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How to create genuine happiness for flight attendants: Effects of internal marketing and work-family interface

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the combination of affective event theory and the job demands–resources model, this paper advances research on the link between organization-related predictors and individual-related outcomes through a psychological mechanism in the aviation industry. Specifically, this study makes a novel contribution as the first to quantitatively explore how internal marketing helps build happiness by changing flight attendants' work-family interface. Using a sample of 142 flight attendants working in airline companies based in Asian countries, our results indicate that communication, welfare systems, training, and management support are directly associated with happiness and indirectly associated with happiness via work-family facilitation. Communication, welfare systems, and management support can shape cabin crews' happiness via decreased work-family conflict. However, compensation is not found to influence flight attendants' happiness. Practical implications and potential future research avenues also are discussed.

1. Introduction

Flight attendants, as airline company representatives, are categorized as emotional laborers who “induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). They play an important role in ensuring happiness among travelers (Foxe, 2016). Consequently, enhancing the positive emotions of flight attendants is widely considered the most important issue for the airline industry. Southwest Airlines, ranked second in Business Insider's list of best U.S. airlines, emphasized that happy employees create happiness for both their customers and shareholders (O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000). However, the job obligations of customer-contact employees take precedence over their non-work activities (e.g., Byrne and Canato, 2017; Lu et al., 2016; Sonnentag and Natter, 2004). For example, flight attendants' uncertain work schedules are characterized by unplanned landings, dead-head/repositioning flights, flight delays or cancellations, replacing unexpectedly absent colleagues (Fu, 2013; Kim and Back, 2012; Sonnentag and Natter, 2004). These unexpected demands result in inability to fulfill family-related responsibilities (Hu and Ho, 2016; Sonnentag and Natter, 2004), thus negatively impacting on flight

attendants' attitudes, job performance (Gittell, 2005), and wellbeing (Lu et al., 2016).

Therefore, airlines must build a working environment that promoting bright side of work-family interface, thereby enhancing positive wellbeing for flight attendants. Indeed, a working environment that balances work and non-work aspects can enhance flight attendants' work engagement (Byrne and Canato, 2017; Xanthopoulou et al., 2008) and benefit their health and productivity (Cheng et al., 2018). For example, Southwest Airlines became one of the most successful U.S. airlines due to its highly motivated and productive workforce, resulting from work- and family-friendly practices (e.g., shift trading, negotiable work rules) that foster flexibility in flight attendants' work schedules and a working culture that fosters mutual respect and effective communication across teams (e.g., see Bansal et al., 2001; Gittell, 2005).

Internal marketing refers to a service management approach that regards all employees, especially those engaged in customer contact, as internal customers, and aims to motivate them to behave in a service-oriented manner (Fu, 2013; Kaurav et al., 2015; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). Previous studies have stated that the focus of internal marketing is to identify and satisfy employees' needs and wants (Dabholkar and Abston, 2008; Lings and Greenley, 2005), with the aim of increasing the

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service quality offered by internal customers external customers (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). Thus, a full understanding of the relationship between internal marketing and the work–family interface is critical for improving flight attendants' wellbeing. This study employs affective event theory (AET) to illustrate the relationship among internal marketing, the work–family interface, and employee happiness. AET refers to affective events, predicted by environmental features, are portrayed as the proximal causes of employees' emotions/moods (e.g., joy, depression, anger, fear, and frustration) that, in turn, determine work outcomes, such as employee attitude/behavior (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) or employee performance (Robbins and Judge, 2011). This study, therefore, postulates that internal marketing activities and the work–family interface may be potential antecedents to flight attendants' psychological state. Recent studies in the airline context, based on the AET framework, have explored the environment–emotion–behavior chain by examining environmental features/work events (e.g., perceived organizational support, family-supportive organization perception) as the cause of work outcomes (e.g., turnover intention, service quality) through affective mediation (Hu and Ho, 2016; Hur et al., 2013). However, there has been little empirical research on either the environment–emotion or the environment–event–emotion chain, especially regarding to the functions/positions in aviation industry (e.g., flight attendants, technicians) (Hu and Ho, 2016). Therefore, using a sample of flight attendants, this study attempts to enrich AET-based literature by clarifying the mediating role of the work–family interface (regular event) including work-family conflict (WFC) and work-family facilitation (WFF) in the relationship between internal marketing (environmental feature) and employee happiness (affective reaction).

This study is also underpinned by the job demands–resources (JD-R) model. According to the JD-R model, the work environment of an employee dealing with information and people is characterized by job resources and demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Job resources and demands are defined as those physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of the job (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014) that have casual and reverse-casual effects (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). In particular, job resources (e.g., feedback, social support, autonomy in scheduling work tasks) are needed to: (1) achieve work goals; (2) reduce job demands and psychological costs; and (3) stimulate personal growth and development; by contrast, job demands (e.g., interpersonal conflict, irregular working hours, work overload) are linked to psychological costs (Demerouti et al., 2001; Demerouti and Bakker, 2011; Karatepe and Eslamlou, 2017; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). The understanding of psychological mechanism explaining the relationship between job resources and job demands remains unclear (Baeriswyl et al., 2016; Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Chen et al., 2015), particularly with respect to organization-based resources (Hur et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2015). This study attempts to fill this gap by using internal marketing as an organizational job resource and explaining its positive relation to employees' happiness through the mediating effect of the work–family interface as job demands.

