Factors influencing employee motivation in hotels

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Abstract

Employees are a fundamental component of service delivery in hotels. Therefore, motivating employees can positively affect the performance of employees which can in turn positively impact on service quality. The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing employee motivation in hotels in South Africa. The study followed a descriptive quantitative design. A total of 246 hotel employees successfully completed questionnaires. Factor analysis was used to reach the study objectives. The study revealed that 'responsibility and being appreciated', 'immaterial incentives' and 'teamwork' significantly influence ($p<0.05$) employees' motivation. However, 'responsibility and being appreciated' emerged as the factor highly influencing employees' motivation in hotels whilst 'immaterial incentives' was rated by respondents as highly influencing employees' motivations. To motivate employees, hotel managers should evaluate the needs of employees every year. In addition, hotels should empower employees to assist managers in achieving objectives. If employees are empowered their drive to perform increases. To the best of the author's knowledge, this paper is the first that attempts to identify factors influencing employee motivation in hotels in South Africa. Because of the high staff turnover and high absenteeism in hotels, the findings can help managers realize the importance of employee motivation to retain quality staffing.

Keywords: service quality, staff turnover, absenteeism, hotel managers, South Africa

Introduction

Employees are a fundamental component of service delivery in the hotel industry (Karatepe & Uludağ, 2007). As such, it is important for hotel managers to keep employees motivated all the time (Çetin, 2013). Moreover, motivating employees can positively affect the performance of employees which in turn can affect service quality and hotel occupancies. Consequently, employee motivation, plays a central role in hotel management (Wasike & Ndivo, 2015). According to Ross (2005), due to the labour intensive nature of the hotel industry, employees work under difficult situations, they work for long and, odd hours and face unpleasant experiences during the service delivery process to customers. In the delivery of hotel services, a motivated and satisfied staff is a primary concern (Kingir & Mesci, 2010). Therefore, keeping employees motivated and satisfied is very important, as customer dissatisfaction or satisfaction, with the services provided, may be influenced by employees' dissatisfaction or satisfaction levels (Çetin, 2013).

However, it is not easy for hotel managers to motivate employees to stay on the job and to offer the efficient, good service which customers need and expect (Ross, 2005). If employees are not satisfied, they will not perform to expected norms (Mhlanga, 2018). Workplace dissatisfaction and poor performance usually lead to high employee turnover in the hotel industry (Aksu, 2005). Therefore, to reduce labour turnover and retain productive employees, hotel managers should keep employees motivated.

Literature Review

Cheng and Brown, (1998) found that the factors that influence employee motivation in hotels were, wages and job security, training programme and growth opportunities. Wong, Siu and Tsang (1999) found that hotel employees were motivated by social opportunities, immaterial

incentives, and responsibility and being appreciated. Salih (2003) identified the following as factors motivating employees in hotels, namely; job security, being appreciated, monetary incentives, teamwork, bonuses and promotion. Ross (2005) conducted research to identify the factors that affected the motivation of employees in hotels. The following were identified as factors influencing employee motivation, namely; job security, good relations with superiors, wage and appreciation based on fair performance, trustful and cooperative relations with workmates, responsibility and being appreciated, appropriate working environment, ensuring opportunities for social development, doing group work and work rotation. However, responsibility and being appreciated' were identified as the factor highly impacting employees motivation (Ross, 2005). In his research carried out in five-star hotel business in Antalya region, Aksu (2005) identified the following as the factors influencing employees' motivation, namely; social opportunities, training programmes, immaterial incentives, responsibility and being appreciated, and teamwork. Wasike and Ndivo (2015) investigated factors influencing the motivation of employees in hotels in Kenyan hotels. Their findings highlighted that the following factors impacted on employee motivation, namely; 'responsibility and being appreciated', followed by 'immaterial incentives' and 'teamwork' with 'responsibility and being appreciated' being the factor highly impacting on overall employees' motivation.

In their study, Karatepe and Uludağ (2007) identified social conditions, working hours and financial incentives as factors impacting employee motivation in hotels. Kingir and Mesci (2010) used 16 motivational attributes to identify the factors that affected hotel employees' motivation in Bodrum. These attributes were classified into four motivational dimensions, namely, social opportunities, immaterial incentives, responsibility and being appreciated, and teamwork. The findings revealed that 'responsibility and being appreciated', followed by 'immaterial incentives' and 'teamwork' significantly impacted on employees motivation with 'responsibility and being appreciated' being the factor highly impacting on overall employees' motivation. These authors also found that respondents selected 'immaterial incentives' as the factor highly motivating them.

