

ROLE AMBIGUITY: A PROBLEM OR A CHALLENGE FACING CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY. THE CRITICAL ROLE OF EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY

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Abstract

Background. Delivering exceptional service experience and creating customer satisfaction and loyalty seems to be crucial for survival of a hotel organization and success in today's highly competitive market. Gaining competitive advantage requires extreme responsiveness and sensitivity from hotel employees towards guests and treating them in a very individual manner. This may make rigid service scripts prevent maintaining this flexibility, which often leads to serious problems connected with role ambiguity experienced by employees.

Research aims. This study attempts to seek an answer to the question: how to minimize the role ambiguity experienced by hotel staff. Therefore, the relationship between hotel employees' creativity and role ambiguity is analyzed. Additionally, selected conditions that promote employee's creative performance are also investigated.

Methodology. In order to achieve the study aim, the literature review, including empirical findings of previous studies, and empirical research based on a survey method were employed. The study was conducted among all hotel employees having direct face-to-face and voice-to-voice interactions with hotel guests, working in two hotels located in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, precisely in Tricity, as the tourist destination of Northern Poland.

Key findings. The results showed a negative and significant correlation between employee creativity and role ambiguity. It may confirm that in the face of dynamically changing customer needs and preferences, employees' creativity when serving customers may lead to reducing employees' uncertainty how to perform effectively to provide outstanding service. The findings also revealed that both employees' intellect/imagination (as a personality variable) and skill variety (as a job characteristic) should be taken into account to increase creativity in the workplace, as both of them positively related to hotel employees' creativity in this study. Despite the fact that the study findings should not be generalized, the results provide some important information for substantive discussion and a context for a wider range of further

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studies. Discussion and managerial implications were also provided and directions for future research were formulated.

Keywords: hotel employees, role ambiguity, creativity, intellect/imagination, skill variety

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The role of contact employees in contributing to service excellence is well known and broadly discussed (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). Service providers are often perceived by customers as an organization (Brown & Lam, 2008) or as a “medium” through which hospitality organizations interact with customers (Tsaour & Tang, 2013, p. 19). Through their actions when delivering services, contact employees may exert a huge impact both on the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Thus they may often determine service differentiation and competitive advantage of hotels on the contemporary market.

In spite of the fact that hotel employees play a pivotal role in successful hotel operations (Enz & Siguaw, 2000), they are often confronted with a number of problems (e.g. Karatepe & Kilić, 2007, p. 239). It is indicated that the major sources of job-related stress seem to be related to employees’ roles, including uncertainty (as an example) (Cho *et al.*, 2014). Although, as literature underlines, role stressors have been extensively investigated in organizational behavior, marketing and management literature, it has received relatively less attention in the hospitality and tourism field (Cho *et al.*, 2014), especially in the hotel setting, where front line employees performing in highly dynamic and changing circumstances, dealing with a variety of guests’ needs and expectations are highly exposed to role stress (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Kim B.C.P. *et al.*, 2009). Role stress consists of two major components such as role ambiguity and role conflict (Babin & Boles, 1996; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008), perceived as problematic, particularly among boundary spanning jobs (Babin & Boles, 1996). Role stress has critical importance in directly affecting emotional exhaustion, satisfaction and turnover; therefore, minimizing it seems to be a crucial dimension of employee well-being and organizational success (Cho *et al.*, 2014).

Due to the fact that frequent encounters with guests requires flexibility from hospitality employees, but on the other hand, it is hard

to maintain this flexibility by rules and routines (Gjerald & Øgaard, 2010), role ambiguity is likely to happen. Therefore, the issue of role ambiguity should be of particular concern in the hospitality industry, especially in Poland, where empirical findings related to the role ambiguity problems are greatly limited. Hence the present study attempts to fill this gap by seeking an answer to the question: how to minimize the role ambiguity experienced by hotel staff working in customer-contact positions.