Internal marketing focuses on the relationship between management and frontline staff (Kaurav et al., 2015). Most empirical internal marketing studies, summarized in Table 1, have used a sample of frontline staff in service-providing organizations, such as international hotels (Huang and Rundle-Thiele, 2014; To et al., 2015), financial companies (Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2018), casino companies (Back et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2016), and restaurants (Choi and Joung, 2017; Joung et al., 2015) (see the details in Table 1). Internal marketing, as shown in Table 1, is portrayed as a useful tool for service-oriented businesses in creating positive outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work attitude/behavior) in frontline employees yet few empirical findings have uncovered whether internal marketing activities promote employees' happiness to date. Additionally, few investigations have explored the role of internal marketing using a sample of flight attendants despite the fact that flight attendants play a critical role in making travelers happy. In sum, this study attempts to explore the relationship

Table 1
Empirical IM research in the service industry for the last 10 years.

Authors	IM dimensions	Sample/Setting	Key findings
Back et al. (2010)	(1) training; (2) communication; (3) perceived benefits; (4) self-efficacy	Korean casino dealers/ South Korea	All IM dimensions positively affect job satisfaction.
Fu (2013)	(1) value of needs; (2) authorized autonomy	Flight attendants/ Taiwan	IM significantly and positively influences customer-oriented behavior.
Huang and Rundle-Thiele (2014)	(1) internal communication; (2) training; (3) internal market research	Tourism employees/ Australia	IM is positively related to employee satisfaction.
Joung et al. (2015)	(1) vision; (2) development; (3) rewards	Restaurant employees/ The USA	-All IM practices predict employee job satisfaction. -Development and rewards predict employee organizational commitment.
To et al. (2015)	(1) formal internal communication; (2) informal internal communication	Four-star and above hotels' employees/ Macao	Management commitment to IM and informal internal communication affects employees' work attitude.
Kim et al. (2016)	(1) welfare system; (2) training; (3) compensation; (4) communication; (5) management support	Casino employee/ South Korea	Corporate social responsibility and IM are positively associated with employees' organizational commitment and negatively related to their turnover intentions.
Kadic-Maglajlic et al. (2018)	(1) internal market research; (2) internal communication; (3) training	Salespeople in a financial services firm/ Europe	The influence of IM on customer satisfaction is mediated by cross-functional goal compatibility.

Note: IM: internal marketing.

between internal marketing and flight attendants' happiness, and the mediating effect of the work–family interface. Its findings should increase understanding of the effectiveness of internal marketing for enhancing flight attendants' wellbeing.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

2.1. Internal marketing and happiness

Salas-Vallina et al. (2018) argued that happiness can be described as a short-lived mood and emotion that individuals might experience at work. Söderlund and Sagfossen (2017) indicated that happiness is positively associated with customers' assessment of both service encounters and service firms. Thus, happiness among service employees should be treated as an operational business goal. However, how organizations aim to increase service employees' happiness remains an important issue for further investigation (Söderlund and Sagfossen, 2017; Yeh, 2015), especially in the aviation setting (Baeriswyl et al., 2016). Vasconcelos (2008) argued that working condition can be portrayed as a major source/channel shaping how happy or unhappy an individual feels in his/her live. As a result, Howard and Gould (2000)

suggested that organizations should design an employee based-working environment and culture, organizational structure in an effort to develop happiness among service employees. They indicated that, to increase employees' happiness, organizations must implement effective ways of understanding employees' needs by enabling two-way and open communication activities (e.g., interview, survey) between staff and the chief executive officer. Demerouti et al. (2019) also argued that individual's developmental possibilities as well as the access to supports from colleagues or organization are valuable job resources that help pilot to facilitate his/her happiness level. These literature mentioned above implied the important role of internal marketing – a construct that is composed of five dimensions including welfare systems, training, communication, compensation, and management support (Kim et al., 2016) and is designed to eliminate dissatisfaction and achieve happiness among employees (Vasconcelos, 2008). Based on a study using the sample of flight attendants in Taiwan, Cheng et al. (2018) suggested that cabin crews engaged more at work unless their organization did not formulate internal marketing's managerial implications such as rewards/recognition, on-the-job training, experience sharing platform.

