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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# The Effect of Internal Marketing Practices on Internal Brand Equity in the Ghanaian Pharmaceutical Industry

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## | ABSTRACT
Globalisation has led to a competitive market landscape where building robust brands through internal marketing is necessary for organisational success, especially in the pharmaceutical sector. Employees in the pharmaceutical sector emphasise internal brand equity, ensuring that employees' values align with brand values. This helps brands maintain a consistent external image and gain a competitive edge. However, despite the importance of internal marketing in fostering brand alignment, there is limited research on the role of internal marketing practices in building internal brand equity in Ghana's pharmaceutical industry. This study aims to address this gap. A quantitative explanatory design was employed, using a stratified and purposive sampling technique to select 423 employees from six pharmaceutical companies to answer an online questionnaire. Regression analysis was used to estimate the relationships between the constructs. The results indicated that brand vision, reward systems, and development programmes, which form internal marketing practices, have statistically significant impacts on internal brand equity. Moderation analysis revealed that the effect of internal marketing practices on internal brand equity is consistent across gender, employment status, and years of experience. There was no significant effect of gender, employment status, and years of experience on the relationship between internal marketing practices and internal brand equity. The study findings highlight the importance of strengthening internal brand equity through internal marketing practices in Ghanaian pharmaceutical companies to ensure competitiveness and industry leadership. It emphasises the need for a clear brand vision, reward systems, and employee development programs.

## | KEYWORDS

Ghana, pharmaceutical industry, internal marketing practices, employees, internal brand equity, brand.

## | ARTICLE INFORMATION

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## 1. Introduction

In a rapidly evolving business landscape, organisations strive to gain a competitive advantage by strengthening their brand identity and ensuring the consistent delivery of high-quality products and services. Barros-Arrieta and García-Cali (2021) defined a brand as the sum of all consumer perceptions, which ultimately shape its distinctiveness based on perceived emotional and functional benefits. Achieving this distinctiveness requires more than delivering quality services and products; employees must internalise and embody brand values in their roles (Boukis & Christodoulides, 2020a; John et al., 2019). Recognising employees as critical brand ambassadors, organisations increasingly acknowledge that building strong brand equity must begin internally (John et al., 2019). As a result, internal brand equity has gained prominence as a key driver of competitive advantage in modern business environments.

Internal brand equity refers to the value that employees contribute to a brand through their attitudes, behaviours, and performance, which align with the organisation's values and commitments (Sangari et al., 2024). It reflects the extent to which employees understand, embrace, and advocate for the brand identity, positioning them as key brand ambassadors. When employees internalise the brand promise and consistently reflect it in their work, they strengthen the organisation's reputation and enhance its overall brand equity. This internal alignment is essential for maintaining a cohesive external brand image and ensuring a consistent customer experience (Santiago, 2023). In industries where employees serve as crucial intermediaries between organisations and external stakeholders, such as the pharmaceutical sector, strong internal equity becomes even more critical. Employees in such industries directly shape brand perceptions through their interactions with healthcare professionals, regulatory bodies, and consumers, making internal branding a key strategic priority.

In the pharmaceutical industry, employees serve as key intermediaries between pharmaceutical companies and medical professionals, directly impacting the perception and recognition of pharmaceutical brands. As pharmaceutical companies strive to build brand equity among physicians and patients, the internal alignment of the representatives with the brand's values becomes critical. When employees effectively embody and communicate the brand promise, as in the case of medical representatives, they can significantly influence physicians' prescribing behaviours, enhancing the company's market presence and brand equity. Thus, internal brand equity directly supports external brand strategies in the pharmaceutical industry, where brand recognition can determine competitive advantage.

Research consistently highlights the fundamental role of internal marketing in shaping internal brand equity (Azizi et al., 2012; de Bruin et al., 2021; Mehdi et al., 2020). Internal marketing is a strategic approach that focuses on attracting, engaging, and retaining employees by addressing the professional needs and expectations Qaisar and Muhamad (2022). When organisation create an environment that motivates employees and fosters engagement, they increase the likelihood that employees will internalize and reflect the brand's values. Abraheem et al. (2020) emphasise that internal marketing shapes employee attitudes and behaviours, cultivating a market-oriented culture where employees actively contribute to delivering the brand promise. Similarly, Brown (2020) argues that internal marketing fosters behaviours that align with external market goals, reinforcing brand identity from within. By creating a culture of alignment and engagement, internal marketing enhances internal brand equity, ensuring employees act as brand advocates (de Bruin et al., 2021). Consequently, effective internal marketing serves as the foundation for building a strong internal brand identity.

