



Discussion paper

Employee responsibility and basic human values in the hospitality sector



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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate the connection between the personal value profile of different groups of hospitality employees (i.e., restaurant managers, chefs/cooks, waiters/bartenders, and kitchen helpers) and the magnitude of authority and responsibility in their positions using the analytical aspect of Schwartz's (1992) theory in basic human values as the basis. A set of logistic regression models are created to provide support for the hypotheses related to such jobs with self-transcendence, self enhancement axis, and openness to change-conservation axis of Schwartz's theory of basic human values and to achieve the objectives of the study. Our findings generally supported the hypothesized relationships between personal values and professional status of hospitality employees. Distinct relationships are manifested in jobs with higher professional status such as restaurant managers and chefs/cooks. The study aims to expand on the existing literature by exploring the human values in the hospitality sector.

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1. Introduction

The hospitality industry significantly contributes to the European economy with its gross domestic product (GDP) and employment rates (1 out of every 13 jobs in Europe according to Ernst and Young, 2013). As such, investigating how and why employees of the hospitality industry are linked to this sector is a critical issue, because it not only determines worker productivity and performance, but also identifies how the goals of the hospitality businesses (i.e. improving customer satisfaction, perceived service quality, customer loyalty, and brand image) are achieved (Tsui et al., 2013). However, improvements in service quality and greater commitment among employees is paradoxical when the sector offers low pay, antisocial working hours, menial tasks, and limited career opportunities (Davidson et al., 2011; Walsh and Taylor, 2007).

Reasons as to why a person ends up working in a particular job position vary, and one of the most important reasons is the satisfaction of certain needs. According to the self-concordance model of Sheldon and Elliot (1999), need satisfaction is affected

by the personal interests of each individual, which motivates them to select goals that reflect their enduring interests and deepest values. Self-concordant objectives are goals sought because of intrinsic motivations or beliefs with which people identify themselves. These objectives are the result of their own choices, indicating an internal locus of causality. By contrast, self-discordant goals arise from external perceived locus of causality, which is not integrated in the self of the individual.

Accordingly, the compatibility between people and organizations (i.e., P–O fit) becomes important (Holland, 1997). According to Kristof (1996), P–O fit implies the comparison between culture, climate, values, goals, and norms of a company and the values, goals, personality, and attitudes of each person. Thus, this study is conducted from the perspective of vocational psychology, which suggests that people join career environments that best match their preferences and personality, and pertains to organizations that better help them obtain their valued outcomes (Holland, 1997).

In the workplace environment, the behavior of workers is affected by individual values (González-Rodríguez et al., 2014). Rasouli et al. (2015) considers the values of employees to be conditioned by early education and personal experiences. These values may also change or be reinforced by the effects of higher education institutions, professional affiliations, and even companies that subsequently employ them. Based on the analytical perspective of Schwartz's (1992) theory of basic human values, this study

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examines the relationship between the personal value profile of different groups of employees in the hospitality sector (restaurant managers, chefs/cooks, waiters/bartenders, and kitchen helpers) and the degree of authority and responsibility in their positions. Some researchers have highlighted the relationship between hierarchical positions with the human value profile of the employees (although, as far as we know, none in the context of the hospitality industry). These researchers have also shown that certain human values fit better with some types of jobs or positions depending on their place in the organizational hierarchy. A right level of P-O fit constitutes a vital factor in the improvement of employee performance and the enhancement of business competitiveness (Casullo and Castro Solano, 2003; Sosik, 2005; Groves and LaRocca, 2012; Jaskyte, 2014; Anjum et al., 2014). Therefore, the results obtained by Jaskyte (2014), using the data from the World Value Survey in a sample of business employees, highlights some differences in individual values based on job position, either supervisory or non-supervisory. In particular, supervisors exhibit higher achievement than non-supervisors. Supervisors are also more creative and take more risks than non-supervisors, thus highlighting their openness to change. In contrast, non-supervisors give more importance to living in secure surroundings, making them more conservative than their supervisors.

