Internal green marketing and ship employees' behaviour: The mediating role of motivation and attitude

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Abstract. Today's problems, such as pollution and scarcity of resources, require the awareness of internal customers and corporate sensitivity to environmental issues before external customers. Therefore, the study examines the relationship between internal green marketing and employees' green motivation, attitude, and behaviour. The methodological basis includes the concept of social learning theory stating that behavioural patterns are adopted with the use of role models. The research methods are quantitative and sociometric analysis. The research data were obtained by survey method to 282 participants randomly selected among the ship employees of a maritime company in Turkey. Reliability and validity analysis were applied to the variables. The relationships between the variables were tested with the structural equation model. As a result, it was determined that internal green marketing significantly positively affected the employees' motivation. It was concluded that motivation has a significant positive impact on attitude, and it has a positive effect on behaviour. In addition, it was found that motivation and attitude have a full mediating effect in this relationship.

Keywords: green marketing; internal green marketing; motivation; attitude; green behaviour; maritime business; Turkey.

Внутренний «зеленый» маркетинг и поведение судового персонала: роль мотивации и экологического сознания

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Аннотация. Эффективность решения экологических вопросов зависит от осведомленности сотрудников и корпоративного сообщества о проблемах загрязнения окружающей среды, а также от ответственности корпораций перед внешними потребителями. Поэтому крайне важно обеспечить заинтересованность участников хозяйственных отношений в решении вопросов охраны природы. Исследование направлено на изучение взаимосвязи между внутренним «зеленым» маркетингом и характеристиками сотрудников компаний в области охраны окружающей среды – их мотивацией, осознанностью и поведением. Методологической основой работы послужила теория социального научения Альберта Бандуры, согласно которой персонал усваивает поведенческие паттерны при использовании ролевых моделей. Применялись методы количественного и социометрического анализа, моделирования структурными уравнениями, а также анализ надежности и валидности переменных. Информационную базу составили данные, полученные посредством рандомного опроса 282 служащих одной из турецких морских компаний. Верификация гипотез исследования подтвердила их истинность. Так, установлено значительное положительное влияние внутреннего «зеленого» маркетинга на мотивацию сотрудников компании к экологической деятельности. В свою очередь, их мотивация положительно воздействует на сознательное отношение к проблемам окружающей среды и поведение в указанной сфере, а также является посредником между внутренним «зеленым» маркетингом и экологическим сознанием служащих. Доказана также опосредующая роль этого сознания во взаимосвязи «мотивация – поведение» в природоохранной деятельности.

Ключевые слова: «зеленый» маркетинг; внутренний «зеленый» маркетинг; мотивация; отношение; экологическое поведение; морской бизнес; Турция.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems affecting today's humanity and causing concern for future generations have become important issues in recent years. However, it is observed that the concern for protecting the natural environment has increased significantly. For example, environmental problems such as climate change, consumption of resources, air pollution, industrial waste, and increased desertification have emerged. However, with the emergence of sustainable development, non-financial performance has gained importance [Popova, Strikh, 2022]. For this reason, it is seen that interest in green marketing (GM) has increased in recent years. In the literature, GM can also be expressed with environmental, sustainable, and ecological marketing. GM is a differentiated activity aimed at the well-being of societies [Mi et al., 2020]. The purpose of GM, which conveys the promotion and awareness of green products, is marketing policies aimed at improving environmental relations [Ersoy, Tehci, Yıldız, 2021].

In the past, marketing focused on physical products and external customers. With the development of industrialization and the increase in competition, changes have also been seen in marketing strategies. In this context, many marketing tools have emerged. Therefore, in the early 1990s, criticisms were brought to the perspective of marketing strategies, and it was suggested that different approaches should be included. In this way, new theories have been developed, and significant progress has been achieved [Erdoğan, Tilyay, Kimzan, 2011]. One of these approaches is internal marketing (IM). IM is a customer-oriented strategy that directs its activities through employees [Grönroos, 2017]. The IM approach, which means training and motivating internal customers, does not see employees as costs but as partners who will lead the business to success [Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2002]. In general, GM focuses on external customers. Internal green marketing (IGM) involves promoting environmental awareness, environmental education, and the environmentalism of employees in the organizational environment [Vilkaite-Vaitone, Skackauskiene, Díaz-Meneses, 2022]. Therefore, because of the increase in environmental concerns of the university, companies have started to change their behaviour to meet these concerns.