However, despite the growing interest in internal marketing efforts to shore up brand equity, the literature on internal brand equity is still scarce, and very few studies have focused on the internal aspects of brand equity in organisations (for example, Baca & Reshidi, 2023, 2024; Rahman & Legese, 2018; Sangari et al., 2024). Most research has focused on external branding and consumer viewpoints, neglecting the crucial role of employees in shaping brand perceptions. Specifically, the pharmaceutical industry has not been thoroughly explored in this aspect, with studies concentrating more on the external influence of medical representatives than on their internal brand alignment.

Only a few researchers, such as Azizi et al. (2012), have highlighted the internal marketing aspect of the pharmaceutical industry and its impact on internal brand equity. However, Azizi et al.'s study was limited to the Iranian industry, where employee behaviour or attitudes may be distinct from other settings. Additionally, although research has delved into the influence of internal marketing on employee behaviour toward the brand of organisations (Bohnenberger et al., 2018; Boukis & Christodoulides, 2020b; Davras, 2024), there is limited empirical research connecting internal marketing practices with the development of internal brand equity in the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana. This gap forms the basis of the current study, which aims to assess the effect of internal marketing practices on internal brand equity in the pharmaceutical industry.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)*

Social Exchange Theory, primarily developed by sociologist George Homans in the late 1950s and further expanded by Peter Blau, suggests that social behaviour results from an exchange process where individuals aim to maximise rewards and minimise costs in their interactions (Yang et al., 2019). Human relationships are formed and sustained based on the perceived benefits and costs involved. This indicates that individuals participate in social exchanges to obtain rewards such as approval, status, and emotional support, while avoiding negative outcomes like disapproval, conflict, or effort (Ahmad et al., 2023). The theory centres on the concepts of reciprocity, balance, and rationality in human interactions. According to the theory, individuals assess their relationships based on the ratio of rewards to costs, striving for a fair and balanced exchange. When the perceived rewards exceed the costs, relationships are likely to be satisfying and lasting. Conversely, if the costs surpass the rewards, individuals may seek to adjust the balance or end the relationship to adjust the balance or terminate the relationship (Krishnan et al., 2020; March et al., 2023).

Within the framework of internal marketing, employees perceive communication, recognition, and development programmes as expressions of trust and investment that motivate them to reciprocate with brand-consistent attitudes and behaviours. The theory helps in understanding why employees experiencing genuine support tend to be more emotionally connected to the brand and are prepared to become brand ambassadors, transforming internal marketing activities into lasting internal brand equity. It also offers a relational perspective that extends beyond transactional models, emphasising psychological exchange, mutual respect, and long-term identification rather than short-term motivation. In highly competitive industries like the pharmaceutical sector, where employee congruence and loyalty determine brand integrity, the theory provides an insightful framework through which internal marketing can generate brand value at a strategic corporate level.

### *2.2 Internal marketing practices and internal brand equity*

According to Bohnenberger et al. (2018), internal marketing is a strategic management approach that attracts, develops, motivates, and retains employees by providing work products that meet employees' needs. Many researchers believe that internal marketing plays a role in encouraging employees to adopt and demonstrate market-oriented behaviour (Davras, 2024; Mehdi et al., 2020). Internal brand equity emphasises the significance of employees in embodying and promoting brand values. It showcases how well employees comprehend, internalise, and uphold the brand promise, thereby influencing external perceptions and overall brand resilience(Santiago, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that internal marketing enhances employees' brand equity (Acabado et al., 2025; Pratama & Anindita, 2025; Raj, 2022). Mero et al. (2020) have shown that the use of effective internal marketing strategies helps to increase the organizational commitment of the employees, which is one of the main aspects of internal brand equity. On the same note, Chiu et al. (2020) discovered that internal marketing promotes commitment, which encourages employees to become more engaged and supportive of the brand in their behaviours. Thomas and Rodrigues (2020) also found that employees who receive respectful treatment, supportive work environment, and autonomy, which are the main aspects of internal marketing, display a higher commitment and identification to the values of their organization. All these findings are indicative that internal marketing leads to emotional and behavioral resonance to the brand. Therefore, it can be inferred that ($H_1$): *Company's overall internal marketing has a positive impact on internal brand equity.*

Drawing from Foreman and Money's (1995) description of internal marketing as a combination of three main factors: vision, rewards, and development. The following assumptions were made:

A company's vision plays a crucial role in shaping employees' understanding and alignment with organizational goals, especially regarding brand values. Clearly articulating and communicating the company's vision fosters a shared sense of purpose, which is vital for building internal brand equity.  Konecnik Ruzzier et al. (2021) pointed out that employees are more likely to embody and promote a brand if they internalize its vision. Barros-Arrieta and García-Cali (2021) emphasised that when employees have a clear understanding of the brand vision, they can deliver consistent brand experiences to customers. Similarly, (Ngo et al., 2020) showed that a strong internal brand vision is associated with higher employee engagement and advocacy. Additionally, Baca and Reshidi (2023b) emphasised that clear brand objectives enhance employees' emotional connection to the brand, leading to increased loyalty. Therefore, it can be inferred that ($H_2$): *Company's brand vision has a positive impact on internal brand equity.*

