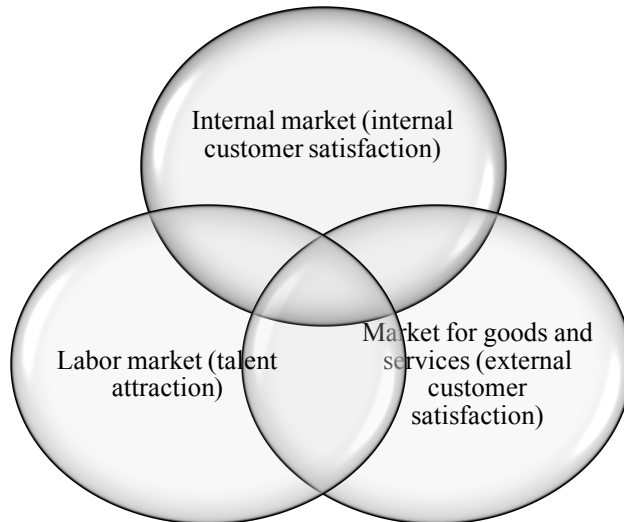
Given the current challenges and the search for the creation of more inclusive jobs, which guarantee the employee's welfare; but, at the same time make the company more resilient, is the Internal Marketing is considered as a theoretical model that in practice offers especially appropriate tools (figure 1).

Figure 1. Contribution of internal marketing to business resilience



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2. Business dilution between three markets through internal Marketing



Source: own elaboration.

Internal Marketing is (1) satisfaction and motivation of the employee to (2) focus on the customer and their satisfaction, by (3) coordination and functional inter (4) integration with a market approach and (5) implementation of corporate strategies and / or specific actions (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000; Foreman and Money, 1995). Under this perspective, job satisfaction is granted through customer satisfaction (Lings, 2004). It is a more humanistic vision of the results of the company because it includes the different perceptions of the employees and the multiple realities that coexist in their work area. By operating as an internal market, the company is diluted between the labor and goods and services markets,

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being more consistent in its actions and adapting to changes faster. Diluting between the two markets does not mean disappearing, it means acting with the same logic and speed, becoming more resilient (figure 2). Both marketing strategies (internal and external) are aligned (Lings and Greenley, 2005), the capabilities of the company are dynamic, and the market responds more quickly (Gounaris, 2006).

This vision of Internal Marketing is congruent with the vision of a XXI century work flexibility, with greater benefits for the employee. The current company is a *Collage* in continuous assembly and disarmament (Sisto, 2009). In this *Collage*, the employee is more than a piece of assembly under unstable joints in which he is expected to remain long-term, grow professionally and develop his talents. The employee is the human part that articulates and gives meaning to the other elements of the *Collage*. The vision of the three markets provides speed and consistency between the internal elements of the company and those external to it, increases its capacity to respond to changes and even makes it an agent of change.

It is possible that this dynamic and uncertain vision also facilitates a greater understanding of productivity, and allows the rediscovery of why one employee is more productive than another under the same conditions; Or, what causes an employee to be more productive in different periods or circumstances, and even in adverse circumstances. Internal Marketing identifies the differences between what the employer perceives about the image of the employee by the company, and the true perception of the employee on itself and for the company, thereby achieving the reinvention of their work, the working environment and employer-employee-client relationships.

METHODOLOGY

An approach has been made to the phenomenon has been made through the compilation and documentary analysis of the last forty years (books, magazines, videos, blogs, among others) on the actions of companies worldwide to create a better work environment through the approach "the employee is the client". Based on this, three models were identified. Two of them are descriptive-explanatory and one is prescriptive. These models were analyzed and compared according to their dimensions and to the theoretical basis. This analysis had as a second claim the increase in the employee's welfare in the face of climate change, the new poverty profiles and migratory flows, resulting in greater business resilience.