The JD-R model suggests that job resources activate positive thoughts about the workplace, causing employees to experience greater work-related wellbeing (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011). Additionally, Schaufeli and Taris's (2014) revised JD-R model indicates that positive job resources result in a higher level of employee health and wellbeing at work (e.g., happiness, perceived health, life satisfaction, organizational commitment, positive work-home interference). Job resources are located at different levels: (1) organizational level (e.g., career prospects, salary, job security); (2) interpersonal level (e.g., leader and coworker support, team climate); (3) position level (e.g., role clarity, participation in decision making); and (4) task level (e.g., skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, performance feedback) (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011). All four levels are mostly contained in internal marketing practices. The JD-R model is a predominant theoretical framework for explaining the positive link between job resources and happiness (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018), particularly in the airline setting (e.g., Baeriswyl et al., 2016; Demerouti et al., 2019; Hur et al., 2016; Karatepe and Eslamlou, 2017). For example, supervisor support has been identified as an important job resource in improving job satisfaction among airport screeners (Baeriswyl et al., 2016). Job crafting, a strategy to change job resource, including an increase in structural job resource (e.g., more authority provided in response to passenger demands) and social job resource (e.g., feedback on job performance provided by pursers), has been found to boost work engagement among flight attendants (Karatepe and Eslamlou, 2017). Hur et al.'s (2016) findings indicate the importance of perceived organizational justice (a job resource) in promoting psychological capital among 263 flight attendants in South Korea.

AET proposes that different environmental factors have different influences on affective states (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). In other words, an employee's affective reactions result from their organization-level environment. Based on AET, flight attendants' affective states depend on the extent to which aspects of internal marketing practices are implemented by their employers. For example, an AET-based study of airline employees in Taiwan found that family-supportive policies, such as providing leave for family reason and paying for professional caregivers, shapes their psychological detachment (Hu and Ho, 2016). Based on the propositions of AET and the JD-R model, this paper argues that internal marketing as an environmental feature and a job resource is likely to strengthen the degree of happiness among flight attendants. Thus, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1. Internal marketing dimensions (a) communication; (b) compensation; (c) welfare system; (d) training; and (e) management support will be positively related to the happiness levels of flight attendants.

2.2. Mediating effect of the work-family interface

WFC and WFF represent the negative and positive side of the work-family interface. The former refers to a form of inter-role conflict in which workplace engagement inhibits the accomplishment of family-related responsibilities (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). By contrast, the latter is defined as the extent to which an individual's engagement in work provides gains (i.e., developmental, affective, experience) that enrich his/her contribution to fulfilling family-related responsibilities (Wayne et al., 2007). Prior studies of service employees have found that WFC causes negative outcomes (e.g., stress, negative impacts on customers' evaluation and customers' purchasing intention), whereas WFF results in positive outcomes (e.g., job performance, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, objective health indicators) (e.g., Gozu et al., 2015; Nete-meyer et al., 2005; Van Steenbergen and Ellemers, 2009). The relationship between the (in)compatibility of family and work roles and wellbeing-related factors requires particular attention in the aviation industry (Baeriswyl et al., 2016). In relation to individual wellbeing, a study using the combination of WFC and WFF should provide greater insights into the relationship among those constructs than one focusing on whether conflict or facilitation (Rantanen et al., 2011). Therefore, the important role of variables in not only improving role facilitation but also minimizing role conflict between work and family domains should be further explored (Gozu et al., 2015; Van Steenbergen and Ellemers, 2009).

Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) AET posits that an individual's emotional reaction to event and work features shapes regular work events. Accordingly, employees' emotional responses toward their job depend on positive/negative perceptions of events that are strengthened/buffered by their working environment. In support of AET, Lam and Chen (2012) found that, among hotel service employees, supervisory support (work environment) is positively related to employees' perception about supervisory interactional justice (event), which helps employees feel less negative emotions (e.g., unhappiness, tiredness, anger) in the workplace (affective reactions). Following the logic of AET, this study proposes that internal marketing practices provide flight attendants a favorable working condition; this in turn shapes their perceptions of events occurring at the work-family interface, which then influences their affective feelings (i.e., happiness).

The JD-R model is a well-tested theoretical framework for describing the relationships between work characteristics, comprising job resources and job demands, and wellbeing (e.g., Baeriswyl et al., 2016; Chiang et al., 2010; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). In particular, the JD-R model proposes that job resources may buffer the harmful effect of different job demands on job-related wellbeing (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). According to JD-R model, the work-family interface can be construed as job demands because work and family domains compete for individuals' time and efforts, whereas internal marketing practices, representing organizational support, is regarded as job resources. Thus, it is reasonable to expect flight attendants' happiness to be indirectly influenced by internal marketing (job resources) because such practices can lessen WFC (job demands). Previous literature has emphasized the essential role of organizational support (e.g., family-friendly policies aiming to improve the interaction between employees and their family, work-related resources and practices) in balancing work-life domains, so as to reduce the effects of job demands on negative wellbeing (e.g., stress, guilt) in service-related jobs (e.g., Byrne and Canato, 2017; Chiang et al., 2010). There is also evidence that organizational variables are necessary for decreasing employees' negative outcomes via the work-family interface (e.g., Dixon and Sagas, 2007; Baeriswyl et al., 2016). Organizational support should be an antecedent for increasing employees' degree of job and life satisfaction through decreasing the mediating effect of WFC (Dixon and Sagas, 2007). Based on the JD-R model, WFC has been extensively examined as an intervening variable in the negative effects of workload on job satisfaction and the role of supervisor support in preventing emotional exhaustion in the airline

industry (Baeriswyl et al., 2016). Also, based on Resource–Gain–Development perspective, Wayne et al. (2007) proposed that environmental resources are an essential enabler of increasing WFF and, thereby, developing positive emotions. Thus, this study proposes that internal marketing practices lead to happiness through decreasing WFC and increasing WFF:

H2a. WFC negatively mediates the relationship between internal marketing's five dimensions (i.e., welfare system, training, communication, compensation, and management support) and employee happiness.