Van Nguyen et al. (2021) argued that reward structures that align with organizational values spur employees to behave in a manner supportive of the brand. Ritala et al. (2020) also suggested that rewarding employees for brand-consistent actions cultivate a deeper connection to the brand. Similarly, Lee et al. (2020) indicated that organizational leaders perceive that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards significantly contribute to enhancing employee dedication to the brand. Raj (2020) contends that effective reward systems enhance employees' emotional ownership of the brand, leading to increased internal brand equity. Furthermore, Adamu et al. (2020) suggested that well-crafted rewards not only boost job satisfaction but also reinforce brand-aligned conduct among employees. As these studies demonstrate, $H_3$ can be assumed: *Company's reward systems positively influence internal brand equity***.**

The development of employees is essential to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to uphold a brand's promise, directly impacting internal brand equity. Muhammad et al. (2020) emphasised that continuous training and development are vital for aligning employee behaviour with brand values. Kulkarni and Scholar (2024) stated that professional development initiatives assist employees in internalizing brand knowledge and enhancing their effectiveness as brand ambassadors. Similarly, Efe and Akyol (2019) found that development programs help employees comprehend their roles in brand-building efforts. Furthermore, Lin et al. (2021) suggest that ongoing development opportunities enhance employees' ability to consistently deliver quality services in line with the brand's image. Based on these assertions, it can be inferred that ($H_4$) *company development programs positively influence internal brand equity.*

### *2.3 Moderating Roles of Gender, Employment Status and Experience*

Pensap and Mekhum (2020) indicated a strong and positive influence of gender on marketing strategies. Prashar and Maity (2024) found that employees' gender and job-related attributes (tenure and work status) considerably affect the association between internal branding and employee commitment. Similarly, employee experience profoundly influences impressions of internal marketing strategies. Individuals with extended tenure may possess a more profound comprehension of brand values, resulting in enhanced employee-based brand equity (EBBE) (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2025). Baca and Reshidi (2023a) noted that employment status can influence engagement levels and brand citizenship behaviours, which are essential for promoting EBBE. Wu and Liu (2025) demonstrated that an increased ratio of female employees might enhance consumer perceptions, rendering organisations more amiable and favourable. Gender diversity within teams can influence internal marketing strategies, as varied viewpoints may foster more inventive approaches to brand management.

Employee brand engagement is dependent on their years of expertise (Adileh & Çengel, 2019). Adamchik and Sedlak (2024) substantiated the job model, indicating that women and men exhibit comparable levels of commitment when all other variables are accounted for. Despite the findings, women's organisational commitment is statistically substantially greater than men's, the effect magnitude is negligible in practical terms. Based on these assertions, it can be inferred that ($H_5$) *demographic factors (gender, employment status, and experience) moderate the relationship between internal marketing practices and internal brand equity.*

