

Determinant of Employees' Motivation in the Hotel Industry

Haftamu Kahsay (MA)

Department of Marketing Management, College of Business and Economics, Mekelle University, Mekelle,
Ethiopia

Yibeltal Nigussie (Assistant Professor)

Department of Marketing Management, College of Business and Economics, Mekelle University, Mekelle,
Ethiopia

Abstract

The main objective of this research was to identify the significant motivational factors affecting frontline employees who are currently working in the three and above star hotels in Mekelle city, Mekelle, Ethiopia. Descriptive study design was used to analyze the data collected through questionnaire from a sample of 157 front-line employees. The survey questionnaires was distributed to the randomly selected frontline employees to evaluate the priority predetermined motivational factors from different theories on a 5-point scale indicating the level of importance associated with each factor. The obtained data was processed through STATA version 11.0 software applications and was analyzed via weighted mean score, frequency, standard deviation, percentage, histogram and charts. The research findings indicate that (1) service (2) autonomy (3) organizational policy (4) supervision and (5) growth are the top five motivational factors among frontline employees in the hotel industry. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that hoteliers need focus on the identified significant motivational factors so as to satisfy customer's needs and should also consider the differences on demographic factors to deliver tailored motivational factors to their frontline employees accordingly.

Introduction and statement of the problem

The importance of hotel industry is drastically growing from time to time worldwide. The number of hotels in Ethiopia's big cities including Mekelle city have been sharply increasing better than ever before (*Ministry of culture and tourism, 2009*). Hotel industry demands highly motivated employees especially to those employees who have high contact with customers. According to Çetin (2013) for an organization, motivation is a process of triggering individuals by creating an environment to meet their needs, influencing and encouraging them. Everyone has certain needs which are neglected. Stimulating these needs results in motivation. Motivation is a driving force for action. After being motivated, the individual takes action. As a result of this action the need is met. Motivation process starts after defining the needs of an individual. These needs can be psychological or social needs which are neglected at any one time. However, the management of employees' remains challenging in the service sector including in the hotel industry. As a result, high staff turnover, negative morale, bored, absenteeism form workplace and the like have been observed in the front-line employees who will ultimately harm the competitiveness of one's organization. The reason that makes the topic work motivation especially important and relevant in today's business environment is the development and current position of the service sector. Since the drastic movement from a traditional manufacturing economy towards a service economy, the service sector has been constantly growing and today it is the dominating sector in the world's economy.

The high level of interaction between customer and service provider also marks the service sector as being human resource intensive, as well as it indicates the significance of the employees' role in the sector. According to Reynold-De (2013), employees are the backbone of any business success, specifically in the service sector, and therefore they need to be developed, motivated, and retained in the organization at all costs to support the organization to be globally competitive.

The significance of human resources and the scope of the employment in service sector, calls for a revised attention to the topic of work motivation in an organizational settings for the frontline employees who have direct contact with customers. The frontline employees are a distinctive group of employees who are different from backstage employees who have no or less contact with customers. According to Shahriar and Polonsky (2013), front-line employees are the face of a service organization, dealing directly with the firms' customers, who, if effectively managed through internal marketing, deliver improved customer experiences. High daily contact with customers can influence the behavior of the frontline employees comparing to their backstage employees counterparts. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that work behaviors and attitudes as well as preferences in motivational factors are distinctive in comparison to the backstage employees. The negligence of frontline employees as a distinctive group could lead to an assumption that frontline employees are not motivated correctly or at least not optimally at their workplace. However, attention to this specific group of employees in the service sector and their motivation is limited in academic research, which calls for a revisited attention towards the topic of work motivation. Therefore, this study will identify the significant motivational

factors that affect motivation of front-line employees in the three star hotels and above.

Research Questions

- ✓ What are the significant motivational factors that affect employee’s motivation in hotel industry in the study area?
- ✓ Are these the significant motivational factors differ or converge among the frontline employees in the hotel industry in the study area as differentiated by gender?
- ✓ Are these the significant motivational factors differ or converge among the frontline employees in the hotel industry by marital status?

