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Creativity of Tour Guides in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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Abstract – The study aims to identify factors that influence the creativity of tour guides in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. By interviewing 185 tour guides and applying the structural equation modeling (SEM), the study has pointed out 4 factors that positively impact the creativity of tour guides. They are Organizational support, Work motivation, Intrinsic motivation, and Job autonomy. In which, work motivation has the strongest impact on the creativity of tour guides. Besides, several administrative implications are proposed to promote the creativity of tour guides in the Mekong Delta.

Keywords – Creativity, On-Site Guide, Tourism, Mekong Delta

I. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is the creation of new and useful ideas in a certain area (Amabile, 1996). To be considered creative, the product or idea must be different from the previous ones. That creative idea/ product does not have to be completely new, but valuable and consistent with specific goals. According to Amabile (1997), creativity is an individual product, and innovation is the application of the product at the organizational level. Innovation and creativity are increasingly considered as an important factor of sustainable competitive advantages that organizations use to adapt to the rapidly changing environment (Lin and Liu, 2012).

A tourism plan requires coordination, implementation, adjustment, and inspection from many departments. Meanwhile, when the tour is held with activities such as greeting, accommodation, sightseeing, procedures, and shopping, the most important person is the tour guide. The success of a tourism program depends partly on the tour guide. Tourism products or tourism programs become the reality thanks to the tourist guide. The tour guide is said to be the "soul" of a tourism program. The service procedures, air tickets, or handover that the company gives to the tour guide are just the “hardware”, while the flexibility in organizing and implementing decides if the tour is successful or not. Therefore, every tour guide is required to be creative to adapt to work and meet the increasing needs of customers. From the above problem, the study "Creativity of tour guides in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam" was carried out and some administrative implications were proposed to promote the creativity of tour guides.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research model

According to previous studies, the creativity of employees in an organization is influenced by many factors such as organizational support (Eder and Sawyer, 2008; Houghton and Diliello, 2010), work motivation (Dinibutun, 2012), intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1988; Shalley et al., 2004), work autonomy (Tierney and Farmer, 2002; Eder, 2007). Base on the above discussion, the research model of factors affecting creativity of tour guides is proposed as follows:

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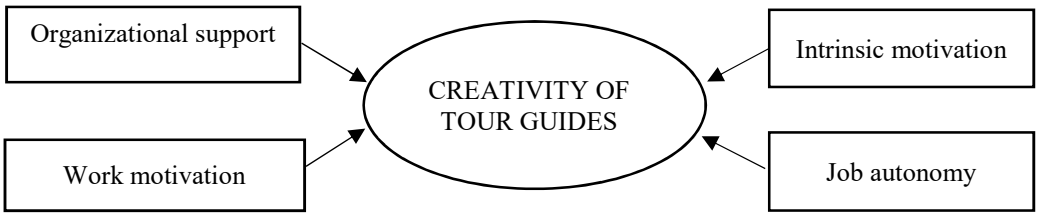

Figure 1: Proposed research model

Table 1: Interpretation of observed variables in the research model

Factor	Sign	Observed variables	Scale	Reference resources
Organizational support	OS1	Tour guides are encouraged to promote creativity;	Likert 1-5	Eder and Sawyer, 2008; Houghton and Diliello, 2010.
	OS2	All ideas are properly recognized and evaluated;	Likert 1-5	
	OS3	Tour guides are encouraged to solve problems creatively;	Likert 1-5	
	OS4	There is a good policy to encourage and develop creative ideas.	Likert 1-5	
Work motivation	WM1	Feel comfortable with assigned tasks;	Likert 1-5	Dinibutun, 2012.
	WM2	Be willing to complete tasks;	Likert 1-5	
	WM3	The work facilitates the professional knowledge and skills;	Likert 1-5	
	WM4	The work creates passion.	Likert 1-5	
Intrinsic motivation	IM1	Prefer to find solutions for complex problems;	Likert 1-5	Amabile, 1988; Shalley et al., 2004.
	IM2	Prefer to find new ideas at work;	Likert 1-5	
	IM3	Prefer to create new procedures to finish the work;	Likert 1-5	
	IM4	Enjoy improving existing procedures.	Likert 1-5	
Job autonomy	JA1	Confident in the ability to finish tasks;	Likert 1-5	Tierney and Farmer, 2002; Eder, 2007.
	JA2	Master the skills and professional knowledge to complete tasks;	Likert 1-5	
	JA3	Proactively perform assigned tasks.	Likert 1-5	
Creativity	CRE1	Always have new ideas at work;	Likert 1-5	Amabile, 1997; Houghton and Deliello, 2009; Shalley et al., 2004.
	CRE2	There are always new products/ services created by personal ideas;	Likert 1-5	
	CRE3	Products/ services created from ideas are efficient;	Likert 1-5	
	CRE4	Always be creative at work.	Likert 1-5	

Source: The author's synthesis, 2019

2. Data and analytical method

To test the research hypotheses, the analyses used include reliability test by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). The SEM method requires a large sample size because it is based on the sampling distribution theory (Raykov and Widaman, 1995). To ensure reliability in testing the appropriateness of the SEM model, the sample size from 100 to 200 is satisfactory (Hoyle, 1995). Quota sampling was used to collect data. Survey objects are tour guides working at tourism agencies in Vietnam with a total number of 185. In which, 52.97% tour guides take charge of domestic tours, and 47.03% taking international tours. During the survey, demographic criteria were paid attention to so that the representativeness of the research data can be ensured.