H2b. WFF positively mediates the relationship between internal marketing's five dimensions (i.e., welfare system, training, communication, compensation, and management support) and employee happiness.

3. Methods

3.1. Procedure and participants

The questionnaire was available in both English and Chinese, with the Chinese version produced following the translation procedure recommended by Brislin (1980). An additional interview with three professional flight attendants, of whom two are experienced managers in the aviation industry, was undertaken, aiming to ensure appropriate items as well as to develop clear questions that are suitable to the context of the study. Using convenience and judgmental sampling techniques, we used the convenience sampling approach and contacted the cabin managers for inviting them to participate in the survey. After obtaining their approval, we asked them to deliver the survey website link to the coworkers who worked with them in the same flight during their latest shift. Following the criteria to select the eligible participants, we collected a total of 142 valid questionnaires from flight attendants who work for the current airlines located in Asia countries more than six months. All of participants were flight attendants and embedded in collectivist cultures. About 90.1% of the respondents were female, while 51.4% were single (48.6% married). The majority of respondents (60.6%) were aged above 36 years, while the second-largest age group (18.3%) was 26–30 years. Most respondents (88%) held a college degree, and 12% also held a graduate certificate. Most respondents had considerable working experience: 6 months - 1 year (10.6%); 1–5 years (18.3%); 6–10 years (12%); 11–15 years (12.7%); 16–20 years (14.1%) and above 20 years (32.4%).

3.2. Measures

Internal marketing. Internal marketing was assessed by the 16-item scale developed by Kim et al. (2016). This scale was adopted because it was examined using a sample of service employees in an Asia country. The scale comprises five dimensions: (1) Welfare Systems (4 items), e.g., “This organization offers good employee benefits”; (2) Training (3 items), e.g., “Service training is regularly provided”; (3) Compensation (3 items), e.g., “Employee performance is fairly rewarded”; (4) Communication (3 items), e.g., “The exchange of information is adequate”; and (5) Management Support (3 items), e.g., “The management encourages open communication.” Participants were asked to rate all items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 7 (“Strongly agree”). Among others, the item “This organization fairly rewards employee performance” was deleted from the analysis because its factor loading was less than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006). The Cronbach's alpha value for five dimensions were communication (0.87), compensation (0.76), welfare system (0.91), training (0.92), and management support (0.93).

Work–family interface. To measure the work–family interface, the study used the 8-item scale developed by Wayne et al. (2004). The scale included WFC (4 items), e.g., “Stress at work makes you irritable at

home”; and WFF (4 items), e.g., “The skills you use in your job are useful for things you have to do at home.” Participants were asked to rate all items on a scale ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“frequently”). The Cronbach's alpha values of WFC and WFF were 0.87 and 0.85, respectively.

Happiness. Happiness was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), which captures both the frequency and magnitude of happiness. Among others, the item “I am generally not very happy. Although I am not depressed, I never seem as happy as I might be” was deleted from the analysis because its communality was less than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006). The overall Cronbach's alpha value was 0.90.

3.3. Construct validity and common method variance

The measurement models were assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Following the procedure of comparing models (e.g., Hu and Ho, 2016), this study tested three CFA models: (1) a one-factor model (combining all items into one construct); (2) a four-factor model (combining internal marketing, WFC, WFF, and happiness); and (3) an eight-factor model (five dimensions of internal marketing as separate factors, WFC, WFF, and happiness). Through the chi-squared difference test (Model 1 vs. Model 3: $\Delta\chi^2 = 1374.78$, $\Delta df = 111$, $p < 0.0001$; Model 2 vs. Model 3: $\Delta\chi^2 = 252.2$, $\Delta df = 70$, $p < 0.0001$) and CFI (Model 3: 0.94 as compared with Model 1: 0.56 and Model 2: 0.89), the results in Table 3 show that eight-factor model is better than two alternative models.

As shown in Table 3, the fit of the eight-factor model to the data is good. Comparative fit index (CFI) value of 0.94 and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) value of 0.93, which is greater than 0.90, and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) value (0.07), which is less than 0.08, indicate a good model fit. Table 3 presents the summary statistics of means, standard deviations, and correlations among the constructs. The standardized factor loadings of all items are greater than 0.55, demonstrating statistical significance. The average variance extracted (AVE) values of all constructs, ranging from 0.60 to 0.83, are greater than the recommended threshold value of 0.50; and their construct reliability (CR) values, ranging from 0.78 to 0.94, exceed the suggested threshold of 0.70, (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2006). Accordingly, construct validity and reliability are acceptable.

