

MARKETING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION: The Relationship between Marketing and Human Resources¹

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ABSTRACT

On the organizational literature, there is a lack of studies on the relationships among the functional departments of organizations, in particular of the relationships between marketing and other departments. The research presented in this article has the purpose to analyze the relationship between marketing and human resources departments on the implementation of marketing mix strategies. The fieldwork has an exploratory focus and was conducted in two phases: one based on interviews and documental analysis and another on quantitative questionnaires. These questionnaires are based on the model proposed by Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005), which includes process-based dimensions, psychosocial outcomes and behavioral outcomes. Four organizations were investigated: two service and two manufacturing industries. The results showed how the relationship between these departments influenced the effectiveness of marketing strategy implementation, providing new information about its components and stages for the purposes of decision-making. There was no difference between service and manufacturing industries.

Keywords: *Marketing functions. Human Resources functions. Implementation of marketing strategies*

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the 1960s, in a climate of operational poverty and spurred on by an incessant quest for efficiency, researchers were already seeking solutions for a range of operational blind spots and one of their approaches was to investigate relationships between different functional departments (Walton, Dutton and Fitch, 1966; Walton and Mckersie, 1966). Towards the end of the twentieth century, researchers began to adopt an approach focused on cooperation among functional departments, in particular between marketing and human resources departments, and even though the number of these studies are so far limited, results indicate that this type of relationship is positive, including increased operational effectiveness and attaining organizational goals (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993; Chimhanzi and Morgan, 2005; Chimhanzi, 2004a, 2004b).

Not only the relationship between marketing and human resources is interdependent, rather the respective objectives, tasks and decision-making of all of the functional departments are interrelated and interdependent, leading to the proposal that two or more departments are more efficient if operating together (Piercy, 1997). For example, marketing department contributes to the organization while delivering results by creating value for customers (Varadarajan, 2010). At the same time, the human resource department influence the entire organization by providing advice and guidance to practitioners in all departments and by attracting and retaining marketing talents (Boudreau and Milkovich, 2000). The importance of a collaborative relationship between marketing and human resources lies specifically in the combination of the results they are able to deliver, which, in turn, are divided between the organizations' internal and external dimensions. A close relationship facilitates decision-making, information sharing, conflict resolution, integration of processes, training, (Rafiq and Ahmed,

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1993; Olson, Walker, and Ruekert; 1995; Kotler, 1999) and, in particular, the implementation of strategies (Chimhanzi and Morgan, 2005; Chimhanzi, 2004a; Chimhanzi, 2004b).

Considering the different levels of management within an organization – management (business unit), institutional and functional – this article focuses on the functional level, because it offers a practical perspective on the application of strategies (Webster, 1988) and is the most appropriate for the purpose of investigating the relationship between marketing and human resources departments on the implementation of marketing mix strategies: strategies for products/services, pricing, channels/distribution and promotion. We investigate the marketing mix strategy based on McCarthy's 4 Ps (1964), a model in which organizations are analyzed in terms of the marketing tools available to influence consumers and a unique combination of principal strategies: place, promotion, product and price (Kotler, 2012; Lamb et al., 2004).

The marketing strategy is an important element in any organization because it is responsible for planning and operationalizing the actions designed to deliver value to the market, with the objective of constructing and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Day, 1992; Varadarajan, 2010). However, most articles addressing the relationship between marketing and human resources consider marketing as tool for HR, and do not analyze marketing in a strategic perspective (Hogg et al., 1998; Ryan et al., 2000; Huang and Chiu, 2011).

This article contributes to the research on the process of marketing strategy implementation, especially in collaboration with HR - another functional area that can help to broaden the organizational performance if aligned with the marketing strategy. This is important in order to fill the theoretical and empirical gaps in the marketing strategy process studies (Varadarajan, 2010).

At the same time, this research is important to guide the development (and implementation) of HR practices that effectively add value to other functional departments in an organization, which is a recurrent research agenda at the HR Strategic Management literature.