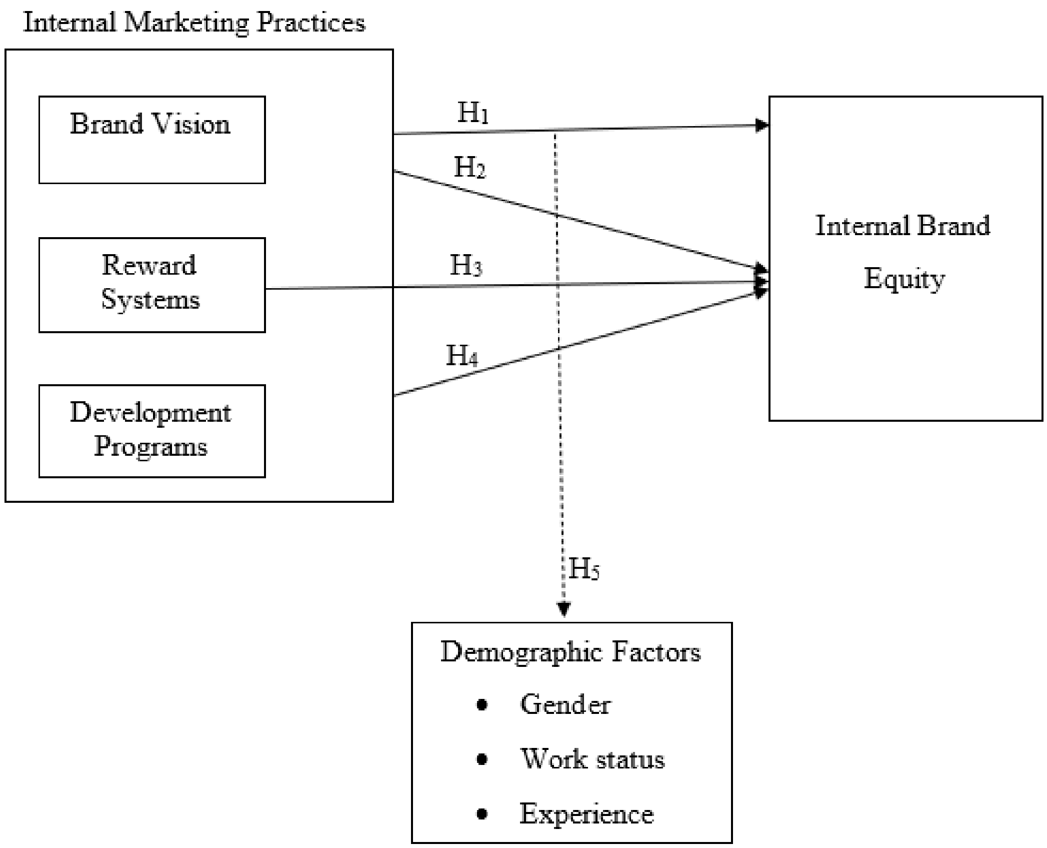


**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework (Author's construct, 2024)

## 3. Method

### *3.1 Philosophical Assumption*

The study employs an objective realist ontological perspective, asserting that social phenomena and their meanings exist independently of social actors (Otoo, 2020). It also embraces an objectivist epistemological stance, indicating that knowledge regarding these occurrences can be obtained by observation and measurement (Omodan, 2022). Ontological and epistemological perspectives offer distinct contexts for grounding research. Creswell & Creswell (2022) delineated four frameworks: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and interpretivism. This research employs a quantitative approach, entailing the systematic observation and measurement of events. This research aims to observe and quantify phenomena, grounded in positivism and post-positivism (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). According to Perera et al. (2022), this paradigm is suited for quantitative research since it allows for the empirical testing of hypotheses while recognizing the possibility of restricted knowledge and biases in the seek for information.

### 3.2 Research Design

This study adopts an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between internal marketing practices and internal brand equity in Ghana's pharmaceutical industry. Explanatory research is particularly suitable because it enables an in-depth investigation into the underlying mechanisms that link internal marketing strategies with employee brand alignment and commitment. This choice aligns with prior studies on brand equity, which have emphasized the necessity of explanatory approaches when modelling organisational behaviour constructs (Ngo et al., 2020).

### 3.3 Research Population

The target population for this study consists of employees working in Ghana's pharmaceutical industry, including personnel from key departments such as marketing, sales human resources, and product development. These employees play a pivotal role in internal branding efforts, making them essential for understanding the effect of internal marketing practices on internal brand equity. Given the diverse nature of pharmaceutical companies in Ghana, it was necessary to select a representative sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. To determine the sample size, Cochran's (1977) formula was employed:

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 \times p(p-1)}{e^2}$$

where:

- $n_o$ represents the required sample size,
- z is the confidence level (set at 95%, meaning z= 1.96),
- p represents population variability (set at 0.5 for maximum variability),
- q is given as 1- p, and
- e is the margin of error (set at 5% or 0.05).

Using these values, the calculated sample size was calculated as 385 respondents. However, anticipating potential non-responses and incomplete surveys, the sample size was increased by 10% to 423 participants. This adjustment aligns with best practices in survey research, where increasing sample size accounts for non-response bias and missing data (Noor et al., 2022).

### 3.4 Sampling Technique

A stratified purposive sampling methodology was used in order to have a balanced representation of departments and firms. The stratification was necessary to balance the inclusion of the HR, marketing and sales, and R&D staff since they were exposed to the external and internal stakeholders differently. In each stratum, purposive selection selected respondents who were actively involved in internal communication or employee development or brand-related activities. This design was able to reduce departmental bias and guarantee that the participants had the appropriate hands-on knowledge of internal marketing practices to enhance representativeness and construct validity.

To obtain operational variety of the medium- and large-scale segments of the industry, six registered pharmaceutical companies were purposefully sampled in the official database of the Ghana Food and Drugs Authority (FDA, 2024). The sample included two large, research-based companies with R&D departments and four medium-sized manufacturers that deal with the manufacture of generic and branded drugs.

### 3.5 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The study included full-time employees and partners working in pharmaceutical firms in Ghana, as they are directly involved in and affected by internal marketing practices. Respondents with more than 2 years of experience were recruited to ensure they had sufficient experience with their firms' internal marketing strategies and brand-related activities.

The exclusion criteria were applied to part-time workers, interns and contract employees, since their limited organisational exposure could affect the reliability of the responses. Moreover, employees from non-pharmaceutical sectors in Ghana and non-Ghanaian pharmaceutical firms were excluded. This was to main industry specific relevance.

