Tour leaders' job crafting and job outcomes: The moderating role of perceived organizational support

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A B S T R A C T

Job design is a critical issue in human resource management. Although policy on job crafting in the workplace has been studied, little research has investigated the connection between job crafting and the impact it has on the travel industry. This study fills this gap by examining the links between job crafting and job outcomes in relation to the travel industry. Data from 355 tour leaders from 32 consolidated travel agencies show that both individual and collaborative crafting have a positive effect on employees' satisfaction with their jobs, commitment to the organization, and job performance. Perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between job crafting and job outcomes. Theoretical and managerial implications and directions of future research are addressed in this study.

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1. Introduction

For decades, studies on how employees experience their jobs have centered largely on the impact that job design has on employees’ perception of and way of handling their jobs (Parker, Wall, & Cordery, 2001). Job design means ‘how tasks, jobs, and roles are developed, enacted and changed and what the influence of these developments, enactment, and changes are on the employee, team, and organizational outcomes’ (Grant & Parker, 2009). Traditionally, job design theory has concentrated on the system by which managers at the top of the hierarchy determine the nature of jobs for their employees (Campion & McClelland, 1993). In the last few years, however, scholars have demonstrated that employees themselves play a role in the determining the nature of their jobs and have highlighted the proactive nature of these efforts (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) proposed the construct of job crafting, which is defined as the physical and cognitive changes people apply to the task or relational boundaries of their job. According to Leana, Appelbaum, and Shevchuk (2009), job crafting has two forms: individual crafting and collaborative crafting. In individual crafting, employees actively shape the boundaries of their tasks and their actual way of working. By contrast, in collaborative crafting, employees work together to revise the work process. In the travel industry, tour leaders possess high job autonomy because they may need to adjust an itinerary as a result of unforeseen circumstances that arise during tours (Tsaur, Yen, & Yang, 2011). They are also responsible for collaborating with travel organizations employees, who have direct contact with travelers, to facilitate a positive tour experience, and frequently encounter unforeseen situations. Thus, a tour leader may engage in both individual crafting and collaborative crafting. Job crafting enables tour leaders to shape their work identities and roles by tailoring their jobs to their own skills and to the way they perform their tasks (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). By engaging in job crafting, tour leaders can determine how they understand the purpose of their work and define themselves in a professional capacity, which is essential to enhancing job outcomes.

Numerous studies have indicated that job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance are critical indicators of employees’ job outcomes (Chiang & Jang, 2008; Cho & Johanson, 2008; Karatepe & Kilic, 2009; Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). Job crafting behaviors can change employees’ work identities and work meanings, enhancing their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (Chitulescu, 2007; Tims & Bakker, 2010). However, Leana et al. (2009) found that individual crafting is negatively related to job satisfaction and has no bearing on employees’ commitment to their organization. Therefore, previous studies have yielded contradictory results when examining the impact of job crafting on employees’ attitudes toward their jobs. Regarding the travel industry, while past
studies have offered explications of the link between job crafting and employees' job outcomes in organizations, there has been relatively lit-
ttle research on the connection between job crafting and tour leaders’ job outcomes. Therefore, a deeper understanding of job crafting and its ef-
fects on tour leaders is warranted.

Previous studies have suggested that perceived organizational sup-
port (POS) has a crucial effect on employees' attitudes and outcomes
(Chiang & Hsieh, 2012; Karatepe, 2012; Kim, Tavitiyanam, & Kim,
2009), which is also applicable to the travel industry. POS refers to the
way in which employees perceive the organization in terms of the de-
gree to which it has appreciation for what they provide to the organiza-
tion and how much it demonstrates concern for their happiness as
employees (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Ac-
cording to the norm of reciprocity, employees provide the organization
with their labor and loyalty, and the organization in turn rewards them
with respect, acceptance, and concern for their welfare (Rhoades &
Eisenberger, 2002). Hence, POS is positively associated with job satisfac-
tion, organizational commitment, and job performance (Riggle,
Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). If this positive association exists, then it
can be assumed that higher POS reinforces the connection between
job crafting and employees' job outcomes, and, therefore, POS may
play a major contextual role in the relationship between job crafting
and tour leaders’ job outcomes. Accordingly, this study aims to examine
the relationship between job crafting and tour leaders’ job outcomes and
to clarify the moderating effect of POS. The results of the study pro-
vide travel managers with strategic directions for human resource man-
agement (HRM) practices and organizational behaviors.

