



# Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of work motivation tested empirically on seasonal workers in hospitality and tourism

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to understand work motivation in a sample of seasonal workers at a tourism destination strongly steered by seasonality. Furthermore, it was investigated whether seasonal workers could be divided into worker subgroups on the basis of their work motivation. A structural equations model tested Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of work motivation empirically. The findings of the study support the Two-Factor Theory of work motivation. Furthermore, results indicated that a migrant community of workers was significantly less concerned about wage level as well as significantly more concerned about meeting new people than resident workers. As a result of these findings, it is suggested that management of businesses in hospitality and tourism need to consider that the seasonal workforce consists of different kinds of worker subgroups, which have different needs to be satisfied.

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this study is to understand work motivation in a sample of seasonal workers at a ski-resort strongly steered by seasonality, situated in northern Sweden.

Tourism is strongly steered by seasonality. An international definition of seasonality in the hospitality and tourism industries is, seen in the strictest sense, a peaking of demand at different times of the year (Kennedy, 1999). Even though all destinations are subject to some form of seasonality, research indicates that peripheral destinations, in both the southern and northern hemispheres, have the greatest difficulty in overcoming the problems caused by seasonality (Lundtorp, Rassing, & Wanhill, 1999). Both coastal and winter sport resorts are the most heavily affected by seasonal fluctuations (Pearce, 1989; Murphy, 1997). Urban areas are less affected because of the wide variety of attractions. These attractions are in most cases not dependent on climatic conditions and therefore not as vulnerable to climatic changes (Butler & Mao, 1997).

Baum (1999) suggests that the impact of demand variation is one of the major operational and policy concerns of the hospitality

and tourism industries. The supply-side behavior is affected in all aspects including marketing (packaging, pricing, distribution), business finance (cash flow, attracting investment) and the labor market (sustainability of employment, nature and quality of employment, skills availability) (Baum, 1999; Cooper, Fletcher, Gilberg, & Wanhill, 1993).

Vaughan and Andriotis (2000) suggest that one major characteristic of employment in hospitality and tourism is its seasonal and part-time nature, which can result in seasonal employment, underemployment, and unemployment (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003). Furthermore, the negative employment image within the sector affects the recruitment and retention of qualified employees. This image is created by the generally perceived idea that work within the hospitality and tourism industries only offers limited opportunity for promotion and progression (Baum, Amoha, & Spivack, 1997; Hjalager & Andersen, 2000), and that work is characterized by anti-social working conditions and casualized remuneration (Baum, Amoha, & Spivack, 1997).

This is problematic since tourist perceived quality is closely related to employee performance. An essential feature of any successful organization is motivated employees. Therefore, the extent to which an employer is able to motivate employees is important for the overall success of the organization on its markets. One of the most important challenges facing managers is the

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creation of a context within which employees feel motivated and will act in order to achieve the goals of the organization. Managers may, by influencing the context, affect the degree of work motivation among the employees. Maybe nowhere is the understanding of employee work motivation more important than in a customer service oriented business such as the hospitality and tourism industries.

Furthermore, it has been argued that seasonal workers within the industry can be divided into different subgroups on the basis of their attitudes towards seasonal jobs as well as their behavior as seasonal workers (Lee & Moreo, 2007; Lee-Ross, 1999a,b) since employee work motivation varies between individuals, and individuals respond differently to the same motivational stimulus in different situations (Lee-Ross, 1999a). The individual differences of employees have important implications for managerial practice. Motivational theories are useful when studying the range of human motives to explain how the motives affect human behavior. However, the theories do not provide an insight of what motivates a particular individual or group. Therefore, when searching for the specific work motivators of a particular individual or group of individuals there is no other way than finding out what actually motivates that particular individual or group (Wright, 1989). In the light of the above, it is here argued that seasonal workers in hospitality and tourism constitute an important group with which to study work motivation.