In this article, we discuss the relationship between marketing and human resources with relation to implementation of marketing mix strategies in two service and two manufacturing industries. The relationship between these departments was assessed in three dimensions, adopted from a model proposed by Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005): processes, psychosocial outcomes and behavioral outcomes. It is important to note that this study is not only a replication of Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005) study, but an extension of the research suggested by these authors. They developed and applied a survey to organizations in the banking sector. In this research, we use Chimhanzi and Morgan's questionnaire to service and manufacturing industries in different sectors of activity.

Then, we intend to complement and deepen the knowledge about the relationship between marketing and human resource departments, identifying which elements are relevant to this relationship as well as which ones help the process of implementing the marketing mix strategies. It collaborates directly on organizational outcomes, since marketing strategy is responsible for building and delivering a value proposition to the market.

2. ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARKETING AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENTS

The model we used to assess and describe the relationship between marketing and human resources departments was developed by Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005). It is designed to evaluate indicators of best management practices for encouraging intra-corporate cooperation (see figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

The first dimension in the model is based in processes. This dimension is directly related to the variables chosen for psychosocial and behavioral outcomes, which in turn provide the assessment of relationship effectiveness, interfunctional conflict and the effectiveness of the marketing strategy implementation (Chimhanzi and Morgan, 2005). **Process-Based Dimensions** includes six items: joint reward systems, informal integration, connectivity, senior management support, written communication and interpersonal communication.

- **Joint Reward Systems:** promoting collaborative behavior using joint rewards encourages professionals to focus on cooperative goals rather than just on their individual or departmental performance (Ruekert and Walker, 1987). It is described as an option for achieving better co-participation and integration of marketing

with other organizational functions and can be defined as an additional incentive to the accomplishment of organizational goals (Wind, 1981).

- **Informal integration:** informal activities proposed to initiate or sustain relationships between people, and the many reasons for engaging in them. It has also been suggested that a controlled absence of formality within the corporate environment can encourage communication (Yan and Louis, 1999). Integration between departments can be promoted both within organizational areas, defined by roles and responsibilities, or through social and informal means (celebrations and extra-organizational events). Menon et al. (1999) also suggests that integration between departments can be promoted if teams have multiple skills and functional responsibilities.
- **Connectivity:** the degree of formal and informal contacts between employees within all related departments (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Menon et al. (1999) have pointed out that connectivity is an important instrument for implementing marketing strategies.
- **Senior management support:** interaction between functional departments is directly dependent on the way their managers interrelate and take decisions, meaning that their leadership styles have a significant impact on the relationship (Noble and Mokwa, 1999). Therefore, management support can be described as efforts made by managers to instill a co-operative culture that leads to excellent results in terms of interdepartmental proximity (Weinrauch and Anderson, 1982).
- **Written and interpersonal communication:** forms of communication can be assessed in terms of their potential for effectively transmit the desired information into written and interpersonal forms. Characteristics of interpersonal communication, such as both departments using a language understandable to each other can provide considerable advantages (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). It has also been pointed out that frequent communication using a range of different methods (face-to-face, written, and electronic) is essential to ensure joint efforts (Morgan and Piercy, 1997). Additionally, written communication is considered more effective, raising credibility and validity in departments with proprietary jargon, whereas verbal communication offers richer feedback (Moenaert and Sounder, 1990).

The second phase presented in the Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005) model is composed by two **Psychosocial Outcomes** - relationship effectiveness and inter-functional conflict:

- **Relationship effectiveness:** an organizational situation in which teams exhibit collective understanding in the form of voluntary cooperation between functional areas, which must be productive, satisfactory and equitable (Chimhanzi and Morgan, 2005) to the extent that there is both commitment to and fulfillment of the expectations that are common to both parties (Ruekert and Walker, 1987).
- **Inter-functional conflict:** this is defined as the interdepartmental tension to which two or more departments are predisposed and which arises normally from differences or incompatibilities (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Menon et al. (1999) suggest that interdepartmental conflict is evident in territorial disputes between different interests. These facts suggest that organizational misunderstanding and disagreements may therefore reduce cooperation and coordination between departments, affecting planning and the implementation of strategies (Menon et al., 1999).