Since all study measures were based on self-reports, Common method variance (CMV) is a potentially serious source of bias in behavioral research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, this study used Harman's single latent factor approach in which all scale items were loaded on a single latent factor to deal with CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As shown in Table 2, all goodness-of-fit measures indicated a poor fit for the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 1810.19$, $df = 380$; $RMSEA = 0.16$; $CFI = 0.56$; $TLI = 0.53$) but a good fit for the eight-factor model ($\chi^2 = 453.41$, $df = 269$; $RMSEA = 0.07$; $CFI = 0.94$; $TLI = 0.93$). The chi-squared difference also indicated that the eight-factor model yielded a significantly better fit than the one-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1374.79$; $\Delta df = 111$; $p < .001$), suggesting that the majority of the variance in this model was not explained by a single factor.

Additionally, this study employed marker-based technique that has been widely suggested as an effective means of identifying CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2012; Simmering et al., 2015). Aesthetic labor, measured by three items (i.e., attractive appearances, hairstyles, and uniforms), has been widely accepted by individuals who intend to work in Asian airline companies. Thus, this can be an appropriate “marker” that should be theoretically unrelated to the research variables. Following procedure recommended by Williams et al. (2010), we conducted several models (i.e., baseline model, method-C model, method-U model and method-R model) and compared their model fitness indices. Specifically, the fitness of baseline model, in which the marker did not link to the core measures, was significantly better than that of method-C model, assuming the marker had equal influence on all measures ($\Delta\chi^2 = 55.82$;

Table 2
Chi-square different test between the three models.

Model	χ^2	d.f	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δ df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1. One-factor model	1810.19	380		.56	.53	.16
2. Four-factor model (Internal marketing, WFC, WFF, and happiness as separate factors)	687.61	339		.89	.88	.09
3. Eight-factor model (Five dimensions of internal marketing, WFC, WFF, and happiness as separate factors)	435.41	269		.94	.93	.07
Chi-squared model comparison tests						
Model 1 vs. Model 3			1374.78 (111)***			
Model 2 vs. Model 3			252.2 (70)***			

Notes: CFI: Comparative fit index; TLI: Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA: root mean square error of approximation.

***p < 0.001.

Δ df = 3; $p < .001$), indicating CMV did not influence our measures. Method-U model, assuming the marker has unequal influence on all measures, was significantly better than method-C model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 36.48$; Δ df = 24; $p < .05$). Thus, the next step is to compare method-U model with method-R (assuming the correlations among variables would not be biased by CMV) in order to check whether the correlations among the substantive constructs would be biased due to the latent method factor (William et al., 2010). A comparison shows no statistically significant difference ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.23$; Δ df = 28; $p > .05$) but displays a better fit for method-R model. Overall, model comparisons showed that CMV did not alter relationships among observed variables of theoretical model.

4. Results

This study utilized Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS procedure with 5,000 bootstrap samples to assess all relationships in the proposed model. This study used Process rather than structural equation modeling (SEM) because PROCESS estimates each equation separately whereas SEM solves the entire system of equations simultaneously in a model with multiple mediators (Hayes et al., 2017). It is possible to pit theories against each other by statistically comparing indirect effects that represent different theoretical mechanism as using SEM (Hayes, 2018). Because WFC and WFF represent opposite mechanisms in the relationship between internal marketing and happiness, PROCESS is more appropriate than SEM for this study. All regression results are presented in Table 4. Regarding the effects of internal marketing on happiness, Model 1 shows that the four dimensions including communication, welfare systems, training, and management support had significant positive influences on happiness ($\beta = 0.42$, $\beta = 0.42$, $\beta = 0.29$, and $\beta = 0.39$, respectively; $p < .001$). Therefore, H1a, H1c, H1d and H1e are

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficient.

Construct	Mean	S.D	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Communication	3.95	1.53	.71	.88 ^a							
2. Compensation	3.29	1.36	.64	.32 ^b	.78						
3. Welfare Systems	3.82	1.51	.71	.78	.34	.91					
4. Training	4.44	1.46	.79	.66	.39	.66	.92				
5. Management Support	3.27	1.52	.83	.75	.26	.79	.65	.94			
6. WFC	3.12	1.02	.64	-.32	.08	-.37	-.18	-.41	.87		
7. WFF	3.11	0.88	.60	.46	.18	.57	.32	.58	-.45	.85	
8. Happiness	4.58	1.13	.76	.57	.13	.56	.37	.52	-.45	.51	.90

^a Composite Reliabilities for each scale are along the diagonal.

^b Correlations are below the diagonal.

significantly supported and H1b is significantly rejected ($\beta = 0.11$, $p > .05$).