Research methodology

In this research, the researcher was being using two types of the data which are primary data and secondary data in order to come up with comprehensive and consistent information. Indeed, both of the data did a great job of assisting the research to find out relevant information. The study used self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaires were completed by frontline employees of the selected hotels and were collected in the time duration from May 20, 2016- May 25, 2016. Such questionnaire was favorable as it was more economically and at the same time it was much easier to collect the detail information from a large number of respondents.

The target population of this research referred to front-line employees who are currently working in Axum hotel, Desta hotel and Planet hotel which are three stars and above. The respondents included front-line employees who are currently working in various departments including the security, housekeeping, food and beverage and frontline office in the selected hotels. The respondents for the research study were drawn randomly from the target population from the updated and accurate payroll found in the hotels proportionally from the targeted hotels.

Analysis and discussion of the result

In trying to answer the first research question with regard to uncovering the significant motivational factors that affect employee’s motivation in hotel industry, the result generated from the STATA shows the summary of mean, standard deviation of various motivational elements and its role in influencing the performance of employees.

Table 1: Summary of mean, standard deviation of motivational elements

Motivational Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Service	157	4.694268	.7130866	1	5
Autonomy	157	4.66242	.7642169	1	5
Organizational policy	157	4.636943	.7692226	1	5
Supervision	157	4.630573	.7275409	1	5
Growth	157	4.624204	.7545929	1	5
Work conditions	157	4.605096	.7742487	1	5
Relationship with boss	157	4.585987	.7766181	1	5
Salary and fringe benefits	157	4.585987	.7848288	1	5
Relationship with coworkers	157	4.579618	.7773013	1	5
Work flow	157	4.566879	.8264373	1	5
Advancement	157	4.547771	.7961917	1	5
Achievement	157	4.522293	.8517402	1	5
Personal life	157	4.515924	.8593759	1	5
Responsibility	157	4.43949	.9152384	1	5
Equity	157	4.426752	.9143011	1	5
Job variety	157	4.414013	.9408438	1	5
Job security	157	4.375796	.9227468	1	5
Work itself	157	4.369427	.9693153	1	5
Recognition	157	4.312102	.9257949	1	5
Significance	157	4.197452	1.200638	1	5

The mean scores and standard deviations of the 20 motivational factors assed in the survey, one can conclude that the significant motivational factors among frontline employees in the hotel industry are indicated that motivation factor such as service (4.69), autonomy (4.66), organizational policy (4.64), supervision (4.63

and growth (4.62) respectively are found to have significant impact on employees motivation.

The relationship between sex and motivational factors

Table 2: Summary of the 20 motivational factors in relation to sex

Motivational factor	Sex					
	Male			Female		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Achievement	4.3943662	.99252741	71	4.627907	.70371304	86
Recognition	4.2112676	1.054453	71	4.3953488	.80116195	86
Work itself	4.1971831	.99455257	71	4.5116279	.92982207	86
Responsibility	4.3521127	1.0569308	71	4.5116279	.77829657	86
Advancement	4.3943662	.97802824	71	4.6744186	.58293094	86
Growth	4.5211268	.93898357	71	4.7093023	.55021448	86
Company policy	4.4788732	.90804586	71	4.7674419	.60729717	86
Supervision	4.4366197	.95217637	71	4.7906977	.4091966	86
Relationship with boss	4.4084507	.97946727	71	4.7325581	.51846875	86
Work conditions	4.5070423	.90826742	71	4.6860465	.63730366	86
Salary and fringe benefits	4.4366197	.98172435	71	4.7093023	.55021448	86
Relationship with peers	4.4225352	.96602236	71	4.7093023	.55021448	86
Job security	4.2816901	1.0307154	71	4.4534884	.82114664	86
Autonomy	4.5352113	.93855491	71	4.7674419	.56723102	86
Job variety	4.3802817	.93145351	71	4.4418605	.95307121	86
Equity	4.3239437	1.0388819	71	4.5116279	.79326853	86
Work flow	4.4929577	.93919783	71	4.627907	.72023708	86
Personal life	4.3802817	.97638103	71	4.627907	.73639043	86
Service	4.6197183	.90025706	71	4.755814	.50726595	86
Significance	3.9295775	1.4174821	71	4.4186047	.93889943	86