The last phase is related to **Behavioral Outcomes**, measured by effectiveness of the marketing strategy implementation. This implementation refers to the stage of executing a strategy based on corporate actions that lead to its effective institutionalization, thereby avoiding damage to organizational performance (Menon et al., 1999; Piercy, 1998; Noble and Mokwa, 1999). Piercy (1989) described three items as essential, namely implementation, accomplishment of goals and acceptance by teams.

3. METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork was developed in two phases. In the first phase, we collected qualitative data. It was designed to understand the relationship between marketing and HR departments based on the analyses of documents and in-depth interviews with these department managers. In the second phase, we gathered quantitative data by applying the questionnaire proposed by Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005), with minor edition. The questionnaire contains 42 questions (see Table 1), each with a seven-point Likert scale, and was tested in advance. This questionnaire was sent to all employees working at marketing and HR departments - 30 respondents in total (Organization I – 9 employees; Organization II – 8 employees; Organization III - 6 employees; Organization IV – 7 employees).

Two organizations investigated are service providers in the hospitality sector. The other ones are manufacturing industries: a bearings production company and a candles/paraffin production industry. These organizations are

all market leaders in their respective businesses, with 50 to 150 employees each, and have a well-structured marketing and human resources departments.

Data collected from the interviews, documental analysis, and questionnaires were organized and evaluated based on content analysis, as proposed by Bardin (2004). Data from the questionnaires were also analyzed from a qualitative perspective; the numerical results of the questionnaires were calculated from simple averages to complement other subjective assessments. Thus, the results with averages 1-3 points are considered "low" for the mean in the range of 4 points obtained a weighted "average" and 5-7 points, "high". Finally, the results from this analysis were compared to descriptions of the areas during the interviews, thus identifying the similarities of document analysis, and interviews with the questionnaire results (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2004).

It is important to say that although there are differences between goods and services deeply specified in the marketing mix literature, these differences do not interfere in this research results. The questions in the questionnaire are related to the psychosocial and behavioral outcomes, which in turn provide the assessment of relationship effectiveness, interfunctional conflict and marketing strategy implementation effectiveness (Chimhanzi e Morgan, 2005). No question is affected by the kind of the product (good or service), even the questions about marketing strategy implementation (see Table 1).

4. RESULTS

The first step when analyzing the results was the description of the marketing and human resources departments' strategic processes in the organizations investigated, which is important to the triangulation of data with the observations made during the interviews, as well as the interviews themselves. Based on the results from the qualitative data collection and the answers provided for the questionnaires, we analyzed the relationship between marketing and human resources departments on the implementation of marketing mix strategies. Table 1 presents the questions related to each of the 9 variables in the model of Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005).

Insert Table 1 about here

Org. I is a multinational organization that produces bearings for the automotive, aerospace and industrial companies. It has more than 4.5 thousand employees worldwide (about 150 at the Brazilian unit). In this organization, the scores were below half (3.5) for the questionnaire as a whole and close to the mid-point for the items "senior management support" (3.89), "informal integration" (3.78) and "joint rewards system" (3.39), which are results that impact on behavioral outcome: marketing strategy implementation effectiveness (4.88). In practice, this firm demonstrated that it had good organizational and cooperative processes in place through documentation and in the interviews, but the questionnaire results suggest that there are areas still in need of improvement.

Org. II is a Brazilian organization, Latin America market leader in candles and paraffin industry. It has four units in total and the one investigated here has 130 employees. At this organization, managers have a very close relationship with employees; members of all departments are involved in all processes. Here, both the questionnaire results and the on-site visit confirmed excellent levels for all indicators, with all means greater than five out of a maximum possible score of seven points. While their respective scores still demonstrated a high degree of maturity, the indicators "informal integration" (5.75), "connectivity" (5.95) and "conflicts" (5.85) had lower scores than the other indicators (which all scored more than 6.0 points), suggesting that these aspects could be improved in line with the organization's overall level. Increasing these means would have a direct influence on the behavioral outcome, which had a mean score of 5.46 points.