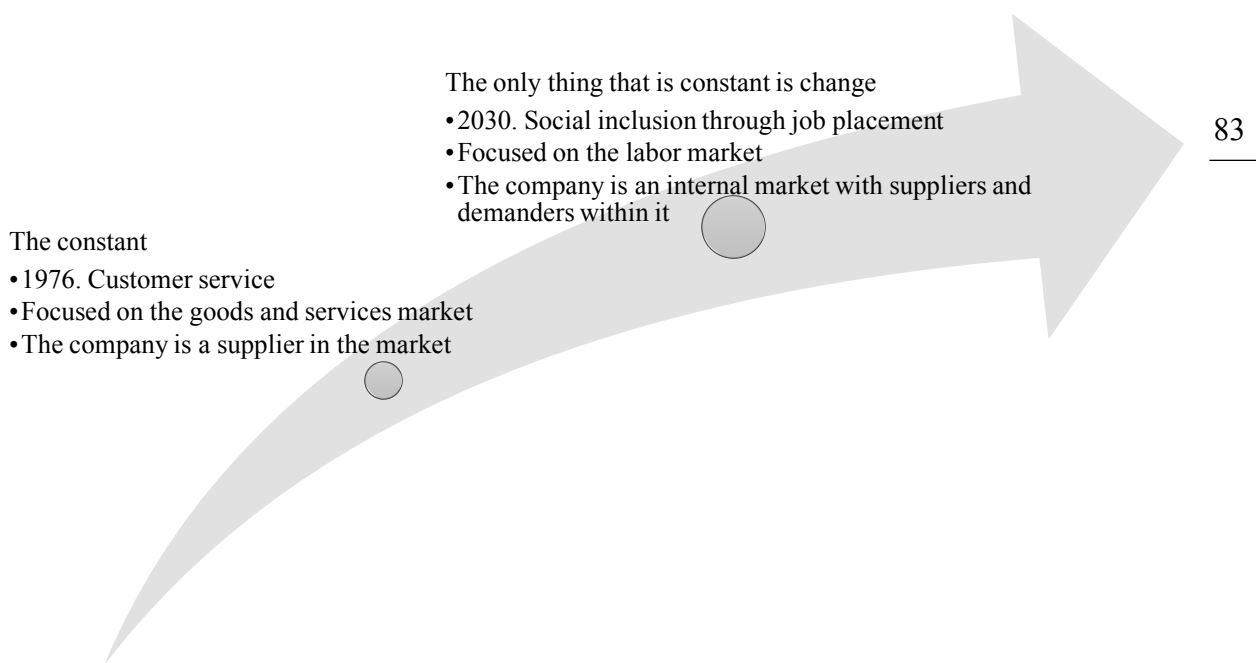
The preliminary results were exposed to the debate of the scientific and academic community through participation in multidisciplinary conferences, seminars and congresses. In the same

way, triangulation between experts has been a necessary and essential measure, in order to achieve consistency and greater objectivity in what is collected and analyzed.

DEVELOPMENT AND DISCUSSION

Before the free trade, it was considered that the formal structures of the company were designed to achieve the main activities and enabled to capitalize on human potential (Argyris, 1993), under a planned environment and with little possibility of facing to international competition. The prevailing theoretical thinking in business aspects attributed minimal importance to tackle climate change, the new poverty profiles and migratory flows. The companies had rigid structures and with many hierarchical levels. The procedure manual was highly indispensable and was based on rigid rules and policies to which the employee had to quickly adapt without question.

Figure 3. Transformation of thinking based on internal marketing



Source: own elaboration.

The transition from a closed economy to an open one, implying the confrontation with international changes, led theorists to consider companies as open sociocultural systems and, as such, inclusive of ideological elements, collective schemes of meanings, values,

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knowledge and beliefs, forming an integrated whole with more dynamic structures, emerging strategies, policies and processes of the organization in constant change (Crosby, 2002). Internal Marketing was part of the transformation from "the constant" to "change as the only constant" (figure 3).

According to the literature review, the first reference to appears in 1976 Internal Marketing. Almost twenty-five years before the world committed to the Millennium Goals, and nearly forty years before the Sustainable Development Goals. Berry et al. (1976) raised the importance of Internal Marketing in customer service, while Flipo (1986) censured marketing without employee involvement and Grönroos (1990) linked marketing service with satisfaction. Although it was Collins and Payne (1991) who found the importance of the employee in the achievement of the company's objectives, through strategies marketing.

The link between Internal Marketing and quality in customer service was clearly explained. However, its application was not extended to other functions within the company, nor did it involve companies that were not typical of the service sector. The bet was towards the employee who dealt directly with the customer. Piercy and Morgan (1991), almost at the same time as Collins and Payne (1991), related the motivation of the employee with the costs of the company. Finally, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) proposed to practice first Internal Marketing, before external one.

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Internal Marketing involved the treatment of employees and customers to increase corporate effectiveness, improving internal relations (Helman and Payne, 1992). Wright et al. (1994) showed that Internal Marketing contributes to the adaptation of the company to new market environments. Caruana and Calleya (1998), emphasized the relationship with organizational commitment.