Research Methodology

This study followed a descriptive quantitative design. The subject under investigation were hotel employees in Nelspruit, South Africa. A list of local registered hotels was obtained from Mbombela Municipality in Nelspruit. These hotels had to comply with the criteria set by Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA, 2017:3) for classification as a hotel, namely an establishment that provides formal accommodation with full or limited service to the travelling public. A hotel must have a reception area and also offer a dining facility. It must also have a minimum of 6 rooms but more likely exceeds 20 rooms. Consequently, nine hotels were included in the study.

A self-administered questionnaire based on the motivational model developed by Kingir and Mesci's (2010) was developed and customised to address the objectives and setting of the study. As in Kingir and Mesci's (2010) motivational model, the questionnaire contained 16 items for identifying factors impacting employees' motivation. These attributes represented four motivational dimensions (social opportunities, immaterial incentives, responsibility and being appreciated, and teamwork). Some research endeavours (Karatepe & Uludağ, 2007; Kingir & Mesci, 2010) identify these four dimensions as the most important that measure employees' motivation; hence, they were adopted for this study.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part had respondents' demographic characteristics, which included gender, age, education, home language and monthly income. The second part listed factors impacting employees' motivation. To identify factors impacting employees' motivation, Kingir and Mesci's (2010) motivational model was used using a motivational scale. To measure factors impacting on employees' motivation, a five-point Likert-

type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), indifferent (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5).

The sample size for the study was determined such that it achieved a 95 per cent confidence level and was within a 5 per cent sampling error, as recommended by Mhlanga and Tichaawa (2016). Consequently, a sample size of at least 246 respondents was deemed appropriate and therefore used for this study. Random sampling, was used to select respondents (Leedy & Ormrod 2013). The hotel manager from each participating hotel was approached for permission to conduct the study. Data were collected in February 2018 from Fridays to Mondays, during the lunch period. The researcher approached every employee in each department. The researcher explained the aim of the study to the employees and asked them to participate. It was emphasised that the researcher would treat the information provided as confidential and anonymous. Hotel employees who were willing to participate in the study received a questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were collected, checked and discussed with the respondents in case of any queries. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23, which enabled the generation of descriptive statistics for the interpretation of the results. Factor analysis was used to reach the study objectives.

Results and Discussion

A total of 246 fully completed questionnaires were gathered, which corresponded with the calculated sample size. The respondents' demographic profile is depicted in Table 1. Of the 246 respondents, 48% (n=117) were male. Most of the respondents were in the age group 25 to 34 years (33%), followed by respondents in the age group 35 to 44 years. SiSwati was the language most frequently used by respondents (38%), followed by IsiZulu (23%). Most of the respondents (90%) earned a salary below ZAR 10 000 per month.