Org. III is a hospitality services provider. It is part of one of the best European hotel chains, according to the HMI (Hotel Management International) ranking of 2013. In general, Org. III had good results for the indicators measured by the questionnaire, but questions such as "senior management support" (4.79), "joint rewards system" (3.20), "connectivity" (4.60) and "conflicts" (4.86) scored lower than the other variables. If these indices were improved, the score for the behavioral dimension (4.50) would increase, which is an indication that the effectiveness of strategies' implementation is high. However, despite the reasonably high scores, during the interviews and observations, it was clear that there are deficiencies in the methods and processes for its activities and strategies. Definition of such procedures would reap benefits for Org. III as a whole.

Org. IV is also a hospitality services provider of a European hotel chains classified between the ten bigger in the world (HMI – Hotel Management International, 2012). Analysis of the Org. IV revealed that it had the best results of all four companies investigated for the indicators at the questionnaire. All indices attained higher scores than for the other firms (the overall mean was greater than 5.50 points out of 7.0). Notwithstanding, it was still possible to propose that optimization efforts be exerted to improve scores for “joint rewards system” (5.00) and “interdepartmental conflicts” (5.14) both of which had scores below the firm’s overall mean. Despite these two variables, Org. IV exhibited the best result of all four firms for “marketing strategy implementation effectiveness” (5.92), which was also confirmed qualitatively in terms of efficiency of processes and availability of documentation, and also a strong management presence, all contributing to the excellent results.

Comparison between the organizations from two business sectors showed that the results for service and manufacturing industries were similar, since organizations II and IV had a high degree of compliance with the indicators, leading to better results in the dimension of behavioral outcomes at 5.46 and 5.93 respectively. This study therefore contributes to demystifying the issue of whether there are differences in terms of implementation of marketing strategies between companies doing business in different sectors, in this case service and manufacturing industries. The scores for the model’s behavioral dimension indicated that these organizations were very similar in terms of their efficiency in these processes.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research presented in this article had the purpose to analyze the relationship between marketing and human resources departments on the implementation of marketing mix strategies. The fieldwork has an exploratory focus and was conducted in two phases: one based on interviews and documental analysis and another on quantitative questionnaires. Four organizations were investigated: two service and two manufacturing industries. The results confirmed the importance of promoting the relationship among functional departments, in particular between those investigated here: marketing and human resources. At the qualitative phase of the research, we found that these organizations do not have formal processes defining the relationship between marketing and HR departments or shared goals, but the interviewees mentioned such level of cooperation between them.

The results of the questionnaires confirmed the existence and relevance of this relationship, as well as its importance to the effectiveness of implementing marketing mix strategies. The relationship between marketing and HR departments was assessed in three dimensions: processes, psychosocial outcomes and behavioral outcomes (Chimhanzi and Morgan, 2005). In general, all variables in the model was confirmed in the light of the theoretical references and the fieldwork results of this research.

By considering each dimension, it is possible to identify the contributions to the theory. The variables joint rewards, informal integration, and interdepartmental conflicts received the lowest means in the organizations, suggesting attention for improvements and development of these in order to improve the effectiveness of the marketing strategies implementation. As an illustration, we can cite Org. I which, with the lowest mean, showed less participation of managers in decision-making processes and therefore had the lowest results. At the same time, the variables senior management support, connectivity, and interpersonal communication showed the highest means, reinforcing the need to keep them at high levels, since their influence on the effectiveness of marketing strategies implementation are positive.

Regarding the psychosocial dimension, results related to the inter-functional conflict – a pre-arranged tension between two or more departments that normally arises from the differences or incompatibility (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) – confirmed that the effective conflict management influences co-participation in the teams at the four organizations investigated. The variable relationship effectiveness that demonstrates the commitment and compliance with shared goals (Ruekert and Walker, 1987), also proved its theoretical contribution in all organizations.

Besides the relationship between areas, this work contributes in the development of theoretical and empirical studies for research on marketing strategy process, specifically in the strategies implementation with regard to its collaboration with other functional area (HR). The results, based on the Chimhanzi and Morgan’s model, (2005) add to the knowledge of managers and professionals in organizations, whether in marketing, human resources or other functional areas, by analyzing the variables that influence the effectiveness of strategies implementation.