### 3.6 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

A structured questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data on internal marketing practices and internal brand equity. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Demographic characteristics of respondents, internal marketing practices and internal brand equity. The questionnaire was structured using previously validated scales to ensure strong theoretical grounding and measurement consistency.

The internal marketing practices scale measured by 15 items was adapted from Foreman and Money (1995), which evaluated key dimensions such as vision, communication and employee development. This study employed Su's (2016) scale to assess internal brand equity measured by 12 items, encompassing participants' opinions of brand commitment, brand identity and brand loyalty. The questionnaire items were structured using a 7-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) which allows for a nuanced measurement of respondent perceptions. The 7-point likert scale enhances data quality and granularity by improving response sensitivity and reducing central tendency bias compared to a 5-point likert scale (Koo & Yang, (2025).

Before deploying the main survey, a pilot test was conducted with a small sample of 30 employees from different pharmaceutical firms. The pilot study assessed clarity, internal consistency, and item reliability. Feedback from this pilot study led to minor revisions in question-wording to improve comprehensibility and reduce ambiguity. The final questionnaire was then distributed electronically via email and WhatsApp business groups to the selected 423 participants. This method ensured wide accessibility while minimizing logistical constraints. The survey was open for four weeks, with follow-up reminders sent weekly to encourage participation. At the end of the period, 403 completed questionnaires were received indicating a response rate of 95%.

### *3.7 Data Analysis*

To ensure accuracy and completeness, the collected data underwent a rigorous cleaning and validation process before analysis. Data was first entered into Microsoft Excel 2019 for initial inspection and screening. Missing values and outliers were examined to prevent distortions in statistical estimates. After this, the dataset was imported into SPPS (version27) and AMOS (Structural Equation Modeling software) for further analysis. The data analysis process consisted of the following steps: Descriptive Statistics such as mean and standard deviation scores were computed for study constructs to summarise general trends in internal marketing practices and brand equity perceptions.  Reliability testing, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable (Ursachi et al., 2015). Validity testing which construct validity was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to verify the factor structure of measurement items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was conducted to ensure sample adequacy, indicating suitability for factor analysis. Regression analysis was used to model the relationships between internal marketing practices (vision, reward, and development programs) and internal brand equity. Fit indices, including Chi-square ($X^2$/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), were assessed to determine model fitness. The model fit results were within acceptable limits, confirming that the conceptual model was statistically sound.

The study adhered to ethical research standards, ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained before data collection, and respondents were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. The data was anonymized to prevent any identifiable linkages to individual respondents or organisations.

## 4. Results

### *4.1 Participant Demographics*

The study indicates a diverse demographic in the pharmaceutical sector, with males comprising 48.3% and females 41.7%. The majority are aged 51 or older, have advanced qualifications, and work in the pharmaceutical sector. Firm size is split between 101-500 and over 500 employees. The demographics reveal a highly educated, experienced, and professionally varied workforce in Ghana's pharmaceutical industry. The high levels of educational attainment and professional certifications, coupled with the significant representation of employees and managers, indicate that the study's findings are indicative of a knowledgeable and experienced sample. Table 1 gives further details on the respondents recruited for the study.

***Table 1.*** *Description of the respondents.*

| Characteristic | Variable | Frequency | Percent % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 168 | 41.7% |
| | Male | 235 | 58.3% |
| | ***Total*** | ***403*** | ***100.0%*** |
| Age | 21-30 years | 94 | 23.3% |
| | 31-40 years | 99 | 24.6% |
| | 41-50 years | 110 | 27.3% |
| | 51 years or older | 100 | 24.8% |
| Educational Level | Bachelor's Degree | 81 | 20.1% |
| | Master's Degree | 87 | 21.6% |
| | Doctorate Degree | 81 | 20.1% |
| | Professional Certificate | 84 | 20.8% |
| | Others | 70 | 17.4% |
| Employment status | Owner/Partner in pharmaceutical business | 26 | 6.5% |
| | Employee in pharmaceutical business | 246 | 61.0% |
| | Manager in pharmaceutical business | 97 | 24.1% |
| | Others | 34 | 8.4% |
| Firm size | 101-500 employees | 217 | 53.8% |
| | More than 500 employees | 186 | 46.2% |
| Years in pharmaceutical sector/firm | 3-5 years | 129 | 32.0% |
| | 6-10 years | 135 | 33.5% |
| | More than 10 years | 139 | 34.5% |

### *4.2 Descriptive Analysis and Reliability*

The results in Table 2 indicate that all constructs exhibit high mean scores, suggesting that respondents have a favourable view of pharmaceutical firms' internal brand equity and internal marketing practices. Moreover, all constructs demonstrate robust reliability coefficients above the 0.70 threshold indicating that the scales employed are consistent and reliable in capturing respondents' perceptions (Taber, 2018). The skewness and kurtosis of all constructs are very low, which warrants that the distribution is approximately normal.