Table 1: Demographic information and overall means and standard deviations

Demographic variables	n	%	Motivational dimensions								Overall motivation	
			Social opportunities		Immaterial incentives		Responsibility and being appreciated		Teamwork			
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Gender												
Male	117	48	4.26	0.53	4.38	0.46	4.12	0.64	4.49	0.50	4.56	0.66
Female	129	52	4.08	0.61	3.96	0.68	4.49	0.76	4.23	0.74	4.39	0.73
Age												
≤24	19	8	4.39	0.74	3.01	0.85	4.36	0.54	4.09	0.61	4.28	0.74
25-34	83	33	4.20	0.56	3.20	0.61	4.81	0.96	4.38	0.84	4.35	0.65
35-44	66	27	4.07	1.02	3.69	0.78	4.34	0.66	4.43	0.55	4.41	0.54
45-54	49	20	3.62	0.59	3.75	0.67	4.56	0.92	4.56	0.63	4.06	0.69
55-64	22	9	3.50	0.75	3.89	0.83	4.42	0.72	4.16	0.67	4.02	0.73
≥65	7	3	3.91	0.63	3.64	0.46	4.11	0.46	4.29	0.86	4.01	0.49
Education												
No schooling	42	17	4.47	0.63	3.69	0.46	4.26	1.08	4.26	0.63	4.28	0.73
Primary school	89	36	4.32	0.55	2.70	0.59	4.10	0.76	4.03	0.73	4.07	0.51
High school	74	30	4.28	0.60	3.29	0.62	4.04	0.61	4.19	0.40	4.30	0.72
Tertiary Diploma	29	12	4.49	0.72	2.62	0.68	3.67	0.82	3.78	0.78	4.21	0.64
Tertiary Degree,	7	3	4.22	0.42	4.33	0.71	3.82	0.56	4.37	0.70	4.13	0.57
Other Postgrad	5	2	4.30	0.65	4.09	0.53	4.40	0.60	4.25	0.52	4.02	0.69
Home language	31	13	4.49	0.79	3.78	0.68	4.17	0.54	4.06	0.84	4.26	0.63
English	40	16	4.38	0.81	3.96	0.80	3.66	0.87	4.25	0.62	4.42	0.86
Afrikaans	93	38	4.27	0.67	3.07	0.76	4.22	0.60	4.48	0.67	4.39	0.74
SiSwati	58	23	4.16	0.85	3.19	0.89	4.14	0.75	4.23	0.83	4.25	0.59
IsiZulu, Other	24	10	4.20	0.51	3.49	0.95	4.03	0.52	3.99	0.70	4.27	0.66

Monthly income												
≤R10 000	221	90	4.58	0.96	2.39	0.64	3.29	0.43	4.36	0.53	2.46	0.62
R10 001-R19 999	21	8	4.45	0.55	3.95	0.58	3.94	0.51	4.09	0.93	3.41	0.79
≥R20 000	4	2	4.26	0.93	4.08	0.62	4.51	0.90	4.03	0.63	4.64	1.01
All	**246**	**100**	**4.22**	**0.69**	**3.55**	**0.68**	**4.16**	**0.69**	**4.23**	**0.68**	**4.15**	**0.68**

Table 1 depicts the variable mean scores and standard deviations calculated for the total sample and different demographic groups. An initial glance at the data reveals that factors impacting respondents' motivation varied from 2.39 for immaterial incentives to 4.81 for responsibility and being appreciated, with five being the highest possible score. Respondents reported a high score for overall motivation (4.15). Standard deviations between 0.68 and 0.69 were calculated.

By using descriptive analysis, the means and standard deviations of 16 motivational attributes in the nine hotel settings are presented (Table 2).

Table 2: Means and standard deviations for employees' motivation

	Attributes	Overall motivation	
		M	SD
V1	Amount of payment effects the motivation positively.	4.26	0.79
V2	Participant management approach affects positively.	4.01	0.62
V3	Appreciation motivates the employees.	3.86	0.53
V4	Optimum time of work in businesses affects the motivation.	4.57	0.88
V5	Determination of promotions according to the merits boosts motivation.	4.85	0.64
V6	Employees must be provided social facilities (housing, transportation, local etc.) at the highest standards.	4.45	0.56
V7	Fair payments is very crucial for employees.	4.69	0.92
V8	Perception of the significance level in the job being done affects the motivation positively.	4.33	1.06
V9	Employees give importance to moral incentives (appreciation, respect, etc) as well as physical incentives.	4.18	0.75
V10	Participation of employees in taking the decisions becomes incentive.	4.51	0.59
V11	Employees like to be given responsibility.	4.48	0.81
V12	Juniors should have the opportunity to discuss with seniors at any time in any matter.	4.05	0.57
V13	Success of the employees should be appreciated at all times.	4.42	0.70
V14	Rewards motivates employees at a higher level.	4.79	0.96
V15	Team work adds more to the motivation.	4.26	0.54
V16	Working is natural like games or entertainment for people.	2.97	0.68
	Overall	**4.29**	**0.73**

Employees' motivational attributes were measured on a five point Likert-type scale, where the higher the score, the greater the motivational score (Table 2). The mean scores of attributes impacting employees' motivation ranged from 2.97 to 4.85. The lowest motivational item was "working is natural like games or entertainment for people" (V16). On the other hand, employees' highest motivational item was "determination of promotions according to the merits boosts motivation" (V5) which indicates that employees strongly agree that determination of promotions according to the merits boosts motivation. The overall mean score for motivational items was 4.29. This score indicates that on average, employees agree that the 16 factors (in Table 2) influence employees' motivation in hotels.