While compensation was insignificantly related to WFC (Model 2a: $\beta = 0.06$, $p > .05$), other internal marketing practices were negatively related to WFC ($\beta = -0.13$ ~ -0.27 , $p < .05$). By contrast, internal marketing was significantly positively related to WFF ($\beta = 0.11$ ~ 0.34 , $p < .05$). The mediation effects of H2a and H2b are respectively presented in Models 3a and 3b, with unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors, and 95% confidence intervals (CI). H2a posited a mediating effect of WFC between internal marketing and happiness. As shown in Model 3a, the indirect effects of three internal marketing dimensions – communication, reward systems, and management support – on happiness through WFC were significant, as evidenced by a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI that did not include zero ($B = 0.070$, [0.02, 0.13]; $B = 0.08$, [0.02, 0.15]; $B = 0.09$, [0.02, 0.16]) (Hayes, 2013). However, WFC was not found to mediate the relationships of compensation and training with happiness since the 95% CI contained zero ($B = -0.03$, [-0.11, 0.04]; $B = 0.06$, [-0.01, 0.13]). Model 3b indicates that four internal marketing dimensions – communication, welfare systems, training, and management support – had significant indirect effects on happiness via WFF, as the 95% CI did not include zero ($B = 0.11$, [0.04, 0.17]; $B = 0.12$, [0.05, 0.20]; $B = 0.11$, [0.04, 0.19]; $B = 0.13$, [0.04, 0.22]) (Hayes, 2013). However, the mediation effect of WFF between compensation and happiness was not significant ($B = 0.07$, [-0.01, 0.16]). Therefore, both H2a and H2b are partially supported.

5. Discussion

This study examines the positive effect of internal marketing on happiness and explores the mediating effect of the work–family interface in this relationship. Only one internal marketing dimension (i.e., compensation) is not significantly related to happiness. The other dimensions of internal marketing –communication, welfare systems, training, and management support – are all found to be significant determinants of flight attendants’ happiness. These findings correspond to those of Vasconcelos’s (2008) conceptual study, which provided evidence of a positive link between internal marketing and happiness. However, Vasconcelos’s (2008) is limited by a conceptual level which did not present specific internal marketing practices/activities to improve or increase employee happiness in the workplace.

WFC mediates the relationships of communication, welfare systems, and management support with happiness, while WFF mediates the effects of communication, welfare systems, management support, and training on happiness. Compensation is not found to be an effective tool for increasing employees’ happiness and reducing their WFC. This is consistent with Yeh (2015), whose surveys in East Asian countries (Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea) revealed that job satisfaction is more influenced by the non-financial job resources (e.g., workplace relations) than earning factor. In addition, training can effectively reinforce WFF, thereby improving happiness. However, the results indicate that training does not indirectly influence happiness via WFC. Interviews with several incumbent flight attendants support this finding. The

Table 4
Results for research hypotheses^a.

Predictors	Standardized coefficients	R ²	t values	Boot LLCI ^b	Boot ULCI ^b
Model 1: Happiness					
Communication	0.42***	0.32	8.18	0.32	0.52
Compensation	0.11	0.02	1.60	-0.03	0.25
Welfare Systems	0.42***	0.31	8.02	0.32	0.52
Training	0.29***	0.14	4.76	0.17	0.41
Management Support	0.39***	0.27	7.22	0.28	0.49
Model 2a: WFC					
Communication	-0.21***	0.10	-3.95	-0.32	-0.11
Compensation	0.06	0.01	0.90	-0.07	0.18
Welfare Systems	-0.25***	0.14	-4.72	-0.35	-0.14
Training	-0.13*	0.03	-2.18	-0.24	-0.01
Management Support	-0.27***	0.17	-5.28	-0.37	-0.17
Model 2b: WFF					
Communication	0.27***	0.21	6.18	0.18	0.35
Compensation	0.11*	0.03	2.10	0.01	0.22
Welfare Systems	0.33***	0.32	8.21	0.25	0.41
Training	0.19***	0.10	4.00	0.10	0.29
Management Support	0.34***	0.34	8.46	0.26	0.41
Model 3a: Indirect effect of internal marketing on happiness via WFC					
	B	Boot SE^b			
Communication	0.07	0.03	0.02	0.13	
Compensation	-0.03	0.04	-0.11	0.05	
Welfare Systems	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.15	
Training	0.06	0.03	-0.00	0.13	
Management Support	0.09	0.04	0.02	0.16	
Model 3b: Indirect effect of internal marketing on happiness via WFF					
Communication	0.11	0.03	0.04	0.17	
Compensation	0.07	0.04	-0.01	0.16	
Welfare Systems	0.12	0.04	0.05	0.20	
Training	0.11	0.04	0.04	0.19	
Management Support	0.13	0.05	0.04	0.22	

*p < 0.05; ***p < 0.001.

^a Bootstrap sample size = 5,000.

^b LLCI = lower limit confidence intervals; ULCL = Upper limit confidence intervals; SE = standard errors.

interviewees indicated that training programs were designed to cultivate their servicing skills, which can be applied in the family domain, but not provide any knowledge regarding how to resolve role conflicts.

