

INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN CATERING COMPANIES

Review

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Received 2 October 2012

Revised 3 December 2012

14 January 2013

Abstract

The purpose – The purpose of this study is to research motivators that help to attract, retain and motivate employees in the catering industry.

Design – The special focus is given to the analysis of specific demographic factors and their influence on employee motivation.

Methodology – Using available secondary data, key motivational factors for work in the catering industry are identified. Followed by a qualitative analysis, motivational factors are then compared to specific demographic factors.

Approach – The survey was conducted in the municipality of Piran, which is touristly the most developed Slovenian municipality and an important tourist center in the northern Mediterranean.

Findings – The findings show that motivational factors are strongly associated to different demographic factors. By understanding both, demographic factors and their influence on motivational factors, it is possible to successfully motivate different groups of employees. Practical considerations for managers of catering business, how to selectively motivate different groups of employees according to different demographic characteristics, are discussed in conclusion.

The originality of this research – The originality comes from the analysis of the specifics of motivation in the catering industry, which provides the guidance and ideas for further improvements and research in this important sector of tourism.

Keywords Motivation, waiting staff, demographic factors, Slovenian coast

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourist activity, as in the world, including in Slovenia is an important economic activity and human resources undoubtedly represent its most important resource. Tourism share directly represents 2.5% of Slovene national GDP and employs 3.3% of the economically active population in the country (SURS, 2010). The numbers for Slovenia show, that in 2011 there were 2,193 food&beverage companies which employed 8,859 employees. The survey was conducted in municipality of Piran, which is touristly the most developed municipality in Slovenia. Tourism is the major local (municipal) economic activity. There were 47 food&beverage companies in the municipality of Piran in 2011, with a total number of 119 employees. In addition to that there were 91 privately held businesses (sole proprietors) which employed 149 employees. Statistics shows that 25% of active population in the municipality is employed in tourism companies (SURS, 2011).

Motivation, attraction and retention of employees represent one of the major problems in the catering industry. If companies want to achieve their goals they must pay maximum attention to employees' satisfaction and motivation. Despite the economic crisis, statistics indicate a serious labour shortage and a high staff turnover (Raspor, 2011). The demand for professionally qualified staff is constantly increasing. According to the Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ) operational jobs in the catering industry remain the most sought after. Jobs in the catering industry are subjected to specific working conditions (physical effort, split schedule, strict hygiene rules etc.) and from caterers some specific characteristics, such as; emotional stability, resourcefulness, respectful attitude to employees and property and high ethical values are expected (Šuligoj, 2006). Catering is also characterized by low payment¹, which further reduces the interest in these jobs. A key problem in Slovenia is also the law, because it does not provide a mandatory minimum for professional qualification in the catering industry.

The key objective of this study was to identify the main motivational factors to work in foodservice and to determine whether specific demographic characteristics have an impact of employee motivation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many authors are interested in the problem of motivation in the tourism industry. Satisfied employees directly affect the process of hospitality and improve the long term competitive advantage of the company. So what can be defined as motivation? The answer varies through different cultures, times and authors. Unčanin et al. (2006) state that one should always have in mind that what motivates some does not necessarily motivate all others. Many researchers provided numerous theories that provided basic answers, such as, what triggers human activity and how the motivation process comes into being. The current study expands the existing body of literature by examining the impact of demographic characteristics on motivation to work in the catering industry. Current literature on motivation (presented below) primarily focuses on general guidelines for motivating employees and there are almost no studies that evaluate the importance of demographic characteristics.

Motivation and motivational theories

There are many motivational theories, so worth mentioning a few, important for our study: Maslow (1954) has stated that people are motivated by the desire to meet needs, which are classified from vital-physiological needs to less urgent needs (self-improvement); Herzberg's theory of motivation or the »two factor« theory, by which people are influenced by two sets of factors - motivator and hygiene factors; McGregor's theory or the »x-y theory« which is based on two extremes of human behaviour; Poter-Lawler's motivational model that combines content and process

¹Average monthly net earnings in the catering industry for the month of February 2012 was 733,96 €. Official figures do not include tips and other benefits.