Anjum et al. (2014) reported a significant positive correlation between self-enhancement values and the dominant style of management, which is a leadership style based on the exercise of authority, power, and control. Employees who adopt these self-enhancement values are inspired by the desire for power and naturally seek positions of authority. This condition appears to be consistent with the atmosphere that fills many cuisines of certain restaurants, where both restaurant managers and chefs/cooks may believe that the only way to take responsibility and ensure the performance of hospitality businesses is to exercise this style of management.

Some previous studies have also indicated that those employees who reach positions of greater responsibility are often permeated with values associated with openness to change (i.e., varied and exciting life, creativity, daring, independence, freedom, and choosing one's own goals), while job positions of people with lower socioeconomic status tend to be more conservative. In terms of the relationship between the level of responsibility in the workplace and a greater openness to change, previous research has proven that this contingency is associated with a particular style of leadership, specifically transformational leadership. According to Sosik (2005), transformational leaders wish to depart from the status quo, which is consistent with the human values of openness to change. Moreover, Groves and LaRocca (2012) reported a significant correlation among transformational leadership, openness to change values, and self-transcendent values, but transformational leadership was not significantly associated with traditional values. In terms of the relationship between conservative values and professional status in the context of the armed forces, Casullo and Castro Solano (2003) asserted that militaries of low socioeconomic status are more conservative than those of higher status. They also argued that compared with officers, cadets score higher on the three human values of the conservation axis, namely, security, conformity, and tradition.

In analyzing the relationship between hierarchical position and human values, we also attempt to identify whether significant differences exist on each of Schwartz's (1992) 10 value dimensions, which include universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction, across occupation types. Certainly, human values are not only determined by the type of job or its hierarchical position. The range of influencing factors is unlimited because each individual can be affected by different elements and a similar factor

may inflict heterogeneous effects on different individuals. Thus, the aim of this research is not to define which variables determine the human values of hospitality employees, but rather to investigate whether this set of values (regardless of how they have emerged) discriminates job positions in the hospitality industry, particularly in terms of hierarchical authority and social prestige. This research delves into altruistic or selfish motivations, either individualism or conformism, that pervade different professions in the hospitality industry. Finally, the study improves the literature by exploring the human values in the hospitality context. To date, no study has explored Schwartz's theory of basic human values in a hospitality setting. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring how different types of European employees in the hospitality industry exhibit different human values, which may be self-concordant or self-discordant with their deepest interests and motivations.

In summary, this present study hypothesizes that the values of hospitality workers are influenced by their positions in the hierarchy. Thus, when comparing two different groups of employees, the group with higher seniority or professional status (in descending order, restaurant managers, chefs/cooks, waiters, and kitchen helpers, in this paper) should exhibit values related to self-enhancement (achievement and/or power) and openness to change (stimulation and/or self-direction), whereas employees with the lowest professional status should exhibit greater self-transcendence (universalism and/or benevolence) and conservation (security, conformity, and/or security).

The remainder of this paper is divided into several sections. Section 2 presents a review of relevant literature and the hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 presents the results obtained in relation to the hypotheses. Section 5 discusses the most relevant evidence drawn from the empirical study. Section 6 concludes the paper with the limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Basic human values in the hospitality sector

2.1. Framework of theory of basic human values

Human values are underlying conceptions regarding what is good and desirable (i.e., freedom, obedience, humility, success, and justice). In this regard, values play a critical role by differentiating what is important from what is not in the lives of people. Many authors, such as Rokeach (1973), place more importance and stress on values considered to be capable of uniting interests, although these values often differ and are even contradictory to the research findings on human behavior.

Values form the essential core of every human being and provide the basic principles that guide us throughout our lives (Grönlund, 2012). Although values determine each individual's course of action at home and work environments, limited research has focused on the professional context primarily because of the difficulty in measuring variable values and the influence of other psychosocial aspects.

Although the study of human values dates back to ancient times, the two prevailing schools of thought are relatively recent. Kluckhohn (1951) emphasizes actions, whereas Rokeach (1973) asserts that values give meaning and significance to these human actions. In the current study, Schwartz's theory of basic human values is used as a frame of reference. Schwartz (1994) enriched and strengthened Rokeach's original theory by suggesting that we consider what is important in our life when examining human values. Schwartz also defines values as those objectives that are desirable, transcendent, and of variable importance, which establish the principles guiding the life of a person or social entity. Schwartz's

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