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Exploring the Motivators Stimulating Hotel Employees' Innovation

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Abstract

Previous research has examined the influence of organizational factors on individual innovation, environmental stimulants and obstacles to innovation. However, environmental qualities are not sufficient; the abilities and wishes of employees to perform is also a factor. Thus, the link between motivation and individual innovation is seemingly important. This study explores what the job-related motivators are stimulating employees' innovation and how they can be enhanced to help the hoteliers. A questionnaire was developed to conduct this study. The results indicated that "Training and Development" was the most important factor that could most motivate staff to be innovative, followed by "Support and Motivation from the Top", "Open Policy", "Recognition" and "Autonomy and Flexibility".

Keywords

Innovation, Motivators, Hotel

1. Introduction

In today's business environment, an essential element to an organization's success is adaptability and the ability to manage the speed of change which in turn requires innovation. Innovation and its support of innovation are vital for long-term corporate success. Firms that deliver the same products and services in the same way will not long survive, especially in the growing global economy, which continually emphasizes innovation [1]. Therefore, executives responsible for hotel planning, operations and management must be more innovative than ever before. Previous research has examined the influence of organizational factors on individual innovation [2], environmental stimulants and obstacles to innovation [3] and work environment for innovation [4]. These studies have emphasized those environmental qualities that promote or inhibit innovation. However, environmental qualities are not sufficient; the abilities and wishes of employees to perform is also a factor. Thus, the link between moti-

vation and individual innovation, though often neglected in research and in practice, is seemingly important. Relatively subtle changes in the work environment can make possible substantial increases in individual innovation [1]. Identifying those motivators that enhance innovation may be a prerequisite to improving the existing situation in the hotel industry.

Motivation is the component of individual innovative performance that has been mostly neglected by innovation researchers, theorists and practitioners. Yet, in some ways, this may be the most important component. When hiring personnel and assigning personnel to tasks, it is important to look for not only skills, but also intrinsic motivation [3]. Therefore, it is valuable to know the motivators for innovation in a work environment and how hospitality organizations can enhance and make use of employees' innovation to sustain business survival in the current competitive environment. Research on innovation is a natural extension of earlier research on employee motivation. The same contextual variables that foster intrinsic motivation are also associated with innovative performance, so organizations can simultaneously influence motivation and innovative performance in an effective way [5]. Nevertheless, in spite of growing concern about innovation, no previous research has been done, and no journal publications are available that discuss the dimensions of motivators towards innovation in the hotel industry. This research will investigate the perception of managers and supervisors working in the hotel industry. In other words, the problem statement is "What are the job-related motivators stimulating employees' innovation and how they can be enhanced to help the hoteliers".

2. Literature Review

According to previous research, intrinsic motivation is important, beneficial and crucial for innovation [6]. The power of intrinsic motivation is so strong that simply thinking about intrinsic reasons for doing a task may be sufficient to boost innovation for that activity [7]. Highly innovative people have been described as being totally absorbed in and devoted are identified as more intrinsically motivated toward their work have consistently been found to produce work rated as highly innovative [3]. In reviewing the literature, the Work Environment Inventory (WEI) developed by Amabile and Gryskiewicz [2] is a classic that sets a yardstick. They identified eight scales describing environmental stimulants to innovation. They are: 1) freedom; 2) challenge; 3) resources; 4) supervisor; 5) co-workers; 6) recognition; 7) unity and cooperation; and 8) innovation supports. The Amabile and Gryskiewicz [2] research study on content analysis reviewed nine qualities of environments that served to promote innovation including: 1) freedom; 2) good project management; 3) sufficient resources; 4) encouragement; 5) various organizational characteristics; 6) recognition; 7) sufficient time; 8) challenge and 9) pressure.

Most probably, people with different backgrounds or cultures will show differences about the need for and expression of innovation and may be motivated to be innovative by different environmental stimulants. Since no previous research has been undertaken in the hotel industry in Taiwan, this study sought to examine whether the same stimulants are found in the Taiwanese population and what are the main motivators hotel management need to consider.