Environmentalism, which is not a new concept in the literature, appears as a new competitive tool for businesses in today's environment [Alkaya et al., 2016]. In this context, IGM is defined as an activity that aims to create environmental values within the organization to establish a corporate green culture [Papadas, Avlonitis, 2014]. GM, which is also considered as a marketing philosophy, deals with the ecological interests of society as well as consumer satisfaction [Amireh, 2021]. IGM, on the other hand, includes activities such as evaluating the environmental initiatives of the employees in recruitment and promotion procedures, using environmentally friendly products among the employees, and encouraging environmental awareness [Papadas et al., 2019]. Institutions offering ecologically friendly policies to their internal customers will positively impact their attitudes and behaviours [Kim et al., 2016]. Therefore, value sharing among the institutions' internal stakeholders is the basis of this philosophy. This philosophy will increase the likelihood that stakeholders will respond to their firms in this direction in the future [Ansari, Farrukh, Raza, 2021]. Developing GM strategies is critical for the organization's compliance with environmental values. It has also been stated that internally oriented activities indirectly affect financial results by improving the firm's ecological performance [Fraj, Martinez, Matute, 2013]. Although the studies on GM attract much attention, IGM is a new concept. Research examining ship employees' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards green issues is limited. Therefore, the current study examines the relationship between ship employees' motivations, attitudes, and conduct regarding IGM practices. Thus, the paper focuses on the environmental activities and results of the enterprise for its internal customers.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

Marketing as a social process is an activity that occurs both outside and within the organization. Today, the rapid development of the service sector has revealed new perspectives and marketing approaches in the industry. One of these approaches is internal marketing [Yeniçeri, Kurt, Akgül, 2020]. With this approach, it is emphasized that employees should be motivated to perform at a high level. It is assumed that when the wishes and needs of employees are met, their motivation will increase, and higher service quality will occur. The first stage of the development of the IM concept is the strengthening of the motivation of internal customers [Rafiq, Ahmed, 2000]. In an enterprise, an external customer-oriented strategy is realized by keeping the motivation of internal customers high [Grönroos, 1997]. In parallel with the rise in consumption and the much more trade development, environmental sensitivity is also increasing. In their study of the banking sector, Amangala and Wali [2013] found that IM has a positive effect on employees' internal motivation. For this reason, the motivation of employees towards green approaches can be possible with IGM. In this context, Junsheng et al. [2020] concluded that executive support for environmental issues influences employees' internal motivation in the field of food production. They also found that the internal motivation of employees positively affects ecological behaviour.

Environmental and recycling behaviours are associated with having emotional intelligence through the thinking environment [Argan, Argan, Dursun, 2022]. However, it is stated that managers' support for environmental protection is positively related to the willingness of employees to be involved in ecological initiatives [Ramus, Steger, 2000]. Motivation is a purposeful behaviour pattern.

Motivation contributes to people striving for a specific goal [Hays, Hill, 2001]. The motivational factor that helps improve performance also provides information about the quality of the internal customer training environment. Motivation, which can be significantly increased through training and development programs, is essential in achieving employees' individual and organizational goals. Motivation helps support employees and encourages them to accept development programs [Güllü et al., 2017]. It is stated that IM and communication influence employees' work attitudes [To, Martin, Billy, 2015]. Internally oriented activities will contribute to the company's environmental performance, which may affect financial results [Fraj, Martinez, Matute, 2013]. Boswell, Bingham and Colvin [2006] supported the relationship between employee attitude and job performance with various communication practices. Yu and To [2013] found that effective communication positively affected employees' work attitudes. Providing employees with environmentally friendly policies can positively impact their behaviour and attitudes [Kim et al., 2016]. Having conducted a study at a higher education institution, Fawehinmi et al. [2022] found that the environmental attitude of academics positively affects environmental GM. In line with all the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Internal green marketing positively affects the ship employee's motivation.