This study assumes that employees' creativity may decrease hotel staff uncertainty of how to perform their role adequately, which may take place during a service encounter when employees are faced with uncontrolled service reality and have to deal with a variety of dynamically changing customers' needs and requirements. Moreover, because little is known about conditions that promote employees' creativity in organizations (Oldham & Cummings, 1996) and due to the fact that recently more attention has been paid to investigating the antecedents of employees' creativity especially in the hospitality setting (Wang *et al.*, 2014), this study answers these research interests and examines the relationships between employees' intellect/imagination (as a personality characteristic) and skills variety (as a job characteristic) and employees' creativity.

The empirical study, in which the relationship between employees' creativity and role ambiguity were investigated, was conducted among hotel employees.

The results of this study can help hotel managers in their understanding of both the role and the meaning of employees' creativity in reducing the role ambiguity experienced by hotel staff. The study can also serve as support for managers in developing appropriate human resource management practices to enhance employees' creativity in the workplace.

The effect of role ambiguity on employees' effectiveness in the workplace – the hospitality context

The quality of interpersonal interactions between customers and employees seems to be critical in satisfying customers, finally affecting the bottom line of the organization (Lee & Ok, 2012). Therefore, employees' performance during a service encounter should be perceived as a means of, gaining competitive advantage, especially nowadays,

when customers' demands are becoming increasingly sophisticated and today's tourists are looking for experiences which are called "unique" and "new" (Hu *et al.*, 2009, p. 41). This also places contact employees in very demanding and often stressful, uncertain situations, because, even having service scripts describing how to serve hotel guests properly, the pressure put on service quality and excellence demands that hotel employees should be extremely sensitive towards customers' different expectations and needs. That is why they have to perform in a very individual manner to meet various and dynamically changing hotel guests' needs and very often go beyond the call of duty that is required by their roles and scripts. J.-Ch. Chebat and P. Kollias (2000) underline that customers add variability. To interact with them effectively, service providers need elaborate and flexible scripts, but on the other hand, the more flexible scripts are, the more ambiguous the role is, which may have its consequence in employees' anxiety. A.H.Y. Hon (2012) states that the growing focus on employees' flexibility and responsiveness to fulfill customers' needs has made job related tasks in the hospitality industry become more dynamic. As a result, it may not be possible to provide employees with sufficient and clear service instructions. Consequently, individuals have to be strongly flexible when serving customers and therefore may experience role ambiguity as a consequence of lack of clarity on how to perform effectively and what their responsibilities are.

Role ambiguity is conceptualized as a stressful condition due to employees' confusion concerning expectations of what their responsibilities are (Low *et al.*, 2001) and lack of information regarding appropriate actions in a given situation or not understanding the expectation of management (Babin & Boles, 1996). In other words, role ambiguity takes place when a person does not have the necessary information on how to perform work tasks properly (Karatepe, Yavas, Babakus & Avci, 2006; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006) or is unsure how his/her performance will be finally evaluated (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). Thus role ambiguity may refer to employees' uncertainty about the scope of their job (Cho *et al.*, 2014), and about the expectations, behaviors and consequences connected with it (Walsh, 2011).

Both the classical organizational theory and the role theory deal with role ambiguity (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970). As clearly indicated by Rizzo *et al.* (1970), "every position in a formal organizational structure should have a specified set of tasks or position responsibilities" (p. 151), which may

be helpful for employees to understand what is required from them, what their responsibilities are, and which may also help managers to provide guidance and directions for them. If subordinates are not clear about what they are expected to achieve and how they will be judged, they will hesitate to make decisions and they will try to meet the superior's expectations by trial and error (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970). In accordance with the role theory, role ambiguity, such as lack of adequate information that should be available to a given organizational position, increases the probability of dissatisfaction with the role, the experience of anxiety and the distortion of reality, ultimately leading to less effective performance (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970).