Taking the computed mean scores and standard deviations of the 20 motivational factors assed in the survey, the significant motivational factors among male respondents in the hotel industry are presented in the following:

Table 3: The significant motivational factors among male respondents are:

S/N	Motivational factor/s	Mean value
1	Service	4.62
2	Autonomy	4.54
3	Growth	4.52
4	Work conditions	4.51
5	Work flow	4.49

The mean scores and standard deviations of the 20 motivational factors assed in the survey, the significant motivational factors among female respondents in the hotel industry are depicted in the following table:

Table 4: The significant motivational factors among female respondents are:

S/N	Motivational factor/s	Mean value
1	Supervision	4.79
2	Autonomy and organizational policy	4.77
3	Service	4.76
4	Relationship with boss	4.73
5	Growth	4.71

Analyzing the results of female and male respondents, it is identified that three of motivational factors among the significant motivational factors are same in both categories. It is clear that both female and male respondents perceive service, autonomy and growth as top motivational factors in relation to their motivation. However, some differences are present in the ranking of the identified three common factors. For instance male respondents place service as at the first place. On the contrary, female respondents place supervision at the first place when it comes to motivation.

There are also some differences present in female and male selection of the significant motivational factors. Two motivational factors in male category are distinctive and three motivational factors in female category are distinctive. For male respondents' motivational factors, such work conditions and work flow are also among the significant motivational factors, where for female respondents' these are: company policy, supervision and relationship with boss. This inconsistency in regards to the above-mentioned motivational factors could be assigned to gender related differences, where female respondents' motivational factors are based on feminine

“soft” and male respondents’ motivational factors are based on more masculine “hard” values.

The analysis of motivational factors related to gender leads to some interesting findings. Gender does to some extent shape frontline employees’ motivation and preference of motivational factors, since the significant motivational factors in the two categories are not identical. Both categories include additional motivational factors specific for each gender in addition to the communal ones’. Nevertheless, despite the identified differences between male and female respondents’ responses, three significant motivational factors are found to be universal to both genders. By establishing these commonalities within the gender category permits a conclusion that the following motivational factors are important for frontline employees in the in the hotel industry: service, autonomy and growth, when analyzing the results from a gender perspective.

The relationship between marital status and motivational factors

Table 5: summary of the 20 motivational factors in relation to marital status are:

Motivational factor	Marital status					
	Single			Married		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency	Mean	Std. Dev.	Frequency
Achievement	4.5168539	.81341535	89	4.5294118	.90554821	68
Recognition	4.3820225	.79065016	89	4.2205882	1.0768332	68
Work itself	4.3370787	.97635477	89	4.4117647	.96560698	68
Responsibility	4.4606742	.81263013	89	4.4117647	1.0400243	68
Advancement	4.5393258	.69177275	89	4.5588235	.92045338	68
Growth	4.5842697	.65381727	89	4.6764706	.87145746	68
Company policy	4.6629213	.65615651	89	4.6029412	.90007804	68
Supervision	4.6404494	.56903409	89	4.6176471	.89824724	68
Relationship with boss	4.6629213	.58277979	89	4.4852941	.96957672	68
Work conditions	4.741573	.4891572	89	4.4264706	1.0121084	68
Salary and fringe benefits	4.6516854	.58583902	89	4.5	.98496155	68
Relationship with peers	4.6516854	.62342754	89	4.4852941	.93828435	68
Job security	4.4719101	.79900347	89	4.25	1.0562536	68
Autonomy	4.741573	.57461627	89	4.5588235	.95233183	68
Job variety	4.4831461	.82726768	89	4.3235294	1.0712132	68
Equity	4.494382	.75563934	89	4.3382353	1.0873807	68
Work flow	4.6067416	.70094056	89	4.5147059	.96957672	68
Personal life	4.5842697	.75089324	89	4.4264706	.98217207	68
Service	4.752809	.52830989	89	4.6176471	.89824724	68
Significance	4.3033708	1.0488575	89	4.0588235	1.3700676	68

The computed mean and standard deviations of the 20 motivational factors obtained in the survey indicated that the significant motivational factors among single respondents in the hotel industry are the following:

Table 6: The significant motivational factors among single respondents are:

S/N	Motivational factor/s	Mean value
1	Service	4.75
2	Autonomy and work conditions	4.74
3	Organizational policy and relationship with boss	4.66
4	Salary and fringe benefits, and r/ship with co workers	4.65
5	Supervision	4.64

The computed mean and standard deviation with regards to identifying the significant motivational factors among married respondents in the hotel industry, growth ,supervision and service and organizational policy are ranked in the top three as indicated in the below table.