H1a: Green motivation has a mediating role in the effect of internal green marketing on the ship employee's green attitude.

H2: Ship employees' green attitude positively affects green motivation.

H2a: Green attitude has a mediating role in the effect of ship employees' green motivation on their green behaviour.

H3: Ship employees' green attitude positively affects green behaviour.

The above literature analysis shows that IM is related to motivation, attitude, and behaviour. Therefore, with internal marketing practices, employees can be motivated to go green. They may also have attitudes and behaviours towards protecting the green. The current study investigates the relationship between IGM practices and employees' green motivation, attitude, and behaviour. In addition, there are studies on IM, motivation, and attitude factors for various sectors in the literature. However, it is seen that the research for the maritime sector

employees is quite limited. In addition, the study on IGM is minimal. Therefore, the article aims to analyze the relationships between IGM, green motivations, attitudes, and behaviours of ship employees. The results of this interaction between internal stakeholders can be explained by social learning theory. This theory suggests that employees learn appropriate behaviours through role models or support [Bandura, Walters, 1977; Saleem et al., 2020]. A person can be motivated by perceiving the behaviour of others because motivation is often related to the person's demand and learning behaviour. Therefore, when individuals interact with internal stakeholders, they will be motivated to develop behaviour with the effect of green value [Liao, Li, Yang, 2022]. In this context, the research model created in line with the conceptual, theoretical information, and proposed hypotheses mentioned above is shown in Fig. 1.

METHODOLOGY

The survey method was used as a data collection tool in the study. The sample consists of randomly selected participants among the ship employees of a maritime organization operating in Turkey. The research scale has been adopted from proven literature sources (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The research data were obtained by convenience sampling from 300 employees between July 20, 2022 and August 1, 2022 because of interviews with the relevant company officials. Of them, 18 questionnaires were identified as incorrect or incomplete, and 282 were included in the analysis. The first part of the questionnaire has 18 questions with a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In the second part, there are statements to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants (Table 1).

As seen from Table 1, most of the participants are men. However, the distribution obtained in the study is parallel to the ratio of female and male employees in the sector. For example, 50.4% of the respondents are married, and the majority (39.7%) have been working in the relevant company for 5–10 years. It is seen that most of the participants are high school and university graduates and are between the ages of 27–35. According to the demographic findings of the research, most of the participants are men. In addition, they have 5–10 years of work experience. The study meets the minimum sample size criterion (n > 50 + 8m) [Tabachnick, Fidell, 2007]. The scales used within the research is shown in Table 2.
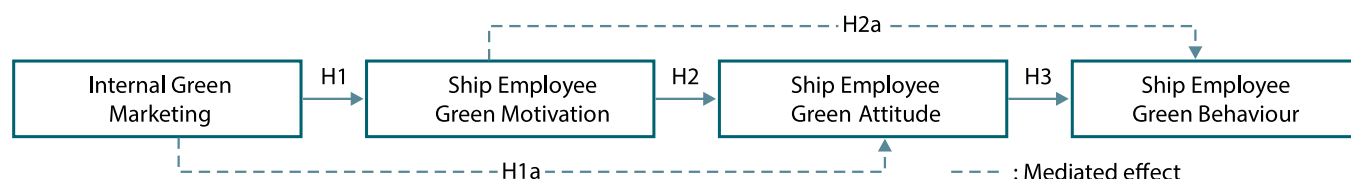

Fig. 1. Research model

Рис. 1. Модель исследования

Table 1 – Respondents' demographic characteristics
Таблица 1 – Демографические характеристики респондентов

Characteristics		N	%	Characteristics		N	%
Education	Primary education	21	7.4	Age	18–26	31	11.0
	High school	157	55.7		27–35	137	48.6
	University	92	32.6		36–44	69	24.4
	Post-graduate degree	12	4.3		45+	45	16.0
Experience, years	Less than 5 years	35	12.4	Gender	Female	42	14.9
	5–10	112	39.7		Male	240	85.1
	11–15	77	27.4	Marital status	Married	142	50.4
	16–20	41	14.5		Single	140	49.6
	20+	17	6	*Total*		*282*	*100*