2. Literature Review And Hypotheses

2.1. Job crafting

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) indicated that crafting a job cons-
ists of changing the task boundaries of a job and the relational bound-
aries of the job physically or cognitively. Changing task boundaries
means that employees adjust the form or number of activities in
which they engage in while working, whereas changing cognitive
boundaries means employees adjust how they view their job. A change in
relational boundaries entails making careful choices regarding with
whom an employee interacts when working. By reshaping any of the
aforementioned elements, employees can shape the overall outline of
their jobs and the social environment in which they work. Tims,
Bakker, and Derks (2012) defined job crafting as the attempts em-
ployees make to give equal weight to the requirements of their job
and the resources it provides, and the skills and needs they bring to the
job as individuals. Job demands mean the physical, psychological,
or organizational aspects of a job that require sustained physical and/or
psychological effort or skills. Job resources refer to aspects of the
job that enable an employee to accomplish the goals related to the
job, reduce the demands of the job and the physiological and psycholog-
ical toll that the job exacts, and motivate the employee to grow, learn,
and develop as a person (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This conceptuali-
ization adopts the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti,
Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) as a starting point. According to
Tims et al. (2012), employees can engage in job crafting in three ways,
by expanding their job resources (structurally or socially), increasing
the requirements of the job, and lowering the demands of the job.

In East Asian countries, outbound travel often consists of group
package tour (GPT) (Wong, Jao, Chan, & Chung, 2010), and the tour
leader plays a critical role on such tours (Wong & Lee, 2012). The tour
leader accompanies members of the tour during their trip (Bowie &
Chang, 2005). A tour leader can also be called a tour manager or tour es-
cort and may sometimes perform the tasks of a tour guide (Luoh &
(WFTGA) defines a tour manager/tour director or escort as “a person
who manages an itinerary on behalf of the tour operator ensuring the
program is carried out as described in the tour operator’s literature
and sold to the traveler/consumer and who gives local practical in-
formation” (WFTGA, 2003). A tour leader plays several instrumental
roles, mediatory (experience management) roles, interpretative/sus-
tainability (destination/resource management) roles, and functions in
various capacities on a tour as a leader, communicator, organizer, sales-
person, consultant, entertainer, and representative of the travel agency
(Hueung, 2008; Weiler & Black, 2014). Many travel agencies consider
tour leaders as representing GPT products or travel brands (Lin, Wang,
& Chen, 2008). However, broad variation exists among guides and
tours in the way tour guides perform their roles in actual practice
(Weiler & Black, 2014). Consequently, tour leaders’ job descriptions are
complex.

Tourists consider the tour leader heading their group to be indis-
pensable (Wang et al., 2010). Due to the critical role tour leaders play
for their tour agencies and for travelers, they must possess a unique
set of skills and be adept at handling numerous challenges. They must
not only understand information related to travel locations but also
maintain a favorable expressions, possess effective communication
skills, have the ability to deal with crises, and possess English language
skills. The skills required of by the tour leader are therefore diverse.
Be-
cause they are under considerable pressure during service encounters,
tour leaders must have patience and diligence when performing tasks
(Bowie & Chang, 2005). Although company rules and tour contracts de-
fine the parameters in which tour leaders operate, they have the free-
dom to revise tour plans according to what is required in particular
circumstances (Tsaur et al., 2011). Thus, tour leaders must exert sub-
stantial effort to perform the work tasks required of them (Wong &
Wang, 2009).

The previously studies have shown that tour leaders’ work situations
require particularly high levels of skill variety, task complexity, and
work discretion. Furthermore, because the outbound GPT frequently ex-
tends over a long period of time, and is ongoing for that period, it neces-
sitates long working hours. This means that the tour leader is expected
to be able to address tour members’ needs 24 hours a day throughout
the tour (Luoh & Tsaur, 2014). During the entire tour, tour
leader mediates the interactions between tour participants and host
destinations, and works long and irregular hours; thus, the job charac-
teristics of a tour leader demand a high degree of emotional labor
(Wong & Wang, 2009). Thus, the job characteristics and function of
tour leader can be said to differ from those of other jobs. Therefore, a
method of altering the tasks and relational boundaries inherent in
their occupation has become an issue of considerable concern for tour
leaders.

2.2. Job outcomes

This study investigates three crucial job outcomes: job satisfaction,
organizational commitment, and job performance. Job satisfaction is
an assessment of how employees feel about their job or aspects of
their job (Spector, 1997), and can be considered a positive emotional
feeling that employees receive as a result of considering that their job
enables them to accomplish or help accomplish the values that they
hold in a job (Locke, 1976). Organizational commitment concerns the
degree to which employees identify with and participate in an organiza-
tion (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Marshall, 2005). Job performance relates to
how far employees are willing to go to play a part in the success of an
organization based on what is required of them as it relates to the role
in the organization (Treadway et al., 2005).

2.3. Job crafting and job outcomes

Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) proposes that people
aim at acquiring, holding on to, and preserving those things on
which they place value, such as material, social, personal, or energetic
resources. Job crafting alters the meaning of work by allowing
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