theories; Kovach (1995) who has developed the scale of 12 external and internal motivational factors; Theory of equity or justice is based on fairness in compensating input vs. output; Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964 in Wildes, 2008) assumes that behaviour is a result of conscious choices among alternatives whose purpose is to maximize satisfaction; Attribution theory helps to explain and control potentially predictable psychological states of satisfaction, which occur in the workplace and influence the work motivation of employees (Schermerhorn, 2001); Glasser's motivational theory or the »choice theory« that says that whatever people do, do in order to meet their own needs, because motivation is based solely on meeting the needs of the individual and does not recognize external motivators and the hierarchy of needs (Zadel, 2005). Recent studies show that the majority of motivation is internal and varies from person to person (Wildes, 2008).

Urošević and Milijić (2012) state that motivation can be defined as a process, which triggers an activity in a man, which is direct towards certain objects and needs coordination in order to achieve a certain goal. As such, motivation can be regarded as energy that guides us towards fulfilling a goal and a complex phenomenon, which channels human behaviour. Motivation is a complex set of influences which make one start working and keep the job on a specific post within the organisation. Motivation is closely linked to work and the organizational efficiency. Motivation in an organization can be defined as a guided behaviour of the employees towards organizational goals but also towards satisfying personal needs and goals at the same time. The main aspects of motivation are; motives of the employees, organisational goals and individual goals (Urošević and Milijić, 2012; Bahtijarević Šiber 1999). Motivation is successful when employees fulfil their personal needs and goals through organisational goals. Motivation is the key preconditions for success in business. That is why is vitally important to nourish and constantly improve this system.

There is a set of factors that influence motivation. Uhan (1999) argues that the practice of analyzing motivational factors show the best results when economic motivation is combined with the co-operation of a larger number of external and internal motivational factors. Although the growth of the employee satisfaction and motivation is reflected on the productivity growth and better business results, the relationship between satisfaction-motivation and organisation's results is complex and numerous factors influence it. This factors can be divided into four categories; personal traits, characteristics of a certain post, characteristics of a certain organisation and wider environment (Urošević and Milijić, 2012). Numerous authors have studied the satisfaction factors and elements of work. Especially changes in society (wider environment) have a significant impact on what people value (Brandl and Traxler, 2011; Lane, 2011; Cradle, 2010, Jones et al., 2009, Mintzberg, 2009; Evans, 2008). Rutherford et al. (2009) pointed out in their research that the employee work satisfaction key elements are; satisfaction with supervisor, work description, company's policy, career advancement, material conditions, human relations, satisfaction with clients. Beebe et al. (2009) pointed out a special significance of material conditions on employee motivation. Urošević and Milijić (2012) stated that professional qualification and motivation have the major influence on employee satisfaction and motivation.

Studies in the field of tourism have shown that employee motivation is strongly connected with a feeling of satisfaction resulting from the quality of work performed (Wildes and Parks, 2005; McCabe, Nowak and Mullen, 2005, Waldo, 2008). Jurdana and Maškari (2010) noted that the drop in motivation has a direct impact on employee productivity and that especially in the hospitality industry all measures should be primarily focused on improving employee motivation. Milman (2002) and Dimovski et al. (2005) stated that the retention of employees in the workplace is primarily associated with personal fulfilment and working conditions, rather than the financial compensation, although money is considered to be the oldest and the most usual way for motivating people.

Wildes (2008) has highlighted the key motivational factors that influence the motivation of employees in the hospitality industry: money, career development, training (further education), social security, fun and flexible working hours. Upchurch et al. (2010) in their study on the loyalty of employees in the catering industry noted that because of the specificity of the industry, it is difficult to highlight just one, the main motivating factor, as the satisfaction and motivation of employees depend on a complex combination of external and internal factors. The issue of motivation is very complex and therefore it is difficult to highlight just one basic reason, which could be identified as »the main culprit« for the lack of motivation of employees. Acuna et al. (2009) stated that employee motivation and satisfaction with their work will be on a higher level if people are not treated in the same way. Personal characteristics of the employees, combined with the key aspects of the employee satisfaction and motivation enable the formation of valid and reliable instrument for measuring motivation and satisfaction (Urošević and Milijić, 2012).