In order to determine the factors impacting employees' motivation, the 16 motivational attributes were factor-analysed, using principal component analysis with orthogonal VARIMAX rotation, to identify underlying factors. The extraction of the factors and the variables were based on the eigenvalues and the factor loadings of the variables. Only factors with an eigenvalue larger than one and attributes with loading > 0.50 were considered. The

exploratory factor analysis extracted four factors, which accounted for 75 per cent of variance in the data. Table 3 illustrates the results of this VARIMAX process.

Table 3. Factor and reliability analysis results of motivational dimensions and employee motivation

ITEMS	FACTORS				COMMUNALITIES
	F1	F2	F3	F4	
V1	0.662				0.683
V2	0.578				0.575
V3	0.689				0.618
V4	0.550				0.594
V5	0.709				0.602
V6	0.623				0.714
V7	0.591				0.662
V8		0.687			0.589
V9		0.646			0.471
V10		0.592			0.640
V11			0.529		0.733
V12			0.703		0.597
V13			0.668		0.535
V14				0.712	0.696
V15				0.696	0.817
V16				0.515	0.408
Eigenvalue	**3.947**	**3.765**	**3.873**	**2.986**	**14.571**
% of variance	**22.451**	**16.368**	**17.033**	**13.560**	**69.412**
Cronbach alpha	**0.7195**	**0.8239**	**0.7540**	**0.7026**	**0.7500**
Number of items	**7**	**3**	**3**	**3**	

Reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha) was calculated to test the reliability and internal consistency of each factor. The results of the reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the extracted factors ranged from 0.7026 to 0.8239. That is well above the minimum value of 0.60, which is considered acceptable as an indication of scale reliability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). These values suggest good internal consistency of the factors. Finally, Cronbach's alpha value for the overall employee motivation scale is 0.7500 and indicates its high reliability. Most of the factor loadings were greater than 0.60, implying a reasonably high correlation between extracted factors and their individual items. The communalities of 16 items ranged from 0.408 to 0.817 indicating that a large amount of variance has been extracted by the factor solution. The four motivational factors identified by VARIMAX as reliable and consistent with an Eigenvalue greater than one are as follows;

Factor 1: Social opportunities had seven attributes which accounted for 22.45% of the variance, with an Eigenvalue of 3.95 and an alpha coefficient of 0.7195. This factor included the following attributes 'amount of payment effects the motivation positively,' 'participant management approach affects positively,' 'participant management approach affects positively,' 'optimum time of work in businesses affects the motivation,' 'determination of promotions according to the merits boosts motivation,' 'employees must be provided social facilities at the highest standards,' and 'fair payments is very crucial for employees'.

Factor 2: Immaterial incentives had three attributes which accounted for 16.37% of the variance, with an Eigenvalue of 3.77 and an alpha coefficient of 0.8239. This factor included the following attributes 'perception of the significance level in the job being done affects the motivation positively,' 'employees give importance to moral incentives as well as physical incentives,' and 'participation of employees in taking the decisions becomes incentive'.

Factor 3: Responsibility and being appreciated had three attributes which accounted for 17.03% of the variance, with an Eigenvalue of 3.87 and an alpha coefficient of 0.7540. This factor included the following attributes 'employees like to be given responsibility,' 'juniors should have the opportunity to discuss with seniors at any time in any matter,' and 'success of the employees should be appreciate at all times'.

Factor 4: Teamwork had three attributes which accounted for 13.56% of the variance, with an Eigenvalue of 2.99 and an alpha coefficient of 0.7026. This factor included the following attributes 'rewards motivates employees at a higher level', 'team work adds more to the motivation,' and 'working is natural like games or entertainment for people'.