3. Methodology

The research commenced by having individual in-depth interviews with 20 hotel professionals by convenience sampling. Open-ended questions were used to identify possible determinants of motivation and innovation. After the interviews, 27 areas were identified as motivators. In order to eliminate and validate reliability, a dichotomous selection test was used to ask another pilot test group comprising 20 hotel professionals to choose either "yes" or "no" to the named items according to whether they thought those areas were motivators. Eighteen statements were accepted by over 50 percent of the respondents, and these formed the basis of research instrument in the next stages of the research.

In order to check the appropriateness of the instrument developed, ten hotel supervisors were asked to comment on the 18 statements in order to check whether any misunderstanding of the original meanings had occurred. To further ensure the validity of the instrument, another group of ten hotel supervisors was asked to comment on the whole questionnaire. Comments were received on improving the presentation of the statements. A final instrument was developed with 18 statements measuring motivators and seven statements asking demographic data. A Likert scale ranging from "1" as "Strongly Disagree" and "5" as "Strongly Agree" was used to measure the respondents' level of agreement to the named motivators. A total of 288 valid responses were re-

ceived in 2015. Factor analysis was conducted in order to discover the underlying dimensions that existed in the Taiwanese culture about motivators to innovation. Mean distribution and factor analysis were used in this research.

4. Findings

The overall mean value of all 18 job-related motivators to innovation was 3.91 and the standard deviation was 0.47. This implied that most of the respondents agreed on these statements. Then, the 18 statements were factor analyzed by using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax Rotation to determine the underlying dimensions. Prior to factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were pursued to test the fitness of the data. The KMO was 0.865. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be 1843.777, with significance lower than 0.000. Both statistical data supported the use of factor analysis for these items.

Initially, all 18 statements were loaded to form five dimensions on motivators. In order to validate the internal reliability of the statements in the factors identified, an internal reliability test was conducted. Statement 17 "Interesting Work" was originally loaded into Factor 1 with a marginal factor loading of 0.50. However, the reliability alpha was found to be greater from 0.75 to 0.76 if statement 17 was deleted. Therefore, statement 17 of "Interesting Work" was deleted from Factor 1. By the same token, statement 18 "Freedom" with a factor loading of 0.52 was deleted from Factor 3 since the alpha rose from 0.72 to 0.77 if the item was deleted. Statement 8 "Challenging Work" with a factor loading of 0.64 was also deleted from Factor 4 because the alpha rose from 0.70 to 0.73 following the deletion of the item.

Therefore, after deleting three statements including 1) Statement 8—challenging work (factor loading = 0.64); 2) statement 17—interesting work (factor loading = 0.50); and 3) statement 18—freedom (factor loading = 0.52), 15 statements were left. The five identified factors (See **Table 1**) were:

Factor 1 Open Policy (alpha = 0.76),
Factor 2 Support and Motivation from the Top (alpha = 0.78),
Factor 3 Recognition (alpha = 0.77),
Factor 4 Training and Development (alpha = 0.73),
Factor 5 Autonomy and Flexibility (alpha = 0.54).

4.1. Factor 1: Open Policy

Three statements were loaded into this factor with alpha at 0.76, with an overall mean value of 3.97. "Open culture in the organization" meant the management would adopt processes transparent to all, which naturally brought about interaction and communication among management and employees. Interaction and communication would be top-down, bottom-up and across various departments. Employees were encouraged to acquire new knowledge in order to maintain survival in a turbulent situation. They would be motivated to be more innovative if the organization encouraged interaction and communication and allowed them to acquire new or novel ideas [3]. This factor was labeled as "Open Policy".

4.2. Factor 2: Support and Motivation from the Top

Four statements were loaded into this factor with a reliability alpha of 0.78 and a mean value of 4.12. All these four statements clearly showed the main frame work of this dimension. Two statements of management support and support by an immediate supervisor state that simply the support from the top was important and served as one of the more important job-related motivators. This reflected a view that when support was received from the management, risks associated with innovative action were acceptable. Employees were then motivated to think of innovative ideas or solutions in order to solve problems. Additionally, two statements about management welcoming opinions and the importance of intrinsic motivation fulfilled the second part of this factor labeled as "motivation from the top". Employees wish to fulfill esteem needs and severe a state of self-actualization during the routine duties [2]. Therefore, this factor was labeled as "Support and Motivation from the Top".