The complexity of the problem in Slovenia is discussed in a comprehensive research project, whose goal was to put a modern model of human resource management in the field of tourism and was carried out under the research project Slovenian Competitiveness 2006-2013. The survey covered 235 people working in tourism in the entire territory of Slovenia. Most respondents (82%) were employed at the operational (executive) positions, managers represented 7% and middle and upper management represented 11% of the total sample. The proportion of employees working in foodservice represented 22.33%. The survey showed that employees are generally satisfied with their work, while no significant differences were observed between age and gender of employees and their level of job satisfaction. The research showed that employees are the most motivated by praise, cooperation and collegiality. The survey showed that money does not work as a direct motivator and that employees often don't receive money rewards. Research has mainly emphasized the problem of low job reputation in society and a generally bad attitude of employers towards employees (University of Maribor, 2009).

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted in the municipality of Piran in May 2012 as a part of a broader study, which aims at investigating employee motivation and satisfaction in catering companies in Slovenian coastal area. The goal of this paper is to discuss the interactions of certain demographic factors onto employees' motivation. The research was conducted by direct interviewing of service personnel. For the purpose of this study, waiting staff is defined as any male or female employee who interfaces with guests. The sample also included waiters working in catering facilities, such as bars and coffee shops, as they often offer various types of food (snacks).

Based on previous research (Upchurch et al. 2010; University of Maribor, 2009; Wildes, 2008; key motivational factors (attributes) were listed: money, career development, training-further education, social security, fun and flexible working hours. For the purpose of the study we wanted to examine how these factors are important to waiting staff in the selected area and how they are affected by demographic variables. In assembling the measurement instrument (questionnaire) we created some of the variables as ordinal and the Likert scales measurement had been used. This then enabled us to compare mean values between groups, as we wanted to test the influence of some demographic variables on the importance of motivational factors. To compare the mean values between pairs of groups, we used the comparable nonparametric Mann-Whitney's test, which compares the median rather than arithmetic means. In addition to comparing mean values, we decided to verify the bivariate relationship between certain demographic variables and motivational factors and to verify the importance (significance) of motivational factors among themselves. For this purpose we used the Spearman correlation coefficient. The data were processed using the SPSS software.

3.1. Types of catering facilities

The survey covered 191 different types of catering facilities ($N = 191$). The most numerous were bars, representing one third of all businesses (33%). They were followed by restaurants, which represented a fifth of the sample (21%).

The catering facilities usually have less than 100 seats, on average slightly less than 70 ($\mu = 69.1$), but the number between different types of facilities varies considerably ($\sigma = 55.2$). The average is relatively high, due to several facilities with more than 100 seats (14%). The majority of facilities have two permanent (full-time) employees employed in service, although the statistical average is relatively higher and indicates the asymmetrical distribution to the right, with a relatively high variability ($\mu = 3.6$, $\sigma = 2.6$). In addition to full-time employees they usually employ two additional seasonal workers or students. The average distribution and dispersion is similar to that of full-time employees ($\mu = 3.5$, $\sigma = 3.2$). We can conclude that catering facilities in municipality of Piran most commonly employ five servers (waiters).

3.2. Profile of respondents

For the purpose of the study, occasionally selected waiters (one per each facility) were interviewed, so the number of respondents is equal to the number of facilities surveyed ($N = 191$). The structure of workforce showed approximately the same proportion of full-time employees (46%) and others (54%). Age of participants was expected to be rather low. Most often the respondents were aged between 20 and 25 years (42%) and there were almost any respondents older than 50 years. Distribution by age is skewed to the right. Education was accordingly to the age of respondents largely secondary (57%), professional (22%) and higher (17%). Postgraduate degree had only one respondent with a master's degree and 5 respondents had less than elementary school. Of those who marked the direction of education (17%), only one-third has a professional culinary education. Personal incomes (net) of respondents mostly varied between 500 € and 1,000 € (63%), often less than 500 € (26%), but rarely above 1,000 € and just in one case more than 1,500 €². Respondents have on average over 7 years of experience in service ($\mu = 7.2$), but the pattern shows that many of them have a significantly longer or shorter length of experience, which is confirmed by the standard deviation ($\sigma = 6.5$). In the future only 40% of respondents are prepared to stay in foodservice, while the rest of them would immediately change their careers in case of a better opportunity.