The four orthogonal factors (Social opportunities, immaterial incentives, responsibility and being appreciated, and teamwork) were used in Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis to investigate the relationship of overall employee motivation (dependent variable) with the four service dimensions (independent variables). The results of the correlation analysis are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation results of motivational dimensions and overall employee motivation

Motivational dimensions	Overall employee motivation	
	Correlation coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Social opportunities	0.52	0.3618
Immaterial incentives	0.73	<.0001*
Responsibility and being appreciated	0.86	<.0001*
Teamwork	0.68	<.0001*

The data revealed that three factors namely, 'responsibility and being appreciated', followed by 'immaterial incentives' and 'teamwork' significantly impacted ($p<0.05$) on employee motivation whilst 'social opportunities' did not have any impact ($p<0.05$) on employee motivation. The factor with the highest positive impact on overall employee motivation was 'responsibility and being appreciated' (r= 0.86), followed by 'immaterial incentives' (r=0.73) and 'teamwork' (r=0.68). The impact of 'responsibility and being appreciated' highly influencing employee motivation deviates from previous literature (Cheng & Brown, 1998; Wong et al., 1999) who found different factors highly impacting on employee motivation in hotels. However, a possible reason for the difference in results between this study and previous scholars might be the difference in target sample. However, the results corroborate the findings by Kingir and Mesci (2010) who also found 'responsibility and being appreciated' as the factor highly impacting on employees' motivations in hotels. A full regression model was run for the dependent variable (employee motivation). The model regressed the four motivational dimensions against overall employee motivation. The regression model is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression results of motivational dimensions and overall employee motivation

Independent variables	Model : Overall employee motivation	
	t-value	p-value (p)
Social opportunities	9.46	0.0104*
Immaterial incentives	17.52	0.0001*
Responsibility and being appreciated	14.38	0.0001*
Teamwork	7.09	0.0165*

* indicates significant relation ($p<0.05$)

The regression model depicted in Table 5 shows that all four factors, namely, social opportunities ($p<0.0104$), immaterial incentives (p=0.0001), responsibility and being appreciated (p=0.0001), and teamwork ($p<0.0165$) significantly impacted ($p<0.05$) positively on employees' motivation in hotels. The t-values in Table 5 indicate the relative impact of each

factor on employee motivation. 'Immaterial incentives' (t=17.52) were rated by respondents as the attribute highly impacting positively on employees' motivations, followed by responsibility and being appreciated (t=14.38) and social opportunities (t=9.46).

The research findings in this study where reliability highly ranked amongst the factors that impacted on employee motivation in hotels corroborates the findings by Wong et al. (1999) who found 'immaterial incentives' as the highest factor positively impacting on employees' motivation in hotels. It I interesting to note that the most important job factor that contributes to job satisfaction for hotel workers is not really the monetary incentives or benefits, but immaterial incentives that gave the recognition and esteem to employees or fame the job gave them.

The model F-value was calculated at 14.57 (p<0001). The four motivational attributes had a coefficient determination (R^2) of 0.6941 (Table 3) and thus explained more than 69 per cent of the variability in overall employee motivation. This explanation of the variability in overall employee motivation is high when compared to other studies. For example, the regression results of a study performed by Kingir and Mesci (2010), identified 'responsibility and being appreciated', followed by 'immaterial incentives' and 'teamwork' dimensions as significant factors (p<0.05) impacting on employee motivation, which explained only 66 per cent of employee motivation.

Conclusions and Managerial Implications

The purpose of this research endeavour was to identify factors influencing employees' motivations in hotels in South Africa. The study clearly indicates that 'responsibility and being appreciated', followed by 'immaterial incentives' and 'teamwork' significantly influencing (p<0.05) employees' motivation. However, among these three dimensions, 'responsibility and being appreciated' emerged as the factor highly influencing employees' motivation in hotels. The study further shows that 'immaterial incentives' was rated by respondents as the attribute highly influencing employees' motivations in hotels. It is suggested that in order to provide the right motivational factors to employees, hotel managers should evaluate the needs of employees every year. Management can also make a job more interesting by using job design such as job rotation or job characteristics. Managers should also consider the concept of self-motivation. In addition, management should continue to empower employees to assist hotel managers in achieving objectives. Self-motivation takes drive and ambition. If employees are empowered, their drive to perform increases.

Limitations

Despite its managerial implications, the study has several limitations. The results are based on a relatively small sample size chosen from a limited geographic area and gathered during a short period of time. Although it is not expected that the findings would be significantly different, it would be worthwhile to expand this research throughout the country to improve the generalizability of the results. Also, the measurement of employee motivation was limited to 16 motivational attributes. Even though these attributes were included in other studies and their validity tested, there could be other relevant motivational attributes that are likely to influence employee motivation. Last, the regression model failed to explain 31 per cent of the variation in employee motivation.

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