Role ambiguity as a form of stress (Walsh, 2011) may lead to many negative consequences and detrimental outcomes both for employees and their organization. It was empirically proved that role ambiguity is negatively related to employee job satisfaction (Walsh, 2011; Karatepe, Yavas, Babakus & Avci, 2006), job performance (Babin & Boles, 1996), self-efficacy (Karatepe, Yavas, Babakus & Avci, 2006) and is positively related to emotional exhaustion (Cho *et al.*, 2014) and burnout (Low *et al.*, 2001). Empirical research in the hotel context showed that the role ambiguity decreases employees' job satisfaction (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Kim B.C.P. *et al.*, 2009), exerts a negative impact on service recovery performance, and leads to turnover intention (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). Moreover, it was proved that hotel employees who are confronted with role ambiguity experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment; additionally, they display decreased performance in the workplace (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). The above discussion and the empirical findings of previous studies justify the need to pay particular attention to the critical problem of role ambiguity in the hospitality context.

Individuals' creativity in the face of dynamic changes in the service delivery process and its relation to role ambiguity experienced by hotel staff

In the face of constant emphasis on change, employees' creativity has focused managerial attention, especially in the hospitality industry, where employees are constantly encouraged to improve service quality and delivery (Hon *et al.*, 2013). Not surprisingly, employees' creativity

when serving customers is perceived as one way of meeting current business challenges in the hospitality industry (Hon *et al.*, 2013). In spite of the fact that hotel organizations generally use service scripts in operational departments to maintain high quality of customer service, employees very often seem to be insufficiently instructed on how to deal with unusual and uncommon service interactions which frequently happen during direct relations with hotel guests. Although there is some commonality, each service encounter is unique (Lee-Ross, 2003). This can make employees extremely confused and stressed, especially when the entire image of the hotel is at stake. Because of the inseparability of the consumption and the production processes, all employees' actions are generally visible and observed in real time by hotel guests and strongly determine their service experiences. Therefore, empirical attention is put on employees' creativity, which may potentially help employees to reduce their problems with role ambiguity, especially when they feel uncertain of how to perform effectively to meet customers' various expectations. Wang *et al.* (2011) found that a moderate level of role ambiguity is conducive to creative performance, and individuals who are more tolerant of ambiguity exhibit higher creative performance when faced with ambiguous situations.

Creativity is perceived as a crucial factor determining success in a rapidly changing business environment (Hon, 2012) and is recognized as the pivotal competence of currently functioning organizations (Çekmecelioğlu & Günsel, 2011). Creativity has become important across a variety of occupations and industries; therefore, as indicated by Shalley and Gilson (2004), "(...) there is room, in almost every job, for employees to be more creative" (p. 33). The need to be innovative, particularly in the hotels' approach to service delivery improvement, has been observed in the hospitality industry, which operates in a highly competitive and dynamic environment (Wong & Ladkin, 2008). However, organizations (including hotels) strongly need creative employees to implement innovations (Çekmecelioğlu & Günsel, 2011). Indeed all innovations start with creative ideas (Amabile *et al.*, 1996), thus employees' creativity is perceived as the "starting point" (Zhou & George, 2001, p. 683) or the "first step" (Amabile, 1997, p. 40) for organizational innovation. Hence it is not surprising that employees' creativity may contribute to organizational effectiveness and survival (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Hotel employees, especially those in frontline jobs, are in a favorable position, which gives them a great chance to observe customers' changing needs and to suggest new approaches to improving the service delivery process (Raub, 2008). Unfortunately, there is lack of research into the creativity issue in the hospitality industry, although creative ideas provide numerous business benefits for hospitality, which is increasingly perceived as an industry that focuses on much wider service experience than only basic needs (Wong & Ladkin, 2008).

Creativity is defined as production of novel/appropriate/useful ideas (Amabile, 1997; 1998; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001). An individual's creativity is a function of three components, namely, expertise that includes everything that a person knows and is able to do in the domain of his/her work, creative thinking skills which determine how imaginatively and flexibly individuals approach problems, and the third component – motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation as an inner passion, interest, and internal desire to resolve problems, which leads to much more creative solutions than doing it for external rewards (Amabile, 1998).