Table 2 – Research scale
Таблица 2 – Переменные исследования

Variables		Measures	Adapted
Internal Green Marketing	IGM1	Information is provided on environmental issues	Papadas, Avlonitis, Carrigan, 2017; Papadas et al., 2019
	IGM2	We believe in the environmental values of the organization	
	IGM3	Exemplary environmental behaviour is accepted and rewarded	
	IGM4	There are environmental committees	
	IGM5	Environmental activities are considered in the recruitment process	
	IGM6	Environmentally friendly behaviour is encouraged	
	IGM7	Encouraged to use eco-friendly products/services	
Ship Employee Green Behaviour	GB1	I turn off the air conditioner when there is no need	Blok et al., 2015; Junsheng et al., 2020; Fawehinmi et al., 2022
	GB2	I take care that the lights are off when there is no need	
	GB3	I use recycling for waste	
	GB4	Incentives or rewards are given to encourage behaviour	
Ship Employee Green Attitude	GA1	Green behaviour in the workplace is essential to me	Fawehinmi et al., 2022
	GA2	I am in favour of being an environmentalist at work	
	GA3	Environmental behaviour in the workplace needs to be supported	
Ship Employee Green Motivation	EGM1	Adequate training on environmental issues	Junsheng et al., 2020
	EGM2	Participation in environmental training is ensured	
	EGM3	I am involved in improving the environment	
	EGM4	Participation in environmental improvement is encouraged	

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

The data were transferred into the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 package program. A descriptive analysis was carried out. First, exploratory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation. Next, it was tested by confirmatory factor analysis. CB-SEM was used because the model was not complex, and the data was normally distributed [Hair et al., 2017]. IBM SPSS AMOS 21 package program was used to test structural relationships. The study first applied descriptive analysis of mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis [Huang, Lee, Ho, 2004]. The results are shown in Table 3.

Skewness and kurtosis values indicate whether the research data are distributed normally, between –1.5 and +1.5. These values indicate a normal distribution of data [Byrne, 2010]. After, reliability analysis was applied to the data. The general Cronbach's alpha (CA) [Cortina, 1993], which shows the internal consistency of the scales, was found to be 0.874. However, the CA coefficient of "EGM4" was determined to be higher than the general CA. Therefore, the analysis was repeated by eliminating "EGM4" to increase the reliability of the scales. As a result, the overall CA of the scales was found to be 0.888. The validity of the scales, first explanatory and then

Table 3 – Normality test results
Таблица 3 – Результаты теста на нормальность модели

Question	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Question	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
IGM1	4.19	1.007	−1.247	.902	EGM3	3.79	1.229	−.729	−.535
IGM2	3.84	1.109	−.736	−.351	EGM4	2.80	1.465	.184	−1.365
IGM3	3.93	1.180	−1.045	.222	GA1	3.62	1.194	−.589	−.474
IGM4	3.57	1.264	−.461	−.891	GA2	3.78	1.136	−.622	−.460
IGM5	3.91	1.109	−.857	−.047	GA3	3.46	1.175	−.332	−.798
IGM6	3.91	1.106	−.882	.006	GB1	3.91	.987	−.454	−.896
IGM7	4.04	1.048	−.975	.281	GB2	3.89	.993	−.445	−.809
EGM1	4.09	1.028	−.912	−.103	GB3	4.79	1.076	−.569	−.468
EGM2	3.94	1.185	−.947	−.075	GB4	3.89	.946	−.413	−.793

confirmatory factor analysis, was applied. The results are shown in Table 4.

The KMO was found to be 0.875 [Kaiser, 1974]. Bartlett's sphericity test shows the correlation between measurement items. It can be said that the measurement tool is suitable for factor analysis ($p = .000$). The eigenvalue of each variable was more than 1 and was grouped as a factor. Cumulative variances (minimum threshold value 50 %) is above threshold values [Hair et al., 2010]. In addition, the construct validity of the scale and the relationships between the variables were also tested. The results are reported in Table 5.