3.3. The impact of demographic characteristics on motivation to work in Foodservice

The importance of motivational factors to work in service was measured with a five-stage ordinal Likert-type scale (from 1 - very unimportant to 5 - very important with a neutral intermediate level). The importance was in all cases distributed asymmetrically to the left, which was expected, since all the factors are at the least somehow important for all workers. Therefore we were aware of the differences between the factors and looked which of them are more important than the others. Money is by far the most important motivator, followed by flexible working hours, health benefits, fun, and career advancement. The least important motivator is training and further education.

High standard deviations and asymmetric distributions had suggested that respondents' opinions are not entirely uniformed. That is why we decided to check whether there are any differences in the importance of gender (men compared to women), age (up to 30 and over 30 years of age), education (up to-including high school, compared with more than high school), personal income (less than 500 € compared to € 500 or more) and length of work experience (up to 7 years, compared with 7 years or more). Mainly due to abnormal distributions (more or less asymmetric in left), we have decided to use the Mann-Whitney's test. We compared the medians between different pairs of groups of respondents and checked if there are any statistically significant differences. Motivational factors revealed some statistically significant differences in relation to demographic variables. Gender significantly influenced the importance of factors

² The reason for this may be sought in the fact that employers often pay only a minimum (mandatory) part of the salary on the bank account, while the difference is paid "by hand". However, in this study we did not examine this and therefore it can not be stated.

"money" and "fun", while to men "money" and "fun" was less important than to women. Age significantly affected the importance of attributes "health benefits", "fun" and "flexible working hours". To young respondents (up to 30) "health benefits" was less important and "fun" and "flexible working hours" were far more important than to the elderly respondents (over 30 years). Education has significantly affected the importance of factors "career development", "training" and "health benefits". To less educate "career development", "training" and perhaps somewhat surprisingly the "health benefits" were far less important than to more educated respondents. Similarly surprising was the impact of personal income to the importance of the factor "health benefits". To less wealthy respondents "social security" was far less important than to the more wealthy ones. The factor "work experience" significantly affect the importance of "career development", "training", "health benefits" and "fun". To less experienced respondents "career development", "training" and "health benefits" were less important than more experienced. Additionally we were interested in links between motivational factors and some other variables. We expected that the motivational factors are primarily associated with age, as well as education, experience and income of respondents. To this end, we calculated the Spearman correlation coefficient. The following table shows the correlation matrix between the importance of motivational factors and demographic variables.

Table 1: **Relationship between the importance of motivational factors and demographic variables**

Motivators	Age		Work experience		Income		Education	
	□	Sig.	□	Sig.	□	Sig.	□	Sig.
Money	-0,06	0,439	0,02	0,777	0,05	0,517	-0,04	0,621
Career advancement	0,08	0,270	0,04	0,587	0,15	0,042	0,03	0,631
Training	0,05	0,501	0,04	0,546	0,12	0,097	0,19	0,008
Health benefits	0,21	0,004	0,22	0,002	0,30	0,000	0,17	0,016
Fun place to work	-0,27	0,000	-0,15	0,038	0,05	0,526	0,06	0,438
Flexible hours	-0,18	0,015	-0,12	0,095	0,06	0,454	0,04	0,543

As the limit of statistical significance, we decided to take into account all the risk levels under 10% (in the table marked with bold). Statistically most significant relationship has demonstrated to be the relationship between personal income and the "social security". Although, it is the strongest among all, it can still be understood as a weak one. If anything, we can undoubtedly claim that the higher the salary is, the more important to respondents the social security is. It is equally surprising, as the earlier detection of differences between groups in terms of "social security". Other noteworthy links are between the age and "fun" and "flexible working hours" (the older they are, the less important "fun" and "flexible working hours" are), age and "social security" (to older "social security" is more important), work experience and "social security" (to more experienced "social security" is more important) and "education" and "training" (the more educated they are, the more important "training" is). Other statistically significant relationships are very weak and not worth mentioning. In conclusion, we have checked the consistency among the motivational variables with the Spearman correlation coefficient. Here some slightly more powerful connections can be seen, still not strong, but moderate or weak. Among the strongest correlations we can expose the connections between "training" and "career development" (the more important