Table 7: The significant motivational factors among married respondents are:

S/N	Motivational factor/s	Mean value
1	Growth	4.68
2	Supervision and service	4.62
3	Organizational policy	4.60
4	Advancement and autonomy	4.59
5	Achievement	4.53

Looking to the results of single and married respondents, it is identified that four significant motivational factors are the same in both categories. It is clear that both single and married respondents perceive service, autonomy, supervision and organizational policy as significant motivational factors in relation to their

motivation. However, some differences are present in the ranking of the identified four common factors. For instance single respondents ranked service in the first place whilst married respondents ranked growth at the first place when it comes to motivation.

There are also some differences present in single and married in selecting of the significant motivational factors. Four significant motivational factors in single and three significant motivational factors in married respondents are distinctive from the communal factors for both. For single respondents' motivational factors, such work conditions, relationship with boss, salary and fringe benefits and relationship with co-workers are also among the significant motivational factors, where for married respondents' those are: growth, advancement and achievement are also among the significant motivational factors. This inconsistency in regards to the above-mentioned motivational factors could be assigned to marital status related differences, where single respondents are normally to be youngsters so their motivational factors preferences go to collect money, build relationship and have conducive environment while the married are expected to be matured so their motivational factors preferences go to the internal motivational factors that supports Herzberg's two factor theory.

The analysis of motivational factors related to marital status leads to some interesting findings again. Marital status does to some extent shape frontline employees' motivation and preference of motivational factors, since the significant motivational factors in the two categories are not identical. Both categories include their own specific motivational factors among the significant motivational factors. Nonetheless, despite the identified differences between single and married respondents' responses, four significant motivational factors are found to be universal to both categories. By establishing these commonalities within the marital status category permits a conclusion that the following motivational factors are the top for frontline employees in the hotel industry: service, autonomy, supervision and organizational policy, when analyzing the results from a marital status perspective.

Discussion of the Study

The main focus of the chapter is to provide a critical assessment of the research findings from a practical and theoretical perspective. The aim of the critical assessment is to identify how findings of the present research fit within existing theory and therefore what contributions the research makes. Following this is an assessment of the research finding's possible implications to HR practice and the service sector. Finally, the chapter ends with presenting the summarizing conclusion and further research directions.

The discussion of the finding involves assessing the findings of the study in relation to the two theoretical frameworks employed in the research. The theoretical foundations of the study are based three theoretical frameworks and from the empirical work of Bernotaitė (*Bernotaitė, 2013*): Two Factor theory (*Herzberg, 1959*), Adam's equity theory (*Adam, 1965*) and (*Hackman and Oldham, 1976*).

The core idea of the Two Factor theory is that two distinctive set of factors, motivators and hygiene factors, influences employees' job attitudes and motivation. Motivators are responsible for employee satisfaction, where hygiene factors are associated with job dissatisfaction. The theory also points out a dual relationship between the motivators and hygiene factors. According to the research conducted by Herzberg (*1987*) motivator factors that scored highest (percentage frequency among respondents) are as follows: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth. Hygiene factors with the highest scores are company policy, supervision, relationship with boss, work conditions, salary and fringe benefits, relationship with co-workers, personal life and job security.