4.3. Factor 3: Recognition

In Factor 3, there were three statements loaded together with a reliability alpha of 0.77. The overall mean value

Table 1. Factor analysis with varimax rotation and reliability analysis of the job-related motivators to innovation from the perception of the supervisory employees in Taiwan hotel industry.

Attributes	Mean	Factor loading	Community	Factor & overall mean	Eigen Value	% of variance	Cummulative variance	Cronbach Alpha
Interaction and communication	3.99	0.77	0.68	Factor 1 Open Policy 3.97	5.88	32.64	32.64	0.76
New knowledge acquisition	4.02	0,73	0.65					
Open culture in organization	3.89	0.65	0.59					
Management welcome to accept opinions	4.00	0.78	0.77	Factor 2 Support and Motivation From the Top 4.12	1.99	11.07	43.71	0.78
Management support	4.21	0.70	0.67					
Supported by immediate supervisor	4.14	0.64	0.62					
Intrinsic motivation	4.17	0.52	0.56					
Tangible incentives	3.83	0.87	0.78	Factor 3 Recognition 3.88	1.34	7.42	51.13	0.77
Tangible rewards	3.63	0.86	0.76					
Opportunities for promotion	4.17	0.53	0.58					
Opportunities for development	4.16	0.73	0.69	Factor 4 Training and development 4.14	1.06	5.88	57.01	0.73
Training provided	4.14	0.70	0.64					
Tolerance of mistakes	3.49	0.67	0.61	Factor 5 Autonomy And Flexibility 3.65	1.00	5.58	62.59	0.54
Empowerment	3.80	0.65	0.54					
Self involvement	3.66	0.53	0.46					

Remarks: 1) The overall mean value of the 15 statements, after deleting from internal reliability test, was 3.95, with standard deviation 0.48. 2) Statement "Interesting Work" was originally loaded into Factor 1 with factor loading 0.50. However, this statement was not selected because the internal alpha was rose up from 0.75 to 0.76 if the item was deleted. 3) Statement "Freedom" was originally loaded into Factor 3 with factor loading 0.52. However, this statement was not selected since the internal alpha was rose up from 0.72 to 0.77 if the item was deleted. 4) Statement "Challenging Work" was originally loaded into Factor 4 with factor loading 0.64. However, this statement was not selected because the internal alpha was rose up from 0.70 to 0.73 if the item was deleted.

was 3.88. All three items represent recognition of the efforts and achievements of employees. Tangible incentives, tangible rewards and opportunities for promotion all acted as means to recognize employee efforts in tangible ways. The employees could easily obtain a signal that management was satisfied with their performance. "Fair, constructive feedback on work, leading to appropriate recognition and reward of good efforts; an atmosphere where employees' interests as well as their skills are recognized" [1]. As there were three positively loaded values in this grouping, and all reflected various ways to praise and recognize the performance of the employees, this factor was labeled as "Recognition".

4.4. Factor 4: Training and Development

Only two statements were loaded into this factor with a reliability alpha of 0.73. Factor 4 attained the highest mean value of 4.14 amongst all the five identified factors. These two statements had a common characteristic that opportunities for training and development were used to better equip hotel employees and their chances for future success. The process of stimulating innovation and innovation was fundamentally based on building the intellectual capital within the organization that would yield the competencies and capabilities for improved performance. In this respect, the notion of a learning organization and the core activities of training: needs identification, setting objectives, designing and delivering content, getting feedback and evaluating, when taken together meant that training itself has a crucial role.

4.5. Factor 5: Autonomy and Flexibility

Three statements were loaded into this factor with alpha reliability at 0.54. This factor had the lowest mean value of 3.65. That employees were empowered to make decision and took initiative to participate in the job task of the organization meant they had a certain degree of autonomy to perform the duties. Innovation are nurtured by cultures that are driven by strong, shared values. Employees need to feel empowered to offer innovative thinking. They need to know that all ideas would be heard and respected with prompt action. This increased self-confidence and nurtured one's ability to think innovatively and openly. In addition, management acceptance and tolerance of mistakes happening on tasks done allow employees to have flexibility to complete the task required, and to try various new methods to fulfill the goals. Therefore, this factor was named as "Autonomy and Flexibility".