It seems that highly creative people with their talents, knowledge, abilities, imagination, and the internal desire to do something may cope much better with role ambiguity than those with low creativity. Additionally, flexible scripts may give them a greater possibility to use their creative potential to actively seek new ways and approaches to meet various guests' needs and expectations and to adapt the service delivery process to them. Coming up with new and better ways of doing things is perceived as the creativity key (Zhou & George, 2001). Therefore, creative employees are more likely to discover customers' hidden needs and resolve service problems more effectively than others, which ultimately may provide customers with superior service experience (Çekmecelioglu & Günsel, 2011).

Based on the extensive literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hotel employees' creativity is negatively related to the role ambiguity experienced by them.

Antecedents of hotel employees' creativity

It is said that employees' creativity is affected by both personal and situational factors and by interactions among these characteristics

(Hon, 2012; Shalley *et al.*, 2004). Personality concentrates on characteristics or qualities making a person different from others (Kusluvan, 2003). It is indicated that creativity performance needs a set of skills which are specific and relevant to creativity. They are defined as “the ability to think creatively, generate alternatives, engage in divergent thinking (...)” (Shalley & Gilson, 2004, p. 36). As literature indicates, both previous theory and research suggest that openness to experience is among traits that may be most relevant for creativity understanding and it predisposes an individual to be creative (George & Zhou, 2001; Shalley *et al.*, 2004).

Openness to experience is described as “the extent to which individuals are imaginative, sensitive to aesthetics, curious, independent thinkers, and amenable to new ideas, experiences, and unconventional perspectives” (George & Zhou, 2001, p. 514). Individuals of high openness to experience are characterized by intellectual curiosity; they are creative and have vivid imagination (Costa & McCrae, 1998). They are described as broad-minded and untraditional (Shalley *et al.*, 2004). In contrast to them, individuals who are low in openness to experience prefer more conventional behavior and they are conservative in their views (Costa & McCrae, 1998) and unanalytical (Shalley *et al.*, 2004).

Based on the above discussion, it can be assumed that persons who have vivid imagination, plenty of good ideas, and who understand things quickly may be more creative than those individuals who cannot be describes in this way; therefore, the personality variable defined as intellect/imagination may have a relationship with employees’ creativity. The above discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

Intellect/imagination of hotel employees is positively related to their creativity in the workplace.

Individual creativity is a complex phenomenon, influenced by multiple, both individual and contextual and environmental variables (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Because creativity cannot appear in a vacuum, it is underlined that a strong effect on employees’ creativity may be exerted by the context within which employees work (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Contextual characteristics are defined as dimensions of a work environment that potentially affect employees’ creativity but are not his/her inherent part (Shalley *et al.*, 2004). Although several social and contextual factors influencing creative behaviors have been

researched, there is still space for investigation (Shalley & Gilson, 2004) that opens up new empirical avenues for a better understanding of work characteristics that may influence employees' creativity. Moreover, it is indicated that it may be better to focus on job-level factors first, which are closer to an employee's daily work (rather than those further ones or at the organizational level), as they may have the most immediate influence on employees' creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Therefore, skill variety, as a job characteristic, has been taken under research.

Skill variety is an integral component of a job. Characteristics theory states that positive personal and work outcomes (such as internal motivation, work satisfaction, quality performance, low absenteeism and turnover) are obtained when three "critical psychological states" are present: meaningfulness of work, responsibility for its outcomes, and knowledge of the work results (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 160). Those critical states are created by the presence of five job dimensions, among which skill variety is indicated as playing an important role (beside the task identity and task significant) in enhancing the experience of the job as meaningful, valuable and worthwhile (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Skill variety is defined as "the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee" (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 161). It is said that when employees work on complex jobs, including among other characteristics a high level of variety, they are likely to experience a high level of intrinsic motivation resulting in developing creative ideas (Shalley *et al.*, 2004). By contrast, jobs which are simple and routine may not motivate employees enough to try to do things in new ways, to take risks, and possibly to perform creatively; therefore, jobs should be sufficiently challenging to motivate employees to be creative in the workplace (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Reassuring, job characteristics are important in influencing employees' motivation and attitudes toward work and should be considered by leaders when managing creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Particularly, skill variety may strongly stimulate to creative outcomes by making the work meaningful and challenging.