Table 5 shows the correlation between CA, composite reliability (CR), mean variance explanation (AVE) and variables. AVE is an indicator of the convergent validity of structures. The CR shows the AVE and its frame. The results are at the threshold values specified in the literature [Hair, Gabriel, Patel, 2014]. There is also a positive correlation between variables.

Table 4 – Validity and reliability analysis results
Таблица 4 – Результаты тестов на валидность и надежность модели

Variables	Question	Factor load		Eigenvalue	Cumulative variance, %
		Confirmatory	Exploratory		
Internal Green Marketing	IGM1	0.721	0.748	6.244	36.729
	IGM2	0.702	0.760		
	IGM3	0.712	0.772		
	IGM4	0.799	0.826		
	IGM5	0.858	0.847		
	IGM6	0.866	0.844		
	IGM7	0.835	0.823		
Ship Employee Green Behaviour	GB1	0.797	0.789	3.372	56.564
	GB2	0.950	0.896		
	GB3	0.798	0.855		
	GB4	0.851	0.875		
Ship Employee Green Attitude	GA1	0.886	0.881	1.896	67.720
	GA2	0.890	0.884		
	GA3	0.838	0.872		
Ship Employee Green Motivation	EGM1	0.866	0.850	1.457	76.292
	EGM2	0.884	0.898		
	EGM3	0.829	0.883		

KMO: 0.875 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: df : 136   Sig: 0.000   Approx. Chi-Square: 3358.602

Table 5 – Construct reliability and correlations
Таблица 5 – Конструктная надежность и результаты корреляционного анализа

Variables	Mean	SD	CA	CR	AVE	IGM	GB	GA	EGM
IGM	3.910	0.917	0.918	0.919	0.785	1	0.267*	0.155*	0.389*
GB	3.871	0.888	0.910	0.913	0.849	–	1	0.468*	0.184*
GA	3.619	1.070	0.904	0.905	0.871	–	–	1	0.193*
EGM	3.938	1.042	0.891	0.895	0.860	–	–	–	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS TESTS

A structural model is an equation that measures the relationship between hidden variables. It includes internal variables other than IGM, GA, EGM, and GB. Structural equation modelling (SEM) can be examined to reduce errors in the model. In addition, it facilitates the discovery of relationships between variables. Therefore, this method helps to model structures at a higher level [Hair, Gabriel, Patel, 2014]. This study tested the general compatibility of SEM with conceptual models and hypotheses. The structural model and fit indices are shown in Fig. 2 and Table 6.

As can be seen from Table 6, χ2/df: 1.889 and model fit indices are among the recommended levels. Therefore, it can be said that the model fits the data well [Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010].