"training" is, the more important "career development" is), "social security" and "training" (the more important "social security" is, the more important "training" is), "flexibility of working hours" and "entertainment" (the more important "flexible hours" are, the more important "fun" is) and "social security" and "career development" (the more important "social security" is, the more important "career development" is).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research results show that in times of economic crisis money is the most important motivational factor to work in foodservice in the municipality of Piran, followed by flexible working hours and social security. The training factor at this time is very low ranked, which in some ways can be understandable, although it reflects the low ambitions of employees which in turn affects the low evaluation of catering professions in society. In general we can conclude that in times of recession money is the best motivator.

In a more detailed analysis, according to some demographic characteristics of employees, we have found some significant differences between different groups of employees. Motivational factor money was far more important to women than men. Younger employees are mostly motivated by fun and flexible working hours, while elderly employees highly value social security. To more educated and experienced employees' career development and training are more important than to less educated and less experienced employees. Furthermore the correlation between different variables showed rather low connections and showed a similar result as the comparison between different groups. Again it was surprising that the more affluent respondents are the more important social security is. Quite expected was the negative correlation between age and fun, as well as between age and flexible working hours. Young people are understandably more interested in fun and flexible working hours. Additionally, the relationship between these two factors is confirmed by a positive correlation between the importance of flexible working hours and having fun. Among other interesting relations between motivational factors is important to note the positive correlation between training and career development. The importance of training can therefore be associated with the importance of a successful career as the catering staffs seeking for a higher education is driven by the desire of personal progress and professional assertion. The table below shows the matrix between motivational and demographic factors with a statistically significant relationship.

Table 2: Matrix between motivational factors and demographic factors

	Gender		Age		Education		Experience		Income	
	male	female	<30	30<	<High school	High school<	<7 years	7 years<	<500€	500€<
Money	-	+								
Funplace to work	-	+	+	-			+	-		
Health benefits			-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
Flexible working hours			+	-						
Career advancement					-	+	-	+		
Training					-	+	-	+		

Legend:

+ = statistically significant difference (very important)

- = statistically significant difference (less important)

Blank = very weak statistically significant relationships (not worth mentioning)

We can conclude that by adjusting the activities to improve the effectiveness of motivational factors in relation to some demographic variables such as age and gender, a greater motivation can be achieved. The motivation of younger employees needs a different approach than the motivation of older employees. Similarly a specific approach to motivation is needed by gender, education and other characteristics. Demographic and other individual priorities are the key factor to understand the motivation of different groups of employees.

Based on the results we can confirm the general opinion, that mostly in service work young people who are more or less temporarily employed and wait for a better job opportunity. We also noted that motivational factors do not have the same effects in different environments, under different conditions and at different times, as this was already demonstrated by the results of other studies, previously mentioned in the text. This fact has been further re-confirmed by this study. One of the most important elements for achieving the success within a company is undoubtedly satisfaction and motivation. The research shows that numerous factors affect employee motivation and there is no general way to approach employee satisfaction and motivation.

5. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion the findings focus on several important observations and findings. Working in foodservice certainly presents a job opportunity. Research has shown that in times of economic crisis money is by far the most important motivating factor for waiting staff and that motivating factors are affected by demographic ones. This finding is consistent with the Theory of choice, as individuals are primarily motivated by the attributes that meet the most important need for them. Our two *main practical recommendations* are:

- Employers should selectively motivate and promote the benefits of employment in the catering industry to different groups of employees.
- The motivation of different groups of employees must be encouraged with different motivational factors, taking into account the importance of demographic factors.

As the importance of different motivational factors varies, it is recommended to carry out a similar research in different environments, on different groups of employees in the tourism sector and to ensure that researches are periodically repeated. Given the limited geographic area in which the study was performed the results might not be applicable to facilities in other locations. An increase in the geographic coverage to the entire country could offer further valuable insight. The survey only gives a snapshot of the situation, although it offers an almost complete picture of a specific geographic area.

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