Based on the above, it may be assumed that if the work is not perceived as simple and repetitive, when it requires the involvement of

different employees' skills and talents into various work tasks, it may stimulate and encourage employees to creative behavior. Therefore, based on the extensive literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Skill variety is positively related to hotel employees' creativity.

METHOD

This study develops and tests a research model (Figure 1) that investigated whether intellect/imagination (H1) and skill variety (H2) are positively related to employees' creativity, and whether creativity is negatively related to role ambiguity (H3), by using contact hotel employees who have direct relations (face-to-face and voice-to-voice) with customers as the study setting. The data were collected through a cross-sectional survey at two hotels which agreed to participate in this study. Both these hotel organizations were chosen mainly because of their availability. Additionally, they were operating under the same ownership and located in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, precisely in Tricity, as a very popular tourist destination in Northern Poland. The study was conducted from January to March 2015, as part of a larger project on selected job and individual characteristics and their relations to employees' attitudes and workplace behaviors in hotel organizations.

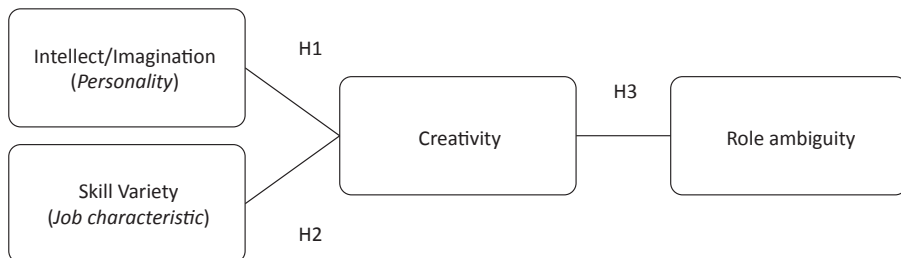


Figure 1. Research concept

Source: own study.

A total of 50 respondents from two hotel organizations were examined to verify the research model. Hotel employees completed pencil and paper based questionnaires. All of the respondents worked in guest contact positions. The selection of these employees results from

the fact that front line hotel employees, especially because of their boundary spanning roles, are particularly prone to heightened role stress, as suggested by Karatepe and Uludag (2008) and indicated before in this study.

The majority of the respondents were female (84%), 72% of the respondents were between the age of 21–40, 52% of the surveyed employees had a secondary school diploma, 40% participants declared university education. Over half of the respondents (52%) had been working in the current hotel between 1 and 10 years, 30% of employees for less than 1 year, and the remaining employees for over 10 years.

All the study constructs were operationalized using scale items adapted from previous studies in the relevant literature. Role ambiguity was measured with 6 items developed by Rizzo *et al.* (1970). Items from Rizzo *et al.* were also applied to measure role ambiguity in many other studies in the hospitality setting (e.g. Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Kim, BC.P *et al.*, 2009; Yang, 2010). Creativity was measured through 3 items adapted from G.R. Oldham and A. Cummings (1996), in line with C-J. Wang *et al.* (2014).

Skill variety was measured using 3 items from J.R. Hackman and G.R. Oldham (1980). Intellect/imagination was operationalized via 10 items from *International Personality Item Pool* (<http://ipip.ori.org>*; Goldberg *et al.*, 2006).

All scale items from role ambiguity were reverse coded; therefore, the higher the score on the scale, the higher role ambiguity. One item from skill variety and items stated negatively from intellect/imagination were also reverse coded prior to data analysis.

Responses to the items in role ambiguity, skill variety and creativity were indicated on a five point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Responses to the items in intellect/imagination were indicated on five point scale ranging from (1) very inaccurate to (5) very accurate.

The questionnaire was originally prepared in English and then translated into Polish through back translation to ensure the equivalent meaning for all items.

* International Personality Item Pool: A Scientific Collaboratory for the Development of Advanced Measures of Personality Traits and Other Individual Differences (<http://ipip.ori.org>). Internet Web Site, 15.01.2015.