The comparison is based on the analysis of the empirical data conducted in the previous chapter where it is identified that: service, autonomy, supervision, organizational policy and growth are the five most significant motivational factors in relation to frontline employees' motivation in the hotel industry. An initial overall comparison indicates that the findings of this study are inconsistent with the results of the study conducted by Herzberg. The findings of the research show that frontline employees at three and above star hotels in Mekelle city prioritize the motivators and hygiene factors from Herzberg's study are fundamentally different. As the set of factors that Herzberg's study points as important for motivation, is very different from the set of important factors pointed by the research population of this study. Growth is the single motivational factor that recurs between Herzberg's study and the present study findings and organizational policy and supervision which are considered as hygiene factors by Herzberg are found to be in the 3rd and 4th ranking order in this study. This study indicates that the emerging of service sector is shifting the prioritization of the motivational factors. What is indicated is that the frontline employees are, the more divergent the study' findings are from those of Herzberg. This acknowledges the impact of service sector on frontline employees' motivation and preferences of motivational factors.

This initial observation points the fact that frontline employees' motivation seems to originate primarily from the hygiene (extrinsic) factors from Herzberg's point of view. In the findings of the study, these factors (organizational policy and supervision) are the significant motivational factors for motivation among frontline employees then deserve to pass to the motivational factor (growth). The Herzberg's division between motivators

and hygiene factors isn't applied to the study findings about frontline employees.

While the study identifies an interesting and important observation about work motivation, it by no account rejects Herzberg's work. Herzberg's theory is still relevant, but when applying it to a population consisting of frontline employees it needs a revision when it comes to the division between motivators and hygiene factors. Because, the study findings illustrate how frontline employees' motivators are different from those proposed by Herzberg. Where hygiene factors actually serve or/and function as motivators for frontline employees in the hotel industry bearing in mind that the study of Herzberg was on employees working in manufacturing sector. This means, the study's findings should be considered as the factors that constitute motivators in Herzberg's framework, replacing the existing ones.

The main idea of JCM is a job that includes a set of specific job attributes leads employees' to certain of psychological states and thereby results positive personal and work related outcomes. The theory outlines five essential job attributes: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Ranking of the five job attributes is not included in the theory; however the theory states that for a high internal employee motivation all three critical psychological states must be present, thereby suggesting equally high importance of all five job attributes.

In order to discover and assess possible distinctiveness of frontline employees' motivation, the findings of this study is compared to the findings of the studies conducted by the three theorists and the empirical study presented above. According this study autonomy is ranked in 2nd rank but the other two factors which are job variety (skill variety) and task significance are ranked in 16th and 20th rank. This study shows that giving equal value to job attributes identified by Hackman & Oldham JMC is not supported by the frontline employees of this study. Apart from the Herzberg two factor theory, this model seems internal motivator for the frontline employees as the respondents in the study survey prioritize one the elements proposed by Hackman & Oldham very high. This suggests a possible adjustment of the job characteristics/factors if they are to be relevant to frontline people in the hotel industry. The factors identified to be important in the study research can be the basis for the alteration of the job characteristics, but certainly further research is needed to confirm the study findings and to enable a more generalizable change of the model. This does not dispute the model, but as with Herzberg's findings, the study' suggests that frontline employees are motivated differently than other groups of employees.

The main idea of Adam was to argue that people seek to maintain a balance between their inputs and the outcomes they receive, also in relation to the outputs of others. Fair treatment creates motivation. It adds a crucial additional perspective to motivation theory, of comparison with 'referent' others. Adams' theory states that employees strive for equity between themselves and other workers. Equity is achieved when the ratio of employee outcomes over inputs is equal to other employee outcomes over inputs (Adams, 1965). Though this notion was interesting but the motivational factor which the equity is ranked 15th in this study. However, this study could not reject the finding rather it recommends further as purpose of the theory and purpose of this study are quite different in their nature.

The final discussion goes to the comparison of this study with previous empirically studied by Beranotaitite (2013). Beranotaitite had conducted a research having a title importance of motivational factors among factors among young employees in the service sector in Denmark intended to identify the important factors from the 24 predetermined factors. According the study of Beranotaitite, the most important motivational factors were relationship with peers, salary, personal life and responsibility which were ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively. These factors are ranked 9th, 8th, 12th and 13th in this study.

According to this article, the top significant motivational factors affecting the frontline employees in the three and above stars in Mekelle city are service, autonomy organizational policy, supervision and growth which are ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th respectively. This discrepancy indicates that the research on motivational factors especially era of service sector is still untapped. The interesting finding in this study is the congruency of being service in the first place with emergency of service sector. One can safely conclude that satisfied customers are the driver to frontline employees by providing tip.