The aim of the study is to address the issue of how seasonal workers in hospitality and tourism are motivated in their work. This aim will be achieved through the following objectives:

1. To understand work motivation in a sample of seasonal workers by testing a context-adapted version of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of work motivation empirically by a structural equations model.
2. To investigate whether seasonal workers can be divided into worker subgroups on the basis of their work motivation.

## 2. Work motivation

People are motivated by a great variety of needs, which in turn vary in order of importance and over time or in different situations. The understanding of human needs is, according to Wright (1989), only the first step towards predicting and influencing work behavior. There is no single definition of work motivation due to the complexity of the concept. Some theorists have found it more useful to concentrate on physiological aspects, whilst some stress the behavioral aspects and others the rationality of human beings (Pinder, 1998). Pinder (1998, p. 11) describes motivation as:

“a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration”.

This definition recognizes the influence on work-related behavior of both environmental forces (e.g. organizational reward systems) and forces inherent in the person (e.g. individual needs and motives). This definition views work motivation as an “invisible, internal, hypothetical construct” (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999, p. 231). Work motivation cannot actually be seen nor can it be measured directly. Therefore, we use established theories when measuring the observable manifestations of work motivation (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).

### 2.1. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of work motivation

When reviewing the literature, there are two main types of work motivation theory that have been used to explain motivational issues like levels of work motivation, job satisfaction and what effects these aspects have on work behavior. These theories are called need theories and process theories. While need theories concentrate on the emotional aspects of motivation, process theories of motivation emphasize the role of cognitive processes (however emotional factors are not ignored) (Wright, 1989). Process theories are suitable for in-depth case-studies whereas we believe that need theories provide a more suitable approach in order to reach our objective “... to understand work motivation in a sample of seasonal workers at a ski-resort ...” at a general level. In this study need theories of motivation will therefore be used. Need theories are based on the assumption that people's needs provide the force, which directs action towards fulfillment of these needs (Wright, 1989; Pinder, 1998). Need theories stress the identification of different needs which motivate behavior. By identifying the needs and by fulfilling them it is assumed that people will become motivated at work (Wright, 1989).

Herzberg's influential need theory of the 1960's, the *Two-Factor Theory*, suggests that humans have two different sets of needs and that the different elements of the work situation satisfies or dissatisfies these needs (Wright, 1989). The first set concerns the basic survival needs of a person – the *hygiene factors* (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 2005). These factors are not directly related to the job itself, but concern the conditions that surround performing that job. The factors are company policy such as for example reward system, salary, and interpersonal relations (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 2005; Tietjen & Myers, 1998). According to Herzberg, these factors can cause dissatisfaction when not satisfied. However, when satisfied these factors do not motivate or cause satisfaction, they only prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 2005).

The second set of needs is *growth needs*, which refers to factors intrinsic within the work itself, for example recognition of a task completed, achievement, responsibility, advancement and work itself. These factors are according to Herzberg, the motivating factors, which implies that humans try to become all that they are capable of becoming and when satisfied they work as motivators (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 2005). According to Herzberg, content of work, (e.g. opportunities for responsibility and advancement) is the only way to increase satisfaction and thereby enhance work motivation (Wright, 1989). However, when the growth factors are missing this does not cause dissatisfaction, simply an absence of satisfaction (Herzberg, 1971; Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 2005).

#### 2.1.1. Herzberg's theory adapted and applied in different contexts

Several studies using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory have been adapted to better suit the specific context studied. One example of a context-adapted study is Parsons and Broadbride's (2006) study of work motivation in a retail setting. In their study, key factors for job motivation and satisfaction for charity shop managers were examined. Herzberg's division of intrinsic and extrinsic factors was employed and examples of intrinsic job characteristics used were responsibility, work itself, self development (i.e. possibility to growth) and recognition. Extrinsic job characteristics examined were for example location of work, job security, hours of work, salary and working conditions. In addition to this, communication and organizational climate were

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