



Discussion paper

## Eco-innovation and organizational culture in the hotel industry



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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 24 October 2016

Received in revised form 31 May 2017

Accepted 1 June 2017

#### Keywords:

Innovation management  
Sustainability  
Culture and climate  
Environmental responsibility

### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the relationship between organizational culture and eco-innovation in a sample of 130 hotels in Oaxaca, Mexico.

A theoretical model is developed to link the compatibility of the four types of organizational culture defined in the Competing Values Framework (CVF) (hierarchy, clan, market, and adhocracy culture) to different modes of eco-innovation (radical–incremental and component–architectural).

In order to test the hypotheses, regression and correlation analyses are conducted. Adhocracy culture and organization size are found to be significant in explaining the presence of eco-innovation.

The implications of these results for firms tend towards the convenience of adopting an adhocracy culture, which facilitates the implementation of eco-innovation at different levels and potentiates both environmental and organizational results.

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## 1. Introduction

According to Galpin et al. (2015), and Harris and Crane (2002), eco-innovation is based on an organizational culture that targets its beliefs, values and behavior towards sustainability. However, the relationship between organizational culture and eco-innovation is not addressed in the literature. There are some studies dealing with the impact of organizational culture on the implementation of green innovations. For example, Ramus (2001, 2002), Hillestad et al. (2010), Smerecnik and Andersen (2010), and Lin and Ho (2011) conclude that leadership influences the initiative and participation of staff in developing ideas and sustainable actions. Chang (2011) shows that corporate environmental ethics has a positive effect on the implementation of green innovations; while Chou et al. (2012) highlight the pressures that organizations place on employees to adopt green practices. However, even if the aforementioned studies show a link between various aspects of organizational culture and eco-innovation, they do not discuss organizational culture deeply, nor do they analyze it as an integral concept. Organizational culture is defined as a system that integrates symbols, values, ideas, meanings, languages, behaviors, and expectations, which is accepted and shared by the members of the organization in order to guide them

on how to think and act appropriately (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Schein, 2004). Organizational culture is not monolithic; it is comprised of several types (see Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983), and the differences in these types may have an effect on the ways in which firms implement eco-innovation.

Regarding the relationship between organizational culture and eco-innovation, Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) indicate that sustainability is understood and adopted by each company differently, depending on the prevailing type of organizational culture. According to these authors, in a culture where the highest value is placed on internal processes (hierarchical culture), sustainability is understood as greater efficiency in resource use and the maximizing of production in order to obtain more economic benefits; a culture guided by the values of human relationships (clan culture) attempts to preserve the natural environment in order to achieve health, safety and welfare for human beings; an organizational culture based on the values of a rational system (market culture) makes an effort in order to achieve both greater efficiency in processes and higher reputation of the firm in terms of environmental issues; and finally, a culture guided by the values of an open system (adhocracy culture) tries to contribute to the overall ecological balance.

Outside of the ecological aspect, it finds that flexible and externally oriented cultures, as identified in CVF (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983) are more predisposed to innovation, while stable and internally oriented cultures are not (see Ergun and Tasgit, 2013; Obenchain et al., 2004; Naranjo-Valencia

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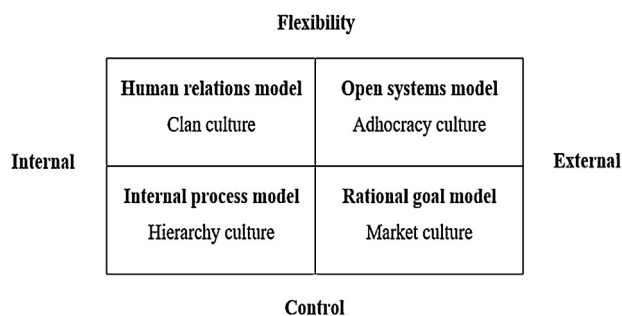


Fig. 1. Competing Values Framework.

Source: Adapted from Cameron and Quinn (2006); and Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983).

et al., 2010; Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2011; Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2016, 2011, 2016).