The overall conclusion of this discussion is that current motivational theories may not be used unquestioned when addressing the motivation of frontline employees in the hotel industry. Furthermore, suggesting that motivational theories need to focus more on sub-groups, as the holistic approach to motivation seems to be insufficient to describe certain populations and industries i.e. the service sector. This also indicates that work motivation is a far more complex and dynamic subject than the existing motivational theories account for.

Conclusion

This paper was designed to identify and examine the significant motivational factors for frontline employees in the hotel industry. To achieve this, this study establishes a set of 20 work motivation factors by combining motivational factors suggested by theoretical frameworks and empirical research studied previously. The 20 factors are used to measure the importance of each motivational factor among 157 frontline employees at three and above star hotels in Mekelle city. The research findings identified that five significant motivational factors

namely service, autonomy organizational policy, supervision and growth which are ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th respectively for frontline employees in the case study.

It is also clear that this study contradicts to what Herzberg two factor theory suggests as the ranges of motivational factors are mixed in this study. Herzberg's conclusions that motivation factors are the drivers for hygiene factors were not confirmed by this study. This paper will help managers to understand what motivates employees most and things they should do to create a motivated workforce.

The research findings supports the idea that what motivates employees differs given the context in which the employee works. So managers have to consider the industry as well as culture in which they are operating. What is clear, however, is that although frontline employees ranked service, autonomy organizational policy, supervision and growth as the significant motivational factor, they are also highly concerned about the predetermined factors in the study because mean values of all were above 4 in all motivational factors.

This study also concludes that the ranking of work-related factors that motivate frontline employees in the hotel industry may change over time and may differ significantly from one person to another and also across different groups of employees. Furthermore, this study concludes that the significant motivational value placed on each factor may vary according to gender, marital status and year of employment. This study shows the educational level of the frontline employees far away from what the three and above star hotel demands. 50 % of the respondents of this study are grade 12th and below. This indicates a mismatch between job and educational background of the frontline employees.

Finally this study concludes by suggesting, Motivation is a very broad term, and the research is quite extensive if one has to go deeper into the subject. There is a wide range of theories on what motivates people (content theories) as well as theories that try to describe how behavior is initiated, directed and sustained (process theories). However, this paper basically restricted to the content theories, which identify the specific needs and are responsible for creating and directing the human behavior.

Recommendation

The researcher of this study strongly believes that since the things or factors that motivate people to do perform best are distinct and different, learning about what workers want from their jobs, or what is more important for them, may generate essential information for effective human-resource management. Thereby guarantying the long-term profitability and survival of the organization will be insured. Furthermore, such learning may help organizations to find answers to questions such as "why do some people invest greater effort in their jobs and why some people are more efficacious in their jobs than others"?

For human resource management the findings of the study helps to gain a better understanding and insight into what drives frontline employees' motivation. Consequently, human resource management should adopt a more focused approach towards motivating frontline employees, where motivational strategies/methods can be better designed to address frontline employees' specific motivational needs.

In sum, the researcher would argue that the long-term survival of any organization depends largely on the motivation of its employees be it financial or non-financial. Therefore organizations should be willing to continuously and on regular basis, undertake employees surveys such as this one in order to understand what their employees expects from their current job.

The result of such exercises could prove useful for the organization, because knowing what their employees wants and efforts in meeting these needs facilitate a mutual working environment for both the employees and its management. Hoteliers or managers of the hotels should know their frontline employees' demographic factors in order to deliver tailored motivational factors based on the findings of this study.

Hoteliers should create a room for short term and long term trainings to capacitate their employees if they want to confront the fierce competition of the hotel industry and to have competitive advantage in the ever growing of the industry.

Finally, the researcher recommends the outcome of this cross sectional research shows that differences by today's frontline employees from the previous studies. Therefore it would be interesting if further research with a longitudinal research could be undertaken to confirm either fully or partly the findings of this study. Further research could also consider other factors such as location of the organization, other demographic factors and regional tendencies and by including other motivational factors which were not part of this study.

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