While Ahmed et al. (2003), added the sense of belonging, motivation, communication and empowerment. Bak et al. (1995) explained that Internal Marketing achieves more effective and participatory employees, directing their participation towards learning environments. That is why Cahill (2017; 1995), demonstrated the relationship between Internal Marketing and organizational learning. The studies presented by these researchers are from the last decade of the last century, which was an important moment in the process of globalization and trade opening in different parts of the world.

Organizational learning is key to resilience in organizations. A learning organization is easily adaptable to external changes, stimulating the achievement of organizational objectives. It is possible that a company with Internal Marketing is a learning organization and, therefore, it is more resilient. Therefore, it is not surprising that Barney and Wright (1998) demonstrated the positive impact of internal Marketing on the competitiveness of the company and its

organizational performance. As it was demonstrated, companies globally were facing major changes in the face of liberalization, deregulation and decentralization. There were rapid changes in the international environment.

The entrepreneur at that time (last five years of the last century), had been subject to new challenges. He faced international competition without leaving home because this competition was installed in his locality. He also faced new financial challenges, one of them arose from a system of exchange parity not controlled by the government, another challenge had to do with the new financing schemes. These challenges indicated the transformation of his town on a more international stage. In that same five years, labor flexibility had knocked on the door in the world economic system and it had been opened wide. Which is why Internal Marketing took on a new justification. Hogg et al. (1998) concluded that the employee had an impact on the perception of clients towards the company, and that this was directly related to performance and values, among other factors.

The business tools that revolved around Internal Marketing had become, by that time, in allies of companies that increased productivity hand in hand with the fall in wages worldwide, the weakening of pension systems, as well as the stiff competition that middle and senior management employees were subjected to. Climate change and migratory flows were not considered. New poverty profiles emerged in the most prosperous cities and rich countries. Companies focused on the accounting benefits of labor flexibility and sought strategies to reduce costs, not to adapt to changes in the environment.

All talent retention strategy was practically unrelated to salary and job stability. Short-term employee commitment was obtained without genuine commitment from the company. In this scenario, Chew (2004) related business performance to employee retention; linked the capacity for innovation and business development with the knowledge and skills of employees.

However, Internal Marketing is based on models that aim at internal customer satisfaction, based on participatory management processes (Bohnenberger, 2005), interfunctional coordination, integration and empowerment (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). All of this requires motivation, training, recognition and empowerment (Bansal et al. 2001).

For the present study, an analysis of three models with the highest incidence in business practice in recent years was run (table 1). They present a long-term vision of the employer-employee relationship, fostering permanent reciprocity and loyalty between the company and its employees.

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In the first model (Berry and Parasuranam, 1991) the best employees are recognized, attracted and retained. The second model (Ahmed *et al.* 2003) emphasizes motivation and empowerment, reinforcing the combination between personnel management and marketing. The third model (GPTW, 2019) focuses entirely on business practice and with the nuances of a multidimensional reality.

Table 1. Orientation of internal marketing models and their indicators for business resilience

	<i>Berry & Parasuranam (1991)</i> <i>Oriented to customer satisfaction</i>	<i>Ahmed, Rafiq & Saad (2003)</i> <i>Oriented to business performance</i>	<i>Great Place To Work (2019) & Levering (1995)</i> <i>Oriented to the employee's welfare</i>
INDICATORS	Talent attraction	Management and environment	empowerment psychological Trust and commitment
	Assertive communication	Middle leadership	management Respect
	Continuous training	Strategies for recognition	performance Credibility and loyalty towards the company
	Leadership	Integration of high-performance teams	Impartiality and social inclusion
	Freedom for work	Incentive system and adaptation in processes	Sense of belonging (pride)
	Recognition for results	Inter-functional coordination and integration through communication	Fellowship and collaboration
		Training and development of individual skills	

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Source: own elaboration based on the authors' proposal.