Tourism affects the natural environment negatively through the destruction of wildlife, pollution and waste generation (Andereck et al., 2005). This damage to the environment diminishes quality of life, especially for the members of host communities (Andereck et al., 2005; Gezici, 2006); threatens the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Melián-González and García-Falcón, 2003; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2012), and increases the vulnerability of the global system (Becken et al., 2014). Given these negative impacts of tourism, and due to lax or nonexistent environmental regulation (Carmona-Moreno et al., 2004; Sánchez-Medina et al., 2016), any environmental actions that a hotel implements are voluntary and implemented in order to obtain different benefits for the organization, stakeholders, and the environment (see Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Fraj et al., 2015; Pereira-Moliner et al., 2012; Sánchez-Medina et al., 2016; Park and Kim, 2014).

Organizational culture provides a means for members of the organization to understand what happens in their environment (Cameron and Quinn, 2006); it lays the foundation for a hotel to create its own interpretation of “environment”, either in a favorable manner (as an opportunity) or unfavorable (as a threat); to implement environmental actions, and to determine the benefits that can be obtained.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by showing how organizational culture and eco-innovation relate to each other. With this purpose in mind, a research model is developed based on two axes of eco-innovation identified by Hellström (2007): incremental-radical and component-architectural; examples of their combinations (incremental-component, incremental-architectural, radical-component and radical-architectural) are identified in the hotel sector, and these axes of eco-innovation are linked to the types of organizational culture developed in the CVF (hierarchy, clan, market, and adhocracy culture).

Below, we describe the theoretical framework for the study and its hypotheses; later, we present the method, results, discussion, and; finally, limitations and concluding remarks.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Competing values framework

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) is an analytical model of organizational culture based on the predominant values of an organization. Values are grouped along two axes: flexibility – stability, and external – internal focus. Each of the resulting four quadrants characterizes a type of organizational culture: hierarchy culture (internal process model), market culture (rational goal model), clan culture (human relations model), and adhocracy culture (open systems model) (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Jones et al., 2005; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983), see Fig. 1.

In the CVF, each type of organizational culture is based on particular values which are in opposition to each other. For example, clan culture, characterized by its flexibility and internal focus, contrasts with market culture which emphasizes control and external focus. Similarly, the flexibility and external focus of adhocracy culture is in opposition to hierarchy culture, which is characterized by control and internal focus; however, various types of culture may coexist in organizations, with one or more being dominant (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).

#### 2.1.1. Hierarchy culture

Cameron and Quinn (2006) state that hierarchy or bureaucracy was the ideal form of organization at the beginning of the twentieth century, where the efficient production of goods and services was the main goal. Organizations based on a culture of hierarchy typically have a highly formalized and structured workplace where the daily activity is guided by clearly defined procedures. Leaders are typically good coordinators. The most appreciated values are stability and predictability in both activities and people in order to gain stability, control, and efficiency in the organization (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).

#### 2.1.2. Market culture

In the mid 1960's, new forms of information use were developed which allowed managers to plan and act more efficiently using a systemic approach drawn from the link between the organization and its general environment (Barley and Kunda, 1992). Cameron and Quinn (2006) point out that with this shift organizations sought to be more effective through links to external elements. In such a scheme, the organization itself functions as a market where transactions with external groups such as providers, clients, contractors, concessionaires, unions and regulators take place in order to gain some competitive advantages.

Market culture is based on planning and setting goals. A work environment with high demands targeting competitiveness between people and organizations (within the industry) develops. In this type of organization leaders are tough, demanding, and have clearly defined goals. Success is defined in terms of market share and penetration; displacing competitors and becoming a leader are the intended goals (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).

#### 2.1.3. Clan culture

Barley and Kunda (1992) point out that the paradigm of human relations is opposed to the rationalism and individualism of scientific management, since human relations theory sees employees as fundamentally social beings; therefore, social interaction and the need to belong to a group are required for human and labor fulfillment.

In this regard, clan culture is based on the cohesion and morale of human relations, turning the organization into a big family in which leaders play the role of mentors while adopting a paternal posture. A friendly work environment is highly valued, as are principles such as loyalty, tradition, and collaboration. The main goal is the development of the members of the organization (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).

#### 2.1.4. Adhocracy culture

Cameron and Quinn (2006) state that as the world evolved from the industrial age to the information age, a new type of organization emerged, one that was more sensitive to frequent changes in the environment and the reduction of a product's useful life. In adhocracy, adaptability, flexibility, and creativity counter uncertainty, ambiguity, and information overload.

Adhocracy culture relies on flexibility in answers and availability for action. A dynamic, creative, and entrepreneurial environment in the workplace is promoted, where people can

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