***Table 2.*** *Results of descriptive and reliability analyses.*

| Variable | Construct | Items | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis | Cronbach's α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent | Internal Brand Equity | 11 | 5.430 | 0.511 | 0.11 | 3.25 | 0.837 |
| Independent | *Internal Marketing Practices* | *15* | *5.430* | *0.528* | *0.16* | *2.76* | *0.879* |
| | Brand Vision | 5 | 5.409 | 0.660 | 0.01 | 3.23 | 0.890 |
| | Reward Systems | 3 | 5.454 | 0.757 | 0.31 | 3.07 | 0.793 |
| | Development Programs | 7 | 5.421 | 0.625 | -0.06 | 2.66 | 0.805 |

### *4.3 Factor Analysis*

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test produced a result of 0.878, signifying that the sample is sufficient for factor analysis. This validates the appropriateness of the data for investigating the underlying factor structure. The factor loadings among the various constructs demonstrate strong associations between the items and their corresponding latent variables, with loadings above the threshold of 0.60 (Effendi et al., 2019). The statistical significance of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) further validates the connection among variables and the suitability of factor analysis. The BTS's significant result demonstrates sufficient variance among items to categorize them into meaningful components, rendering them appropriate for further statistical analysis (Abdullah et al., 2022).

*Table 3. Results of the factor loadings.*

| | Item | Factor Loading |
|---|---|---|
| Brand Vision (BV) | IM1 | .847 |
| | IM2 | .921 |
| | IM6 | .767 |
| | IM15 | .859 |
| Reward Systems (RS) | IM9 | .873 |
| | IM12 | .785 |
| Development Programs (DP) | IM4 | .792 |
| | IM5 | .923 |
| | IM7 | .915 |
| | IM10 | .866 |
| | IM13 | .787 |
| | IM14 | .798 |
| Internal Brand Equity (IBE) | IBE2 | .893 |
| | IBE3 | .691 |
| | IBE4 | .857 |
| | IBE5 | .768 |
| | IBE7 | .776 |
| | IBE8 | .836 |
| | IBE9 | .935 |
| | IBE11 | .844 |
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test = .878 | | |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2$ (348) = 3121.283, $p$ = .000 | | |

**Note:** IM – Internal Marketing Practices

### *4.4 Convergence and Discriminant Validity*

The results for the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) for all constructs, as shown in Table 4, met all the criteria for a convergent validity assessment. Consequently, the AVE and CR values exceeded the thresholds of 0.50 and 0.70, respectively (Isah & Ibrahim, 2023). The discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion) results also demonstrate that the scales are separate and uncorrelated, since the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded their correlations with other scales as indicated in Puteh (2018). This confirms that the items are distinct and do not exhibit bias in terms of their measurement constructs.

***Table 4.*** *Results of convergence and discriminant validity*

| Variable | AVE | CR | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Brand Vision | 0.723 | 0.834 | **(0.850)** | | | |
| 2. Reward Systems | 0.689 | 0.708 | 0.255** | **(0.830)** | | |
| 3. Development Programs | 0.720 | 0.753 | 0.365** | 0.333** | **(0.849)** | |
| 4. Internal Brand Equity | 0.686 | 0.804 | 0.288** | 0.238** | 0.388** | **(0.828)** |

*$p$ < 0.05, **$p$ < 0.01, ***$p$ < 0.001. Note: figures in bold represent the square root of the AVE

### *4.5 Goodness of Fit Index*

The results for all model fit indices, as presented in Table 5, satisfy statistical criteria.

***Table 5.*** *Results of Goodness of Fit*

| Indices | Criteria | Results | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-square ($\chi^2$/df) | < 5 | 3.212 | Excellent fit |
| Degrees of Freedom (df) | p < 0.05 | 348 | Excellent fit |
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | > 0.80 | 0.931 | Excellent fit |
| Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | > 0.90 | 0.916 | Acceptable fit |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | > 0.90 | 0.927 | Excellent fit |
| Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) | > 0.90 | 0.958 | Acceptable fit |
| Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | ≤ 0.08 | 0.064 | Acceptable fit |

### 4.6 Regression Analysis

Internal Brand Equity was found to have a positive and significant relationship with all the four predictors. The impact of internal Marketing Practices was significant (B = 0.2493, p < .001, Beta = 5.01) and indicates that the total internal marketing practices have a positive impact on improving IBE. Brand Vision exhibited a high positive association (B = 0.2633, p <.001, Beta = 5.29) which implies that clear and well shared brand vision enhances the internal attachment of employees to the brand. The effect of Reward Systems (B = 0.1684, p < .001, Beta = 3.38) was also significant, which means that competent reward systems support brand-compatible behavior. One of the most powerful predictors was Development Programs (B = 0.2630, p <.001, Beta = 5.28), which signifies the significance of employee training and growth programs in the internal brand equity.