The scales reliability was assessed by Cronbach's alpha, whose values were as follows: 0.90 (role ambiguity); 0.88 (creativity); 0.76 (skill variety); 0.78 (intellect/imagination). All measures showed high reliability, with alpha coefficients above the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

RESULTS

To verify the study hypotheses, the Pearson correlation was applied. The results demonstrate that all correlations are both significant and in directions as assumed in the study hypotheses (Figure 2).

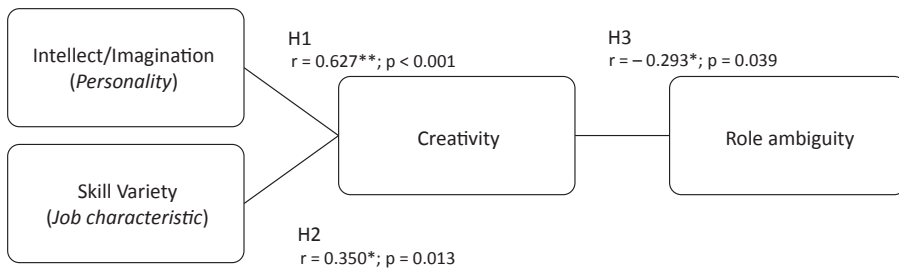


Figure 2. Verified research concept

* Significant correlation at the level of 0.05 (two-sided)

** Significant correlation at the level of 0.01 (two-sided)

Source: own study.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that the intellect/imagination of hotel employees is positively correlated to employees' creativity. The results of Pearson correlation suggested a fairly strong relationship between both study constructs. Thus Hypothesis 1 was supported. Hypothesis 2 stated that there was a positive correlation between skill variety and employees' creativity. The positive and significant Pearson correlation was consistent with this prediction; therefore, Hypothesis 2 was also supported. Hypothesis 3 predicted that there was a negative relationship between respondents' creativity and role ambiguity experienced by hotel staff. The study results showed that both study constructs were correlated negatively and significantly, confirming Hypothesis 3.

The cross-sectional nature of the data and a small number of study respondents have limited the possibility to generalize the results.

However, the study findings can serve as a basis for discussion and as a starting point for future research with both larger samples and different hospitality settings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Managers should not overlook the critical importance of their employees, who are perceived as an integral part of the service experience (Kusluvan, 2003) and who play an important role in linking companies with their customers, thus maintaining long-term relationships with them (Karatepe, Uludag, Menevis, Hadzimehmedagic & Baddar, 2006).

It is stated that employees having direct contact with customers may experience job-related stress due to role ambiguity when they do not understand well their roles, job responsibilities and the performance standards connected with their role as service providers and simultaneously employees in the same organization (Cho *et al.*, 2014). In the face of increasing customers' demands and needs, which have become more complex and sophisticated and the fact that great pressure of today's hotels is put on the excellence of the service delivery, many service situations may contribute to employees work stress due to role ambiguity. Rapid changes, global competition, and growing uncertainty of service encounters have forced hotels to seek ways to improve employees' creativity, which is crucial for the organization's survival and success on the contemporary market. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the relationship between employees' creativity and role ambiguity; additionally, it sought to identify whether personality (such as intellect/ imagination) and job characteristics (such as skill variety) are related to creative behavior. The hypothetic relationships were tested using data from contact employees in two hotels from the Pomeranian Voivodeship as the setting. The study results confirmed all study hypotheses.

Hospitality managers may benefit from the study findings to realize how to inspire their subordinates to creativity and in this way to decrease the role ambiguity experienced by them. If only managers are aware of the important personality factors and the work context that foster creativity, they will be able to develop adequate HR practices positively affecting the occurrence of creativity in the workplace.

The study findings showed that hotel employees' intellect/imagination (as a personality variable) and skill variety (as a job variable) are both

positively correlated with employees' creativity, which in turn appears to be significantly and negatively correlated with role ambiguity. In reference to the study respondents, it may be said that employees of high intellect/imagination may be potentially predisposed to be more creative at work. This suggests that appropriate selection criteria should be established to attract employees high in this personality trait to facilitate better creative outcomes. A direct implication for hotel managers could be that they should consider appointing employees high in intellect/imagination to job positions where creativity performance is crucial, especially when the role ambiguity occurs.