III. Research Results And Discussions

1. Evaluate the reliability of scales

Step 1: Reliability test

The study used Cronbach's Alpha to test the internal consistency and correlation among observed variables. The result shows that all scales' Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.6. The item-total correlation of observed variables in all factors is greater than 0.3, so no variables are excluded from the research model (Peterson, 1994; Slater, 1995). Therefore, all observations are satisfactory and used for the next exploratory factor analysis.

Step 2: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

With the observations retained, the study conducted an EFA analysis to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. The analytical result is guaranteed as follows: (1) Reliability of observed variables with Factor loading > 0.5; (2) Suitability of the model with 0.5 < KMO = 0.903 < 1; (3) Bartlett's test of correlation among variables with Sig. = 0.00 < 0.05; (4) Cumulative variance test is 77.38% > 50% (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). Thus, 5 factors are formed and there is no disturbance of variables among factors, so the names of factors remain the same as mentioned in the proposed research model.

Step 3: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

After the EFA stage, 5 factors were included in the CFA stage. The result suggests that the model is suitable for market data because the values are satisfactory: CMIN/df = 1.219 < 2, TLI = 0.987 and CFI = 0.989 are greater than 0.9, and RMSEA = 0.034 ≤ 0.08 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). Also, the correlation coefficient between errors is less than 1, so the model achieves unidimensionality. The standardized regression weights are greater than 0.5 and the unstandardized regression weights are statistically significant, so the model reaches convergent validity. Besides, the correlation coefficients associated with standard deviations are all < 0.9, so the factors reach discriminant validity. The values of composite reliability (Pc) and average variance extracted (Pvc) of the scales are all satisfactory. Therefore, the research data is consistent with market data, achieving convergent validity, unidimensionality, discriminant validity, and reliability.

2. Test research hypotheses by the structural equation modeling (SEM)

The structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the relationship between factors in the model. The testing result is presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: Testing the relationship between factors in the model

Relationship			Unstandardized			Standardized Estimated value	P-value
			Estimated value	Standard Error S.E.	Critical Ratios C.R.		
CRE	<---	OS	0.227	0.086	2.639	0.243	***
CRE	<---	WM	0.375	0.138	2.709	0.347	***
CRE	<---	IM	0.219	0.077	2.836	0.189	***
CRE	<---	JA	0.275	0.121	2.280	0.258	***

Source: Survey data, 2019

Based on Table 2, the estimated values of variables are statistically significant, proving that factors in the research model have an impact on the creativity of tour guides. The impact level of each factor is explained as follows:

The organizational support affects the creativity of tour guides with a standardized coefficient of 0.243 at a 1% significance level. The support from the organization plays a very important role and positively influences the creativity of tour guides. If the organization has a good support policy for employees and creates a dynamic working environment, tour guides will be motivated to improve their creativity dramatically.

Work motivation has a standardized estimate coefficient of 0.347 with a 1% significance level, which is a positive impact factor and has the strongest influence on the creativity of tour guides. If the work is challenging, requires innovation, and the organization provides promotion opportunities, employees will be motivated to be creative.

Intrinsic motivation has a standardized estimate coefficient of 0.189 with a 1% significance level. This confirms that intrinsic motivation positively affects the creativity of tour guides. Tour guides who prefer to seek new ideas and solutions, or improve old procedures at work, will be actuated to promote creativity and improve the efficiency of assigned tasks.

Finally, job autonomy has a standardized coefficient of 0.258 at a 1% significance level, which shows that work autonomy positively impacts the creativity of tour guides. Those with skills, self-confidence, and proactiveness, their creative ability will be promoted better.

IV. Conclusion And Implications

The study has pointed out 4 factors that positively influence the creativity of tour guides in the Mekong Delta, namely organizational support, work motivation, intrinsic motivation, and job autonomy. In which, work motivation is the most powerful factor affecting creativity of tour guides. Therefore, the study proposes some administrative

implications to promote the creativity of tour guides as follows: Firstly, income is an important goal, motivating tour guides' job engagement and promote their creativity. Therefore, the manager needs to ensure fair sources of income for tour guides; Secondly, personal development is the objective that every tour guide wishes to achieve. Therefore, the manager should focus on training, professional development, and career orientation towards creativity; thirdly, participating in social activities is a self-assertion goal. The participation in many social activities helps tour guides improve practical knowledge and collect ideas from the community, thereby promoting their creativity; Fourthly, the manager should encourage tour guides to accept job challenges and come up with novel ideas or useful solutions for the organization; Fifthly, the manager should always give supportive feedback and offer practical suggestions for tour guides' ideas; Sixthly, formulate and widely publicize the recognition and reward policy for employees; Seventhly, the organization needs to create open management for employees so that every tour guide has the opportunity to promote creativity at work.

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