Table 6. Results of Regression Analysis

| Predictor | B | S.E. | Beta | t-value | p-value | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP→IBE | 0.2493 | 0.04 | 5.0075 | 6.2381 | 0 | 0.581 | 0.338 | 0.331 | 0.41753 | Accepted |
| BV→IBE | 0.2633 | 0.0321 | 5.2899 | 8.2021 | 0 | 0.581 | 0.338 | 0.331 | 0.41753 | Accepted |
| RS→IBE | 0.1684 | 0.028 | 3.3837 | 6.0243 | 0 | 0.581 | 0.338 | 0.331 | 0.41753 | Accepted |
| DP→IBE | 0.263 | 0.0336 | 5.2838 | 7.8369 | 0 | 0.581 | 0.338 | 0.331 | 0.41753 | Accepted |

Note: BV – Brand Vision, RS – Reward Systems, DP – Development Programs, IBE – Internal Branding Equity, IMP – Internal Marketing Practices

### 4.7 Moderation

The moderation test was used to determine the effect of gender, employment status, and years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry on the strength of the relationship between the Internal Marketing Practices and Internal Brand Equity. The finding indicates that all the terms of interaction were not statistically significant (all p-values were over 0.05). This means that the overall impact of internal marketing practices on internal brand equity is consistent across all demographic groups.

Table 7. Results of Moderation Analysis

| Moderator | R | $R^2$ | F (HC3) | df1 | df2 | Interaction Coef. | SE | t | p | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMP x G -> IBE | 0.602 | 0.362 | 78.4 | 3 | 399 | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.64 | 0.522 | Rejected |
| IMP x ES -> IBE | 0.618 | 0.382 | 61.9 | 6 | 396 | -0.08 | 0.43 | -0.18 | 0.860 | Rejected |
| IMP x YS -> IBE | 0.612 | 0.374 | 59.7 | 5 | 397 | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.95 | 0.341 | Rejected |

Note: G – Gender, ES – Employment Status, YS – Years in Sector, IBE – Internal Branding Equity, IMP – Internal Marketing Practices

## 5. Discussion

The main aim of this study was to evaluate how internal marketing practices influence internal brand equity within Ghana's pharmaceutical sector. The results show that internal marketing practices have a strong and meaningful positive effect on internal brand equity, demonstrating that employee-focused strategies significantly enhance perceptions of brand commitment, identification, and loyalty. This supports the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) which suggests that employees respond to positive organisational treatment—such as open communication, recognition, and development opportunities—by forming stronger psychological bonds and engaging in brand-supportive behaviours. The study further indicates that internal marketing can foster a sense of belonging and emotional ownership of the brand among employees, as shown by Acabado et al. (2025), Pratama and Anindita (2025), and Raj (2022). Similar findings were presented by Mero et al. (2020), who argued that well-implemented internal marketing strategies strengthen organisational commitment, a key component of internal brand equity. Chiu et al. (2020) found that internal marketing enhances employee involvement and motivates staff to translate brand values into behavioural promotion. The current findings also align with those of Thomas and Rodrigues (2020), who noted that respectful treatment and positive work environments foster organisational value alignment.

It was also found that having a clear and shared brand vision greatly contributes to internal brand equity. This affirms that once employees know and embrace the long-term purpose of the organisation, they can make their daily decisions in line with the brand's promise. As Konecnik Ruzzier et al. (2021) elaborated, employees who internalise the brand vision are more likely to embed its values into their roles. Barros-Arrieta and Garcia-Cali (2021) also revealed that a clear vision enables the brand to deliver a consistent brand experience, while Ngo et al. (2020) discovered a strong internal brand vision that supports engagement and advocacy. Similarly, Baca and Reshidi (2023b) found that clear brand goals foster emotional attachment and loyalty among employees. These findings indicate that brand vision is not only a strategic declaration but also a cultural process that aligns individual purpose with organisational identity. In the case of Ghanaian pharmaceutical companies, whose reputation depends on trust and credibility, the visibility of the vision allows employees to see their professional duties as expressions of the brand's integrity, thus enhancing internal brand cohesion.

There was also a strong positive correlation between reward systems and internal brand equity, which notes that fair and brand consistent rewarding encourages employees to become emotionally and behaviourally attached to the organization. Van Nguyen et al. (2021) established that reward systems based on organizational values lead to brand-supportive behaviour and Ritala et al. (2020) found that the rewarding of employees who take brand-related actions results in stronger bond with the brand. Lee et al. (2020) also established that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards increase the level of commitment of employees to the brand, and Raj (2020) affirmed that good reward systems foster emotional ownership and commitment. Adamu et al. (2020) also included that fair and clear reward system will enhance satisfaction and strengthen brand-congruent behavior. The Ghanaian pharmaceutical setting, where people tend to move their jobs and find skilled individuals, such recognition is a sign of worth and equity, and employees will react to it with brand-congruent loyalty. Such findings uphold the idea that reward systems must be transcended by transactional rewards that are based on a relationship to hold employees to the brand identity.