Table 7 shows the relationships between hidden variables considered significant at the significance level of 0.05. IGM has been found to have a positive effect on EGM, EGM on GA, and GA on GB. Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 are supported.
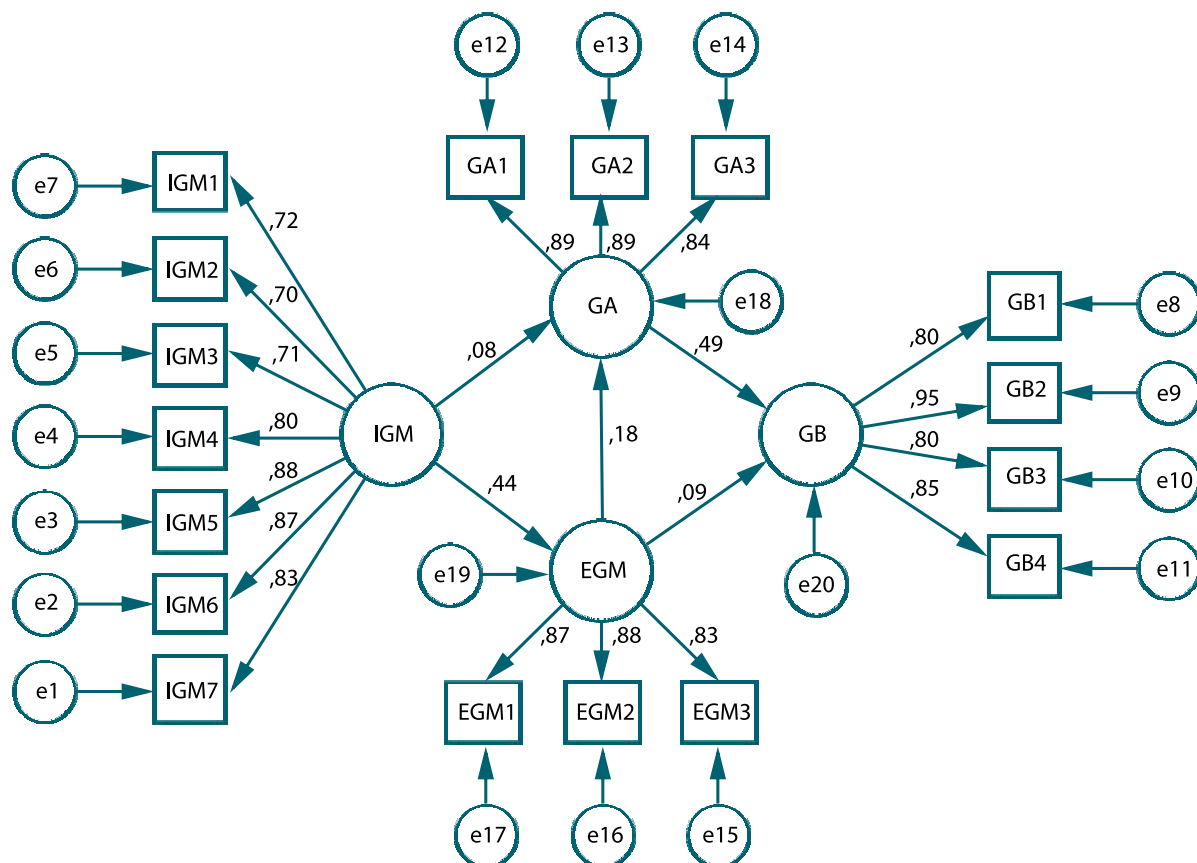

Fig. 2. Structural model
Рис. 2. Структурная модель

Table 6 – Research model fit indices
Таблица 6 – Индексы соответствия в модели исследования

Fit Indices	P	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	NFI
Structural model	0.000	1.889	0.056	0.969	0.915	0.925	0.970	0.963	0.937

Table 7 – Hypothesis test results
Таблица 7 – Результаты верификации гипотез исследования

Hypothesis	Direction	Standardized effect	Standard error	P-value	Result
H1	Ship Employee Green Motivation ← Internal Green Marketing	0.439	0.065	0.000	Accept
H2	Ship Employee Green Attitude ← Ship Employee Green Motivation	0.176	0.088	0.017	Accept
H3	Ship Employee Green Behaviour ← Ship Employee Green Attitude	0.493	0.048	0.000	Accept

MEDIATION ANALYSIS

The positive impact of IM activities on the motivation of internal customers has been expressed in previous studies [Rafiq, Ahmed, 2000; Amangala, Wali, 2013]. Administrative support for internal customers on environmental issues also impacts their motivation [Junsheng et al., 2020]. Therefore, positive employee motivating towards the environment is possible with IM. It is known that internal marketing influences attitude [To, Martin, Billy, 2015], and internal motivation influences ecological behaviour [Junsheng et al., 2020]. But the relationships between these variables allow us to test intermediary variables and bridge the gap. Therefore, the mediating effect of EGM in the relationship between IGM and GA and GA in the relationship between EGM and GB were tested. The bias-corrected (BC) bootstrap method applied in the structural equation model literature [MacKinnon, Lockwood, Williams, 2004] has been used to measure the importance of the intermediary effect.

The variables concerned must first have a direct effect to discuss the mediation effect (see Table 8). When the mediator variable is included in the model, this effect is expected to decrease or disappear altogether (see Fig. 2).

Table 9 shows results based on mediation analysis of 2000 bootstrap samples.

As a result, EGM is mediated in the effect of IGM on GA and GA is mediated in the effect of EGM on GB. Thus, H1a and H2a were supported.