As results proved that managers of the studied hotels may also significantly support their employees' creativity by creating the right work context, in which skill variety plays a critical role. Designing jobs which allow employees to do many different work related things and to giving them an opportunity to use a variety of their skills and talents is strongly recommended to foster creativity in the workplace. By making their work meaningful and challenging, in contrast to simple, repetitive and routine jobs, hotel managers may effectively motivate employees to creative behaviors in the workplace. Interests and excitement provided by the job design is expected to be conducive to creativity achievements at work (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). However, managers should be aware of their subordinates' knowledge, experience in the area of work, individual predispositions, abilities and skills to create the work environment which will sufficiently stimulate creativity, but they should keep in mind the differences between people.

For creativity to occur, the structure of the work environment, climate, culture, and HR practices should all favor creative outcomes (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Creativity has to be realized by employees and strongly communicated to them; moreover, they should be rewarded for being creative and encouraged in risk taking (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Goals or role requirements for producing creative outcomes also have to be established, and appropriate training to be more creative in the workplace should be provided (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Managers should also remember that they may foster creativity through influencing the employees' motivation (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Extensive research has focused on the importance of intrinsic motivation for creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004) for which feelings of competence and autonomy are pivotal (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Thus

providing employees with job autonomy and relevant information about their competence are strongly recommended.

Finally, in the face of high variability of the service process in the hospitality industry, employees need to be creative, and service procedures should be defined in a more enabling approach. Therefore, an enable type of formalization is proposed (Adler & Borys, 1996) to help employees to fulfill customers' needs and to release their own initiatives (Raub, 2008).

However, having to deal with many service difficulties that may affect employees uncertainty, employees need to feel that they are working in a truly supportive work environment, where an adequate communication system allows them, each time, to reach information when task-related uncertainty occurs.

Direction for future research

The present study investigated only creativity influencing role ambiguity. It is recommended to examine other personal and organizational factors affecting role ambiguity in hotel organizations. Additionally, it could be interesting to incorporate into the research model other components of job-characteristics theory (e.g. feedback, autonomy) and other personality traits (e.g. neuroticism) to investigate their impact on employees' creativity. Moreover, the objective of this study was to shed light on separate relations between individual and job characteristics with employees' creativity; therefore, investigation of the interaction between individual and work characteristics and their joint impact on creativity is recommended.

Future study should also take individual, demographic variables under research to see if any differences exist when analyzing study variables. For example, it is stated that employees with longer work experience in their organization may have possessed more information about the work content, which may explain why role ambiguity may decrease among employees with longer work experience (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). Whereas, employees with higher education may feel more confident in their skills and abilities; moreover they may ask specific questions of their managers when feeling that the information on how to perform work-related tasks is limited, thus they may report a lower level of role ambiguity (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). Therefore demographic differences should also be considered when implementing

HR techniques, but this aspect needs deeper investigation in the context of Polish hotels.

It would also be interesting to investigate the proposed model in a different cultural setting to see if any differences exist, especially that other personal and contextual conditions may be important to employees. For instance, individuals from western nations may respond differently to organizational conditions from individuals from non-western cultures (Shalley *et al.*, 2004); therefore, cross-cultural studies are strongly recommended.

Limitations

This study is not without limitation, but as stated in the literature, study limitation may open up an opportunity for future studies (Kim B.C.P. *et al.*, 2009). Because the study was conducted among a small number of employees, derived only from two hotel organizations, the research results cannot be generalized. Therefore, the future study in a broader hospitality setting with a larger sample is proposed. Moreover, taking into account the limited number of study respondents and the sensitive nature of the study variables (job related aspects), also the qualitative approach to the research methods is strongly recommended to provide a much more detailed picture of the study findings that can broaden the research spectrum of further studies.