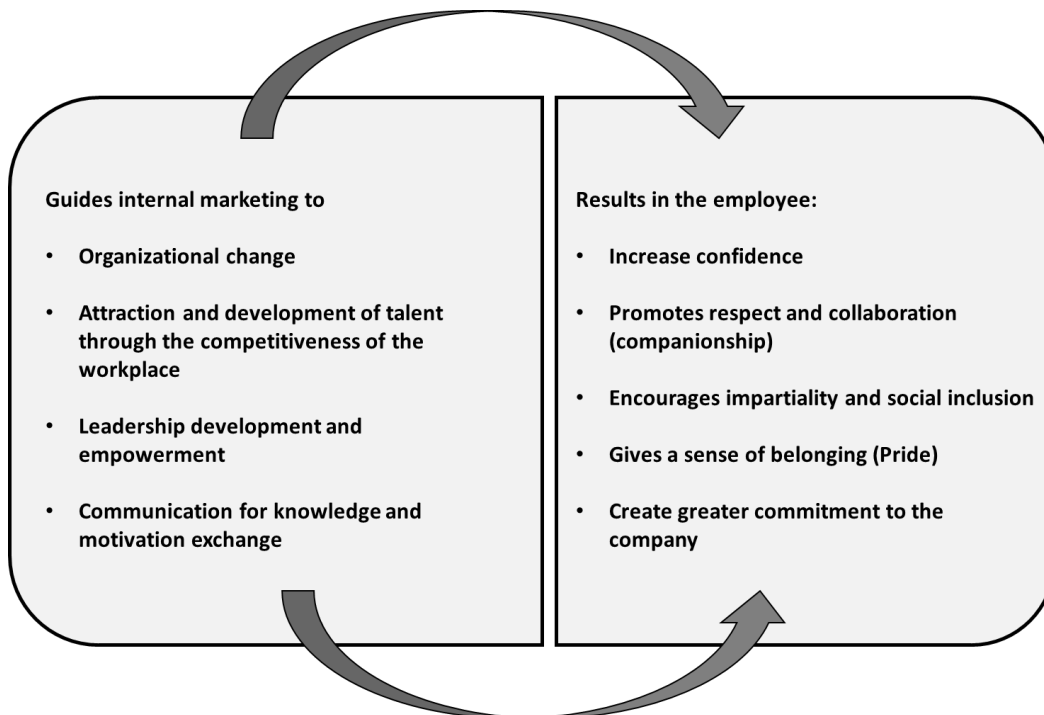
Figure 4, on its left side, showing the elements of the descriptive explanatory model built based on two main theoretical models (Berry and Parasuranam, 1991; Ahmed *et al.* 2003) shown in Table 1. The right side of Figure I shows the prescriptive model generated by *Great Place to Work* (GPTW, 2019), which is supported by a group of companies (45 countries on 6 continents) at the global level. They work with an anonymous survey, with 51 items, to which the employee (around 10 million worldwide) answers, detailing how they feel and what they think about the company and their workspace (GPTW, 2019).

Great Place to Work (GPTW, 2019) is a model of *Internal Marketing* that provides feedback to the company regarding the internal work environment and the external labor market. Companies look beyond productivity and profitability; they seek a distinction from the competition.

The feedback and the distinction *Great Place to Work* contribute to the company operations in congruence with the three markets: internal, labor and goods and services. The main elements considered by this prescriptive model are comparative measurement and analysis

of workplace competitiveness; Intellectual Capital for Leadership Development and Human Capital Best Practices and Knowledge Sharing (GPTW, 2019). In the business environment there is a lot of optimism and credibility towards this model.

Figure 4. Internal Marketing orientation towards business resilience



Source: own elaboration.

In this way, those who make decisions based on their beliefs lead the practice to transform the business reality, in turn, the new business reality transforms the theory (explanation of reality). The *Great Place to Work model* is an essential link between practical reality and theory of *Internal Marketing* (GPTW, 2019; Dabirian *et al.* 2017; Bakker, 2010; Fulmer *et al.* 2003; Levering, 1995).

Great Place to Work strengthens the phenomenon (Internal Marketing) and gives it continuity in such a way that practices Internal Marketing originally focused on the service sector have transferred to industrial sector, with more and more companies in the industrial sector interested in obtaining the distinction and in carrying out the necessary practices to improve employee welfare.

In the *Great Place to Work model*, the main characteristic in determining a great workplace is the level of trust between management and employees, not specific policies or practices.

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The benefits represent a modern and more ambitious version of Elton Mayo's (1972) approach. Mayo (1972) focused on individual job satisfaction without addressing the most basic issues necessary to create a high level of trust.

Great Place to Work is based on communication (two-way dialogue), the strengthening of work skills and integrity, essential for trust in the workplace (Levering and Moskowitz, 1993). This model confirms that *Internal Marketing* has been altered by social changes and company management. The importance of *Internal Marketing* is undoubted, and it is possible that companies allocate a larger budget to strengthening it (table 2).