DISCUSSION

In the literature, the relationship between IM and employee motivation is examined in different sectors. Within the scope of IGM and green motivation, attitude, and behaviour of employees, there are limited studies in the field of the maritime industry and other sectors. Therefore, this article examined IGM practices in a maritime organization and the employees' green motivation, attitude, and behaviours. The findings showed that IGM significantly positively affected employee motivation. This situation parallels the results of studies conducted in different sectors. For example, Amangala and Wali [2013] found in their banking sector study that IM positively affects employees' internal motivation. Junsheng et al. [2020], on the other hand, found that the institutional environment and management support play an essential role in motivating employees' green activities in their organizations. They also stated that the relevant factors are also an important mediator in the relationship with the green behaviour of the company.

The current study concluded that motivation has a positive effect on attitude, and attitude has a positive impact on behaviour. In addition, it was found that motivation has a full mediation in the influence of IGM on attitude, and attitude has a full mediation in the effect of motivation on behaviour. These results align with studies investigating the relationship between environmental attitudes and behaviour in different economic sectors. For

Table 8 – Direct effect testing
Таблица 8 – Тест на наличие прямой связи

Direction	Standardized effect	Standard error	P-value
Ship Employee Green Attitude ← Internal Green Marketing	0.149	0.079	0.022
Ship Employee Green Behaviour ← Ship Employee Green Motivation	0.186	0.058	0.004

Table 9 – Mediation test result
Таблица 9 – Результаты теста на медиацию

	Variables	Standardized indirect effect	Lower bounds	Upper bounds	Two-tailed significance	Mediation $p < 0.05$	Result
H1a	IGM – GA EGM (Mediator)	0.080	0.032	0.148	0.009	Full	Accept
H2a	EGM – GB GA (Mediator)	0.105	0.056	0.168	0.001	Full	Accept

example, To, Martin, Billy [2015] found that IM practices positively affect hotel employees' attitudes. Fawehinmi et al. [2022] determined that environmental attitude positively affects the ecological behaviour of academicians. They also found that attitude mediated the relationship between environmental concerns and the behaviours of academics. Fraj, Martínez and Matute [2013] also stated that the firms' internally focused activities improve the employees' environmental performance. Ahmed et al. [2020] indicated that hotel managers could organize environmental training to enhance the environmental knowledge and awareness of the employees and increase their awareness of green behaviour. Okumus et al. [2019] found that environmental knowledge moderates the relationship between behavioural intention and ecological behaviour of hotel employees. Tsai, Lu, Chang [2017] found that organizational green climate dimensions (port policy, education, communication, and motivation) were positively related to the green behaviours of Taiwan port employees. They found that green motivation had the most significant impact on employees' green behaviour. All these results support the findings of the current study.

CONCLUSION

Protecting and preserving scarce resources and the natural environment is critical with the emergence of environmental problems. In this context, companies and consumers need to reflect environmental sensitivities in their behaviour. Employees are the main driving force in producing and marketing goods or services. Therefore, employee motivation is crucial for businesses to gain a competitive advantage and operate sustainably. IM, which aims to motivate and satisfy employees by addressing their needs, is an activity that business managers should consider in terms of the service-profit chain. Today, it is vital that both internal and external customers are sensitive to environmental problems. Organizations are well aware of the importance of this. Therefore, it is possible to say that today enterprises have started to adopt environmental sensitivity not only as a legal obligation but as a philosophy. However, there is a need to go a long way. For this reason, employees should include IGM activities in their strategic marketing plans. Employees motivated to be green will be easier to develop attitudes and behaviours. Within the scope of IM activities, companies will be helpful to adopt a culture that promotes environmental issues, motivates their employees, and rewards them. In this context, it is recommended that ship owners or companies develop programs that will provide an inclusive working environment for seafarers' environmental awareness.

The current study has some limitations. First, the research was conducted for ship employees. For this reason, evaluating the research results in their specific context would be helpful. Second, a quantitative method was adopted in the study. It is recommended that future studies be carried out with different samples and methods. Doing so will help conceptualize and operationalize the model. ∎

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