All variables were measured using self-report data; therefore, the common method bias could be a concern in the study. Although it is argued that employees being more aware of contextual information affecting their performance may report their own creativity in a more nuanced manner (Kim T.Y. *et al.*, 2009), applying more objective measures in future studies (e.g. supervisor assessment of employee creativity) is recommended to avoid the above mentioned problems.

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NIEJASNOŚĆ ROLI: PROBLEM CZY WYZWANIE DLA WSPÓŁCZESNEGO HOTELARSTWA. KLUCZOWA ROLA KREATYWNOŚCI

Abstrakt

Tło badań. Na współczesnym, bardzo konkurencyjnym rynku szczególnej wagi nabiera dostarczenie gościom hotelowym wyjątkowych doświadczeń usługowych, skutkujących ich wysoką satysfakcją, a często również lojalnością, które istotnie warunkują sukces i przetrwanie hotelu w aktualnych realiach rynkowych. Rosnąca konkurencja, zmienność potrzeb i oczekiwań gości powodują jednak, że pracownicy kontaktowi, jeszcze bardziej niż kiedyś, muszą być wyjątkowo wrażliwi na potrzeby i oczekiwania klientów, istotnie indywidualizując proces ich obsługi. Sytuacja ta może powodować, że nierzadko opracowane standardy obsługi nie warunkują efektywnej elastyczności. W rezultacie wielu pracowników, mierząc się z wysoką zmiennością rzeczywistości usługowej, może doświadczać niejasności swojej roli, a w rezultacie stresu i napięcia.

Cel badań. Celem niniejszej pracy było ukazanie niejasności roli jako jednej z głównych charakterystyk pracy w hotelarstwie oraz poszukiwanie odpowiedzi na pytanie: jak efektywnie wpływać na ograniczenie niejasności roli doświadczanej przez pracowników hoteli, wskazując na istotną i znaczącą rolę kreatywności w tym względzie? Dodatkowo na potrzeby niniejszej pracy empiryczną uwagę skierowano na wybrane charakterystyki pracy (tj. różnorodność umiejętności) i czynniki osobowościowe (tj. intelekt/wyobraźnia) jako potencjalnie istotne uwarunkowania kreatywnych zachowań w organizacji.

Metodyka. Zastosowane metody badawcze to analiza literatury przedmiotu, w tym publikacji zwartych, artykułów i raportów z badań przeprowadzonych w omawianej problematyce, oraz badania pierwotne (badania ankietowe) przeprowadzone wśród pracowników dwóch hoteli zlokalizowanych w województwie pomorskim, a dokładnie w Trójmieście, mających bezpośredni kontakt z gościem hotelowym.

Kluczowe wnioski. Rezultaty niniejszych badań ukazują istnienie znaczącej i negatywnej korelacji pomiędzy kreatywnością a niejasnością roli doświadczaną przez pracowników badanych hoteli. Sugeruje to, że w kontekście wysokich wymagań pracy w hotelarstwie oraz zmienności potrzeb i oczekiwań gości kreatywność pracowników staje się swoistym zasobem, pozwalającym im zmierzyć się z niepewnością scenariuszy usługowych, mających miejsce podczas intensywnych i częstych relacji interpersonalnych z gośćmi. Dodatkowo uzyskane wyniki potwierdziły, iż w przypadku niniejszych badań zarówno intelekt/wyobraźnia badanych (jako zmienna osobowościowa), jak i wykonywanie pracy, która stwarza możliwości wykorzystania różnorodnych umiejętności i talentów pracowników, to istotne uwarunkowania wzmacniające kreatywność badanych. Rezultaty niniejszych badań nie uprawniają

do uogólnień, mogą one jednak stanowić podstawę do dyskusji i założenia badawcze dla szerszego kontekstu przyszłych badań.

Dyskusja rezultatów oraz implikacje dla praktyki zostały szeroko przedstawione w artykule. W ostatniej części opracowania zaproponowano także możliwe kierunki przyszłych badań podejmujących kompleksowo problematykę niejasności roli w kontekście hotelarstwa.

Słowa kluczowe: pracownicy hotelu, niejasność roli, kreatywność, intelekt/wyobraźnia, różnorodność umiejętności