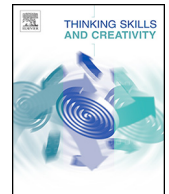




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# Measuring practitioners' creativity in the Taiwanese tourism and hospitality industry



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## ABSTRACT

This study draws on tourism and hospitality literature to develop a new creativity scale that highlights the importance of creativity in the tourism and hospitality industry. It is important for practitioners to develop greater creativity so as to solve problems and obtain competitive advantages. However, few studies have comprehensively examined the impact of creativity on changes in the tourism and hospitality industry, and there is a lack of empirical research on the critical attributes of creativity from the perspective of tourism and hospitality practitioners. This study seeks to fill this gap by constructing and testing a new theoretical model in the tourism and hospitality sector. The scale's reliability and validity are examined through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using samples collected from 854 tourism and hospitality practitioners (579 college students majoring in tourism and hospitality and 275 practitioners in the tourism and hospitality industry). The results identify five critical attributes of creativity: process, creativity, culture, proactive personality, and satisfaction. The implications for theoretical and practical applications are also discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Employee creativity can help organizations obtain competitive advantages for organizational innovation, survival, and long-term success (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Shalley, 1995; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Amabile, 1997; Ford & Gioia, 2000; George & Zhou, 2001; Runco, 2004; George, 2007). Employee creativity refers to the creation of valuable and useful new products, services, ideas, procedures, or processes that can solve problems through the actions of individuals who work together in a complex social system (Woodman et al., 1993). Research on creativity has concentrated on examining the antecedents of employee creativity in an organizational context, such as creative personalities (Batey, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnham, 2009; Hughes, Furnham, & Batey, 2013; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou, 2003), organizational contexts and job characteristics (Amabile et al., 1996), job creativity requirements (Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2000), and leadership (Shin & Zhou, 2003). Besides, the creativity aspects of the 4P model of "person", "process", "place", and "product" have been raised in recent studies (Hansen, Monllor, & McMurchie, 2012; Peng, Lin, & Baum, 2013). Tourism and hospitality researchers have not developed an integrated theoretical framework based

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on the 4P model that explains the unique, independent effects of tourism and hospitality organizations' employees to help organizations more fully leverage the influence of the 4P model on creativity.

A proactive personality refers to a person with a positive attitude who displays the initiative to change procedures in terms of job performance and organizational environment and who thus tends to be creative (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Karpova, Marcketti, and Kamm (2013) also found major creative traits within the fashion industry were risk taking, open minded, and determined. Despite the potential importance for creativity (Amabile et al., 1996; George & Zhou, 2001; Woodman et al., 1993), only a few studies have examined how proactive personalities have fostered creativity (Heinzen, 1999; Kim, Hon, & Crant, 2009; Kim, Hon, & Lee, 2010). For instance, one study that has investigated the linkage between proactive personalities and creative behaviours is that of Seibert et al. (2001), who found that a proactive personality is positively associated with an individual's innovation behaviours.

Many researchers have described an organization's culture as a predictive factor of its success (Choi, Seo, Scott, & Martin, 2010). Delobbe, Haccoun and Vandenberghe (2000) have recently made reference to the understanding of organizational culture as one of the most powerful theoretical tools for an organization's development. In the hospitality industry, Wong and Pang (2003) found training and development, organizational culture, open communication and staff recognition to be the primary motivators of the management staff's creativity. On the other hand, creativity is one of the most important factors for motivating organizational dynamism and survival. Fleith (2000) has argued that creativity may not merely occur in an individual's thoughts, as a suitable atmosphere begets and supports creative thoughts.

Lubart (2001) defines the creative process as the sequence of thoughts and actions that leads to truly creative production; therefore, prior knowledge and the production process might be taken together as the creative process, and the actual product is taken as a creative performance, which makes use of and builds upon the earlier processes. However, it is also possible to see the process as prior or potential knowledge or capacity and the performance as a combination of the production process, which builds upon earlier mental processes, and the final product (Alfonso-Benlliure, Meléndez, & García-Ballesteros, 2013; Lässig, 2013; Lubart, 2001). Although it is hard to know to what extent the creative process varies across the hospitality field, that is, depending on the nature of the task (Nemiro, 1997; Lubart, 2001), creativity researchers in general have long been aware of the importance of both the nature of the final product and the process of making said product. An interesting (if incidental) aspect of this project's findings is that they tend to challenge the common (Western) stereotype that Asians (particularly the Chinese) are not highly creative (Riquelme, 2002); the hospitality field is one area (management might be another) in which East Asians can clearly manifest their creative talents.

Creativity theory advocates creative-process engagement, which is defined as employee involvement in creativity-relevant methods or processes of creativity requirements of jobs and related creative performance (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Creative-process engagement is a key creativity requirement for individuals in creative theory and includes attitudes, workplace, satisfaction, and organizational culture (Shalley et al., 2000). This narrow definition for creativity raises the question of how creative-process engagement interfaces with the broader responsibilities and accountabilities that tend to be a part of careers with strong creativity components (Gilson & Shalley, 2004). This void is particularly significant because creative-process engagement tends to be cognitively demanding for employees, and such activities are ultimately connected to organizational competitive advantage (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Although the link between creativity and organizational success has been documented in the tourism and hospitality industry (e.g., Wong & Pang, 2003), little research has been conducted to understand creativity and its dimensions as an antecedent for job or occupational satisfaction. Robinson and Beesley (2010) have found that there is a clear relationship between creativity and both organizational and occupational satisfaction. Hence, the purpose of this study is to review and integrate the results of previous literature. Because most of the earlier studies have addressed the determinants of creativity exhibited by individual employees, this will be the emphasis of our review. We provide a synthesis based on the 4P model of creativity using tourism and hospitality organizations to build the new research framework. In sum, this study aims to fill this void by using creativity theories and Rhodes' (1961) 4P theory as an overarching theory and develop the creativity scale for tourism and hospitality business practitioners. Through a literature review and statistical analyses, this study proposes indicators to measure the creativity of tourism and hospitality business practitioners, and it serves as a tool for training a professional workforce in the tourism and hospitality industry. We also suggest a number of new directions for creativity research.

## 2. Literature review

Creativity refers to the generation of novel and useful ideas (Amabile, 1997; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Researchers have devoted much attention to examining the important attributes and antecedents of creativity (Amabile, 1997; Ford & Gioia, 2000; George & Zhou, 2001; Pearce, 2004). In the decision-making process, creativity is of crucial importance (O'Halloran & O'Halloran, 2001). In the past, many researchers have defined creativity in terms of the development of new ideas about products, practices, services or procedures— ideas that are potentially useful to the organization in the short or long term (e.g., Amabile, 1996). While the traditional "4Ps" definition of creativity emphasizes the perspectives of person, place, process and product (Rhodes, 1961), researchers have recently begun to interpret creativity in more holistic, dynamic and multidimensional terms. There is also a greater awareness that major breakthroughs tend to be the cumulative effect of incremental procedural adaptations.

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