4.6. Ranking of Factors

Table 2 indicated that amongst all these five factors, the hotel managers and supervisors agreed Factor 4 "Training and Development" was the most important factor that could most motivate staff to be innovative, having a mean value of 4.14, representing a strong inclination that they required the company to provide relevant training for staff and management and they would be motivated to be more innovative when opportunities for further advancement and development were made.

In second place was Factor 2 "Support and Motivation from the Top" with a mean value of 4.12, which implied employees really agreed that support and motivation from the top management and immediate supervisor were very important. If they received support and encouragement, they would be more willing to engage in innovative thinking to fulfill the job tasks.

Thirdly, Factor 1 "Open Policy" was placed in the middle position among the five factors with a mean value of 3.97. Employees were motivated to be more innovative if the organization had an open culture [8]. They would be more willing to communicate with each other, keen on solving problems with innovative ideas and acquire new knowledge habitually. Nowadays, leaders in business and government worldwide know that solutions to pressing economic, social and political problems lie not in yesterday's thinking and behavior, but in entirely new ways of seeing, perceiving and behaving. Learning and innovation always had to do with something new and were inseparable components of any successful enterprise. By the same token, learning was also defined as the act or process of acquiring knowledge or skill [9]. Therefore, it was shown that a company open policy allowed employees to acquire new knowledge and interact with each other in order to enhance their innovation.

The fourth factor was Factor 3, "Recognition", with a mean value of 3.88, which meant that employees agreed that they were motivated to be more innovative if recognition on work done was given. As stated by Lloyd [10], respect and dignity that should be afforded to everyone within the organization, and an appropriate reward or recognition structure could overcome fears and prejudices that abound within the organization.

Lastly, Factor 5, "Autonomy and Flexibility", was loaded as the least important factor among the five with a mean of 3.65 and standard deviation of 0.63. Although this factor was listed as the last, the mean value lay between neutral to agree, but with an inclination "to agree". Within the "empowered approach" now being adopted in organizations, more authority is being devolved to line managers [10]. Besides, as Nabi [11] also concluded, the innovative person demonstrated and required autonomy and independence. Notwithstanding, this result clearly reflected a truth that current Taiwanese culture was not concerned over much with autonomy. Traditionally, Taiwanese people would like to have guidelines on task fulfillment and even confess to being wrong rather than asking management to tolerate mistakes.

Table 2. Ranking of the factors of job-related motivators to innovation from the perception of the supervisory employees in Taiwan hotel industry.

Factors	Mean	Standard deviation	Ranking
Training and development	4.14	0.70	1
Support and motivation from the top	4.12	0.62	2
Open policy	3.97	0.65	3
Recognition	3.88	0.77	4
Autonomy and flexibility	3.65	0.63	5

Mean value on a five-point Likert scale was used, where "1" indicated "Strongly Disagree" and "5" indicated "Strongly Agree".

5. Conclusions

Pursuant to the results of this research, several notable recommendations might be worthy for contemplation by the hotel management. They include the following:

1) Budget allocation for employees' training and development program in order to enhance their innovation and develop them into the valuable assets of the company.

2) Management initiation to give support and provide motivation for employees.

3) Open communication and interaction between management and the employees in order to have a clear and well-defined concept of the company vision and mission.

4) Recognize and praise employees when innovative ideas are given regardless of success or not.

5) Involve employees' participation in planning and decision-making in order to have their commitment to the organization.

However, hotel employees under the influence of the Taiwanese culture did not perceive motivators such as freedom and challenge, as being important. According to the analysis, both statements of "Freedom" and "Challenging Work" were deleted because they did not load together with other statements. Moreover, the mean value of the statement "Freedom" was 3.35, which was the lowest score among all motivators. Employees working in a Taiwanese culture context may not perceive the importance of freedom, as tradition is to provide instructions and guidelines on assigned tasks. Challenge may be good for some employees, but it may also have negative influences on those employees who want to have a stable working environment.

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