Since four of the five internal marketing dimensions indirectly improve employees' happiness through WFF, whereas only three dimensions work through WFC, it seems that WFF depends more on internal marketing activities in the processes of creating happiness. One possible explanation for this finding may be that all the respondents work for airline companies embedded in a collectivist culture. In a collectivist society, people perceive work as a means to fulfill their family-related tasks, rather than to reduce their family responsibilities (e.g., Chen et al., 2015). In this sense, support or practices that can facilitate individuals' roles in their family domain are regarded as more effective for increasing happiness.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study contributes to internal marketing and happiness literature in several respects. Although the influence of internal marketing on happiness has been identified in previous studies (e.g., Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000; Vasconcelos, 2008), the less straightforward issues of how and what kinds of internal marketing programs organizations use to increase employees' happiness are unclear (Vasconcelos, 2008), particularly for service employees and in the context of the airline industry (Baeriswyl et al., 2016; Fu, 2013; Söderlund and Sagfossen,

2017). Additionally, the relationship between psychological aspects (e.g., job satisfaction, happiness) and their antecedents is under-researched (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018), especially regarding the effects of organizations' policies/programs (Baeriswyl et al., 2016; Yeh, 2015) and in Asia's airline industry (Hu and Ho, 2016). Based on AET and the JD-R model, this study demonstrates the role of internal marketing as an organization-based antecedent aimed at increasing the happiness of cabin crews.

The findings of this study underline the role of both WFC and WFF as mediating mechanisms through which internal marketing activities influence flight attendants' happiness level. An investigation regarding the mediating effects of both WFC and WFF contributes to the literature on work-family interface in several aspects. Most research on work-family integration have been carried out in Western countries (Aboobaker and Edward, 2019; Chen et al., 2015; Wattoo et al., 2018), whereas studies regarding work-family practices in non-Western countries have been still lacking (Chen et al., 2015; Chiang et al., 2010). Although some studies investigated both WFC and WFF simultaneously in China and India, these studies may have overlooked the influences of other contextual factors (e.g., Aboobaker and Edward, 2019; Wattoo et al., 2018). This study responds to calls in prior research (e.g., Baeriswyl et al., 2016; Kinnunen et al., 2003) by using a sample of flight attendants in Asian countries and highlighting internal marketing activities for minimizing the adverse consequences of WFC and strengthening the beneficial effects of WFF on wellbeing-related outcomes.

5.2. Practical implications

Since today's economy is characterized by uncertainty and rapid change, the issue of how to keep customer-facing employees happy is one of the biggest challenges for service firms (Söderlund and Sagfossen, 2017). This study provides important guidelines and practical recommendations for airline companies seeking ways to keep flight attendants happy. The findings clarify that, to improve flight attendants' happiness, airline companies should evaluate and implement more non-financial internal marketing activities (e.g., welfare facilities, mental/physical support from manager/executives, downward/upward communication within the company), rather than focusing on financial aspects (e.g., reward, performance-related pay).

This study demonstrates two different ways through which internal marketing might enhance happiness among flight attendants: reducing levels of WFC or enhancing levels of WFF. Consequently, it is necessary for airline companies to address the work-family matters of cabin crews through meaningful internal marketing practices. Three types of internal marketing (i.e., communication, reward systems, and management support) should receive particular attention due to their significant roles in both aspects of the work-family interface. Airline companies should establish various forms of communication (e.g., online channels, printed publications, extra-curricular activities, monthly meetings, annual surveys) in an attempt to promote the bilateral process of information/knowledge exchange between management and flight attendants. On the one hand, management can bring information regarding organizational objectives/goals, core values, development directions, and passenger feedback to frontline staff. On the other hand, these communication networks allow staff to share their relevant ideas, opinions, and experience. Interpersonal interaction should be the preferred channel, since face-to-face communication (e.g., meetings, dialogue, on-the-job counseling service for family-related matters, psychological services) enables management to reach out to and engage with cabin crews directly, in an effort to understand their needs and efficiently address their specific issues (e.g., Tang et al., 2017). In addition, airline companies should provide flight attendants with different benefits or privileges, such as travel perks, accommodation, health insurance coverage, and an advanced system for family/medical leave. Close family members of frontline staff, such as parents, spouses, and minor-dependent children, should also be allowed to accompany

them as “non-revenue guests” who receive free/discounted travel.

Given the important role of the work–family interface as a mediating mechanism through which internal marketing enhances happiness level, work and family-related issues could be listed as criteria in the process of recruiting new cabin crews. For example, candidates may be asked to present their own experience of achieving full and well-balanced lives to deal with different scenarios given by recruiting team in the recruitment interview – these scenarios are also instrumental in training new hires as well. Since training is not found to indirectly influence happiness via WFC, on-site training programs should be altered to address strategies for resolving role conflicts between work and family domains. Specifically, the scope of training programs should cover family-related issues, such as child-care, education, and balancing work and family domains. Staff should also be encouraged to participate in mindfulness-based training (e.g., meditation, yoga, tai chi, and the related qigong), with the aim of improving the quality of communication, reducing conflict, and relieving negative emotions (Lyddy et al., 2016).