Table 2. Contribution of dimensions *Internal Marketing* to business resilience and social inclusion (Sustainable Development Goals)

<i>Internal marketing dimension</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Contribution</i>
<i>Attracting and developing talent through workplace competitiveness (GPTW, 2019; Barney and Wright, 1998; Levering, 1995; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991)</i>	Builds elements that attract the best, develop individual skills that add to the capabilities of the company and to the performance of the business.	It encourages social inclusion, because it focuses on talent and not on the individual's social and economic background.
<i>Organizational change (Ahmed et al. 2003; Barney and Wright, 1998; Levering, 1995)</i>	Dynamic business processes in constant modification through self-assessment and self-learning.	Increases the level of response of the company towards changes in the labor market as well as goods and services, fosters resilience.
<i>Leadership and empowerment development (GPTW, 2019; Ahmed et al. 2003; Barney and Wright, 1998; Levering, 1995; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991)</i>	Construction of high-performance teams, improvements in the work environment, appropriation of knowledge and support from senior management to act on the basis of such ownership.	It promotes the learning environment in the company. It turns learning environments into the best allies for organizational adaptation to new realities.
<i>Communication for the exchange of knowledge and motivation (GPTW, 2019; Ahmed et al. 2003; Barney and Wright, 1998; Levering, 1995; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991)</i>	Clear and accessible communication, contributing to integration and the generation of competences. Employees trust the people they work for, take pride in what they do, and enjoy who they work with. They are motivated for continuous improvement.	It encourages social inclusion and the creation of new jobs, while increasing productivity, innovation and continuous learning.

Source: Own elaboration.

Internal Marketing is a social process. People become relevant as their ability to generate value in the company begins to be recognized, through increased productivity, improvements in customer service and impact on the economic results of the company (Winston and Cahill, 2012; Pfeffer, 1998). *Internal Marketing* contributes to the dynamic capabilities and value (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000; Lings, 2002). It also contributes to the financial performance of the company (GPTW, 2019; Fu *et al.* 2018; Salehzadeh *et al.* 2017; Išoraitė, 2017)

However, its contribution to business resilience and social inclusion is more important (table 2) under the new scenarios. Of course, the impact of *Internal Marketing* on business resilience and social inclusion depends a lot on the long-term vision of senior management. The dimensions that contribute to resilience and social inclusion require a strategic vision that is not static, not short-term, and much less linear.

CONCLUSIONS

As analyzed in this work, a limitation for obtaining better results in business practice, in the face of current challenges, is the existence of tools that are conceived by those who occupy positions in senior and middle management, which tend to be static and isolated. A static, short-term and linear view is dangerous because it leads to poor results, even when the best tools are available. A large part of these arose in the middle of the last century, in a protectionist environment and planned economies. Faced with a change in circumstances, decision makers have to modify their vision: from short term to long term, from planned to emergent, from linear to multidimensional. This work considered that, in most cases, the technique (the way something is done or applied) limits the results before the tool itself.

Internal Marketing is key to business resilience to climate change, new poverty profiles and migration flows at the time that reconciles the welfare of employee, his labor productivity with social inclusion. This requires making long-term decisions and analysis. It requires transforming the vision from the short term into the long term so that it can take effect.

The maximum use depends on the vision of senior management regarding changes in the environment. Once the company acts in congruence with the three markets: internal, labor and of goods and services, it is possible that it will achieve better results in terms of customer satisfaction, business performance and the employee's welfare.

It is concluded that the dimensions of *internal marketing* that contribute to business resilience and social inclusion are the following: 1) the attraction and development of talent through

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the competitiveness of the workplace; 2) organizational change; 3) leadership development and empowerment; and 4) communication for the exchange of knowledge and motivation.

This conclusion is based in the analysis of data from *Great Place to Work* and the documentary analysis of the theories that support *Internal Marketing model*, recognizing the need to delve even deeper into more specific realities. It would imply new lines of investigation, which require direct investigation to gather evidence about what happens within companies that apply any of the three models identified in the work.

The new reality that the business sector and the labor market have entered also leads to the opportunities of comparative studies between before and after the pandemic modifications of modus operandi in what respects the *Internal Marketing* and employment commitment. As well as its possible contribution or not contribution to the resilience of the company in times of pandemic.

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