The impact of the development programmes proved to be particularly significant, demonstrating that ongoing learning and professional development are key factors in the process of building internal brand equity. This supports the findings of Muhammad et al. (2020), who established that continuous training aligns employees' behaviour with brand values, and Kulkarni and Scholar (2024), who argued that development initiatives enhance employees' internalisation of brand knowledge. Similarly, Efe and Akyol (2019) observed that development opportunities help employees understand their contribution to brand-building efforts, while Lin et al. (2021) found that training increases employees' consistency in portraying the brand image. Consequently, development programmes serve a dual purpose: improving skills and fostering identity; they enable employees to represent brand values competently and with conviction. Such programmes translate brand knowledge into behavioural consistency within the Ghanaian pharmaceutical industry, where market credibility relies on professionalism and technical accuracy, thereby strengthening internal brand equity.

The moderation analysis demonstrated that gender, employment status, and years of experience did not significantly influence the strength of the relationship between internal marketing practices and internal brand equity. This suggests that the positive effect of internal marketing is consistent across different demographics within Ghana's pharmaceutical workforce. One possible explanation is the high level of professional standardisation across the industry, where individuals tend to be highly educated and adhere to similar ethical standards, fostering uniform internal communication and support. This finding aligns with Adamchik and Sedlak (2024), who noted that gender differences in organisational commitment were negligible when contextual factors were controlled, and with Chatzipanagiotou et al. (2025), who emphasised that while experience can increase brand identity, it does not lead to substantial change. However, this uniformity contrasts with Prashar and Maity (2024), who found that the impact of internal branding was influenced by gender and job-related attributes in other service sectors, and with Baca and Reshidi (2023a), who observed that employment status moderated engagement and brand citizenship behaviours. This divergence may be due to the collectivist nature of the Ghanaian workplace, where emphasis is placed on group unity and professionalism rather than demographic distinctions. The absence of moderation in this study highlights the broad significance of internal marketing as a driver of employee-led brand outcomes and suggests fruitful avenues for future cross-cultural and sectoral comparisons.

## 6. Conclusion

The research confirms that internal marketing practices, including brand vision, reward systems, and development programmes, are essential contributors to internal brand equity in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical industry. The observed positive relationships among all predictors indicate that employees who receive positive communication, recognition, and growth opportunities develop emotional and behavioural attachment to their organisation's brand. Among these, brand vision and development programmes had the most significant influence, emphasising the importance of shared purpose and ongoing learning in fostering brand-aligned commitment. The absence of moderating variables such as gender, employment status, and experience suggests that the effects of internal marketing are consistent across different demographic groups, implying a unified professional culture where organisational support is valued universally. The findings support the idea that the internal roots of sustainable brand strength lie in firms investing in their employees through credible and mutual practices, which foster trust and loyalty.

### *6.1 Implications*

The results expand on the use of Social Exchange Theory within the internal branding field by empirically demonstrating how mutual organisational relationships lead to brand equity outcomes. The study contributes to the existing literature on internal marketing in emerging economies by providing evidence from a knowledge-intensive industry, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice that is specific to the context. The findings emphasise the importance of institutionalising internal marketing as a strategic role for pharmaceutical companies rather than a peripheral HR activity. Improved internal communication, professional development, and reward alignment can enhance employee retention, service quality, and organisational reputation, which in turn yield direct economic and commercial benefits in a competitive health market. The research also fosters a culture of fairness, empowerment, and shared purpose within organisations, thereby influencing societal trust in the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana and encouraging a more ethical and human-centred industry environment.

### *6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future studies*

This study faced several limitations that may have affected how broadly its findings can be applied. The use of a quantitative approach and a Likert scale questionnaire, while useful for statistical analysis, restricts the ability to explore deeper contextual factors that might influence the relationship between internal marketing practices and internal brand equity. It relied on self-reported survey data, which could introduce response bias and affect objectivity. The cross-sectional design also limits causal inferences, as the relationship between internal marketing and brand equity might change over time. Although various departments and roles were represented, the sample was confined to medium and large pharmaceutical companies, which may limit the applicability of the results to small-scale firms and other sectors. The lack of moderating effects could be due to the similarity of respondents in terms of professionalism, and is not necessarily indicative of an actual lack of differences.

A longitudinal or mixed-method study would be able to reflect the changes in these relationships over time in future research. They can also include other industries or regions to enable a comparison of different contexts. Furthermore, studying other mediators like psychological empowerment or employee engagement might provide more theoretical insight.

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