Despite the focus of this research on the relationship between marketing and human resource departments, managers know that one of the most critical problem regarding organizational structures is to set up a continuing flow of communication between functional areas (Olson, Walker and Ruckert, 1995). Also, marketing effectiveness (as the other functional departments) depends on how people are trained, selected, focused, motivated and valued (Kotler, 2012), activities developed and implemented by human resources department. In this sense, we suggest that organizations evaluate the relationship between functional areas in general, considering the importance of proximity and the impact on the results of the effectiveness in the implementation of strategies, as indicated by the indices of connectivity, senior management support and interpersonal communication in all the surveyed organizations.

The results contributes to the human resources department in the sense that they show the relevance of the relationship with marketing department, pointing out some HR practices that need to be aligned with marketing strategies implementation. Another contribution is the identification of some practices that can help HR departments to act as a strategic partner to the other functional departments, as recommended by Tanure, Evans, and Cançado (2010), Ulrich (1998), Ulrich and Beaty (2001), Ulrich and Brockbank (2005).

It is suggested as a future venue of research the replication of Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005) model in different Brazilian industries, in order to compare the results obtained in this study. In this case, we recommend the application of a ten point Likert-scale (testing the model acceptance to the new scale), since the seven points used here limited the precision of a qualitative analysis of the service and manufacturing related characteristics. Another recommendation is to enlarge the number of organizations surveyed, though keeping the sample pattern in relation to the industry (banking, automotive, education, hospitality), as well as an active market (B2B or B2C), in order to increase the reliability and validity of the research.

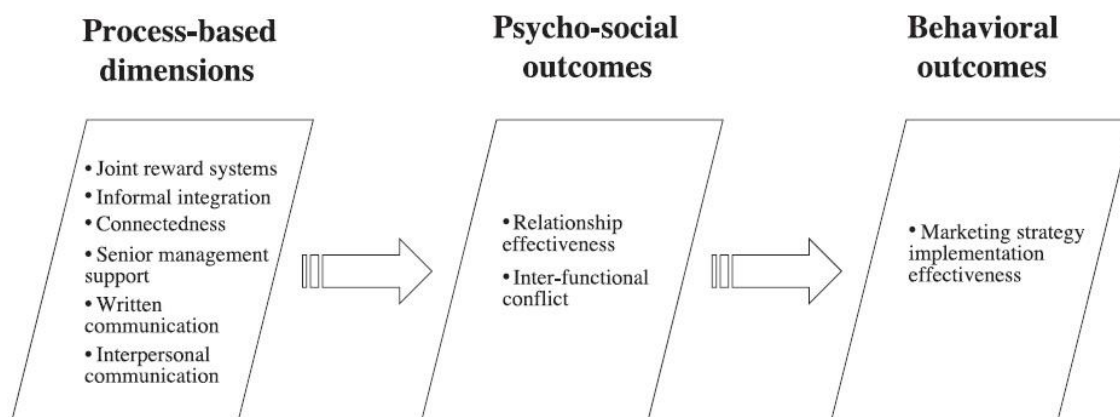
We also suggest the increase in the number of variables analyzed in the dimensions considered in the current model, due to evaluate other interfaces of the relationship between marketing and human resource departments, such as: external and internal environmental conditions, transactions between marketing and other functions, flow of communication between marketing and other functions, functional results (Ruckert and Walker, 1987), factors of the strategy, dimensions of commitment (Noble and Mokwa, 1999).

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FIGURE 1 – CHIMHANZI AND MORGAN MODEL (2005)



Font: Chimhanzi and Morgan (2005).