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

In acknowledging this study’s limitations, insights for future research can be identified. First, this study investigated flight attendants working in airlines based in Asian countries, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. To clarify how well different internal marketing activities influence different types of customer-contact employees, future investigations should replicate this study using other samples, such as ticket kiosk workers, gate agents, and customer-contact specialists, in other countries.

Second, the evaluation of happiness level of service employee was collected at a particular point of time. Frijda (1993) pointed out that a single emotion is not brought about by a single environmental feature/event; rather, it is generated through a series of emotional transactions in response to different relevant features/events. However, flight attendants are required/forced to control their private/real emotions and display organizationally desired emotions (e.g., Hur et al., 2013; Kim and Back, 2012; Söderlund and Sagfossen, 2017). Additionally, studies exploring the influence of job resources/demands on the work–family interface through the emotional mechanism have found opposite results. Using a sample of service employees working in Taiwan, Lu

et al. (2016) argued that work characteristics lead to an increase in WFC, in turn reducing employees’ wellbeing (Lu et al., 2016); by contrast, Chen et al. (2015) argued that job demands cause the imbalance between work and family via emotional exhaustion. Given the importance of clearly understanding the influences of organization-based resources on the work–family interface and individual-level emotion, future studies should use longitudinal data with the aim of validating the cause-effect relationship among the variables.

Finally, this study focuses only on individual perceptions of organizational variables and wellbeing, without considering other influential variables. Given the distinctive characteristics of the aviation industry, in which cabin crews have to work with different chief pursers, the formal leader on each flight (Grote, 2016), it would be interesting to explore whether temporary leadership impacts on employees’ emotional states. Leaders/supervisors are regarded as an important determinant of the success of internal marketing (e.g., To et al., 2015), employees’ work–family interface (e.g., Braun and Nieberle, 2017), and employee happiness (Howard and Gould, 2000; Sallas-Vallina et al., 2018). Future research could explore the role played by the chief purser (e.g., leadership style, communication style), which is another organizational resource in the JD-R model. Previous studies have argued that leaders/supervisors’ life-stories, such as experience in mindfulness practices or in work–life balance, are valuable sources available to followers/subordinates who experience losses and gains relevant to WFC and WFF (e.g., Brau and Nieberle, 2017; Lyddy et al., 2016). Therefore, hierarchical linear modeling using multisample data (e.g., senior management, chief purser, flight staff) would be an appropriate design for future research to explore leaders’ role in the relation between employees’ work–family interface and wellbeing.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Au Due Tang: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Man-Ling Chang:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Tsu-Hui Wang:** Conceptualization, Investigation. **Cheng-Hao Lai:** Conceptualization, Investigation.

Appendix. CFA results for eight-factor model

Factor/Item		Standardized factor loadings	t values	AVE	CR
Communication	The exchange of information is adequate.	.88***		.71	.88
	I can express my opinions freely in a liberal atmosphere.	.78***	11.55		
	Adequate information on the requirements of my job.	.86***	13.65		
Compensation	Employees who developed a close relationship with customers are rewarded.	.90***		.64	.78
	Employees’ pay linked to their performance.	.69***	5.51		
Welfare systems	Good benefits for flight attendants.	.90***		.71	.91
	A good vacation system.	.88***	14.72		
	A good welfare facility.	.82***	16.40		
	A good system to take a leave of absence	.75***	11.01		
Training	Enough training programmes.	.94***		.79	.92
	Regular service training.	.91***	18.03		
	Training session is linked to customers’ needs.	.81***	13.78		
Management support	The management encourages open communication.	.97***		.83	.94
	Two-way information flow across management levels.	.91***	21.51		
	The management offers guidance in solving problems.	.85***	16.67		
Work-family facilitation	The skills you use on your job are useful at home.	.86***		.60	.85
	Having a good working day makes you better at home.	.78***	10.53		
	Work makes you a more interesting person at home.	.79***	10.74		
	Work helps you deal with personal issues at home.	.64***	8.12		
Work-family conflict	Stress at work makes you irritable at home.	.88***		.64	.87
	Job worries distract you when you are at home.	.89***	13.90		
	Work makes you feel too tired to do things at home.	.82***	12.31		
	Job reduces your efforts to home activities home.	.55***	6.92		
Happiness		.87***		.76	.90

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Factor/Item		Standardized factor loadings	t values	AVE	CR
	I am generally very happy and enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything.				
	Compared with my peers, I consider myself happier.	.86***	13.13		
	In general, I consider myself a very happy person.	.88***	13.53		
Fit index					
Chi-Square (p-value)	435.41 (.000)				
Degree of freedom (d. f.)	269				
Chi-Square/d. f.	1.62				
CFI	.94				
TLI	.93				
RMSEA	.07				

* p-value<.05, ** p-value<.01, *** p-value<.001.

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