TABLE 1 – RESULTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS STUDIED

| VARIABLE | QUESTION | MEAN ORG. I | MEAN ORG. II | MEAN ORG. III | MEAN ORG. IV |
|-------------------------------|--|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| SENIOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORT. | 1. Senior management allocate resources to facilitate joint planning and interaction between marketing (sales) and HR | 3.89 | 6.03 | 4.79 | 6.00 |
| | 2. Departmental management strengthen links between marketing (sales) and HR | | | | |
| | 3. Management encourages better communication between the marketing (sales) and HR departments | | | | |
| | 4. The organization provides opportunities for management of marketing (sales) and HR to get to know and understand each other | | | | |
| INFORMAL INTEGRATION | 5. There is joint participation at other departments' social events | 3.79 | 5.75 | 5.00 | 5.54 |
| | 6. The marketing (sales) and HR teams meet outside of the workplace | | | | |
| | 7. The marketing (sales) and HR teams talk about shared interests beyond work | | | | |
| | 8. The marketing (sales) and HR teams meet for lunch or dinner | | | | |
| JOINT REWARDS | 9. There are formal criteria to assess joint cooperation between marketing (sales) and HR | 3.39 | 5.06 | 3.21 | 5.00 |
| | 10. The marketing (sales) and HR departments share the results of a well-implemented market strategy equally | | | | |
| | 11. The marketing (sales) manager's assessments are based on joint actions with the HR manager | | | | |
| | 12. Senior management encourage interdepartmental loyalty ahead of departmental loyalty | | | | |
| CONNECTIVITY | 13. Members of one department feel comfortable calling the other department on the telephone; | 5.23 | 5.95 | 4.60 | 6.34 |
| | 14. Member of one department are easily accessible to the other; | | | | |
| | 15(R). The marketing (sales) and HR teams speak "different languages" which makes communication difficult | | | | |
| | 16. Both departments volunteer information and ideas that could affect the other | | | | |
| | 17(R). People from one department make contact with the other department only when strictly necessary; | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| WRITTEN COMM. | 18. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Documents | 2.93 | 2.25 | 1.38 | 3.32 |
| | 19. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Memoranda | | | | |
| | 20. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Reports | | | | |
| | 21. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Faxes | | | | |
| INTERPERSONAL COMM. | 22. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: E-mails | 6.00 | 6.06 | 5.50 | 6.18 |
| | 23. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Individual contact (face to face) | | | | |
| | 24. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Meetings | | | | |
| | 25. The greater part of communication between departments is in the form of: Telephone calls | | | | |
| INTERDEPARTMENTAL CONFLICT | 26(R). <i>There is often tension if people from marketing (sales) and HR get together.</i> | 4.86 | 5.85 | 4.87 | 5.14 |
| | 27(R). <i>There is constant tension between the marketing (sales) department and HR with relation to working conditions.</i> | | | | |
| | 28(R). <i>The objectives of the marketing (sales) department are often incompatible with the HR department's goals.</i> | | | | |
| | 29. Members of the marketing (sales) and HR departments feel that their goals are in harmony with each other | | | | |
| | 30. At this business unit it is considered normal to privilege or protect a certain department | | | | |
| VARIABLE | QUESTION | MEAN ORG. I | MEAN ORG. II | MEAN ORG. III | MEAN ORG. IV |
| RELATIONSHIP EFFECTIVENESS | 31. To what extent do you have a fruitful (or disadvantageous) relationship with the HR department? | 5.57 | 6.17 | 5.17 | 6.12 |
| | 32. To what extent does the HR department fulfill (or avoid) its responsibilities and commitments in relation to you? | | | | |
| | 33. To what extent do you fulfill (or avoid) your responsibilities and commitments to the HR department? | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|------|------|------|------|
| | 34. To what extent do you consider the interrelationship between the marketing (sales) department and HR to be productive (or unproductive)? | | | | |
| | 35. To what extent do you think the time and effort invested in developing and maintaining a relationship with the HR department to be valid (or invalid)? | | | | |
| | 36. How satisfied in general have you been with the relationship between marketing (sales) and HR during the last 6 months? | | | | |
| MARKETING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS | 37. Marketing (sales) strategies are generally implemented | 4.88 | 5.46 | 4.50 | 5.93 |
| | 38. Marketing (sales) strategies are implemented within the planned timeframe | | | | |
| | 39. Marketing (sales) objectives are achieved | | | | |
| | 40. The methods used to execute marketing (sales) strategies are satisfactory for all involved | | | | |
| | 41. The results of implementation of marketing (sales) strategies are satisfactory for all involved | | | | |
| | 42. Marketing (sales) strategies are implemented as intended | | | | |

(R) Items scored on reverse scale

Font: Data collection