

## Factors Leading to Work Passion for Innovative Work Behavior:

### Case Study of Small Hotel Business in Thailand

ปัจจัยแห่งความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานต่อพุทธิกรรมสร้างสรรค์นวัตกรรม :

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior among executives and employees in a small hotel business. This research employed a qualitative method with multiple case studies. Six boutique hotels and four hostels with Thailand Boutique Award and have been described by online reviewers as being innovative were chosen from different regions of Thailand. Forty participants including ten owners/executive and thirty employees with innovative experience were purposive selected for the interview in a form of semi-structure both individually and focus group.

The results of factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior among executives and employees in a small hotel business revealed in four different themes included; job factors, organization factors, relationship factors, and individual factor. The finding also reported that executives and employees perceived meaningful work, engagement to the organization, and personality as an important factor which could lead them to have more work passion for innovative work behavior.

The researcher would propose the executive or owner of the small hotel business to set up the policy related to training and development program including business trip to other hotels in order to stimulate their innovation.

**Keywords:** Innovative Work Behavior, Work Passion, Small Hotel Business

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่นำไปสู่ความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานต่อพฤติกรรมสร้างสรรค์นวัตกรรมของผู้บริหารและพนักงานในธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็ก การวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพโดยใช้กรณีศึกษา กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยโรงแรมบูติก 6 โรงแรมและโฮสเทล 4 โรงแรม จากภาคต่าง ๆ ที่ได้รับรางวัล Thailand Boutique Award และได้รับการรีวิวที่แสดงให้เห็นว่าเป็นโรงแรมที่มีนวัตกรรม ผู้วิจัยใช้การสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจงเพื่อสัมภาษณ์ผู้บริหารโรงแรมจำนวน 10 คนและพนักงาน 30 คน

ผลจากการวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยที่นำไปสู่ความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานต่อพฤติกรรมสร้างสรรค์นวัตกรรมของผู้บริหารและพนักงานในธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็ก ประกอบด้วย 4 ด้านหลักคือ งาน องค์กร ความสัมพันธ์ และส่วนบุคคล ซึ่งกล่าวได้ว่าปัจจัยหลักที่ผู้บริหารและพนักงานโรงแรมขนาดเล็กให้ความสำคัญคือ คุณค่าในงาน ความผูกพันต่อองค์กรและบุคลิกลักษณะส่วนตัว ที่ส่งผลให้เกิดความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานต่อพฤติกรรมสร้างสรรค์นวัตกรรม

ผู้วิจัยเสนอให้ผู้บริหารหรือเจ้าของโรงแรมขนาดเล็กกำหนดนโยบายที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการจัดอบรม พัฒนา และการเข้าเยี่ยมชมโรงแรมอื่น ๆ ให้มากขึ้นเพื่อช่วยกระตุ้นให้เกิดการสร้างสรรค์นวัตกรรมได้

**คำสำคัญ :** พฤติกรรมสร้างสรรค์นวัตกรรม ความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงาน ธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็ก

## Introduction

Nowadays, small-scaled hotel operators in Thailand are confronted with an intense competition from various groups of the competitors such as the increase of service apartments offering a lower room rate, the 3 - star segment of international hotel chains, and new hotel operators preparing for the ASEAN Economic Community. Moreover, the life styles and holiday patterns of today's tourists are more flexible than tourists in the past which need a responding efficiently and innovation from tourism units to this increased tourism demand (Crnogaj et al., 2014).

It has been widely stated that from now on, the only sustainable competitive advantages for organizations will be achieved through people. Intangible asset such as the ability to generate new ideas will be essential for modern organizations (Coy, 2000; Howkins, 2007; Sombat Kusumawalee, 2010).

The high-performance organization also based its achievement on the innovative behavior of employees so “the study of what motivates or enables individual innovative behavior is critical” (Scott & Bruce, 1994, p. 580). Human capital represents the most valuable resources that help fuel the success of future organizations. Wasita Boonsathorn (2013b) further explained that passion is actually a major drive that transforms creativity in human being into innovation, which creates values for businesses.

There are many qualitative evidences of work passion concept which suggest that work passion can drive employee’s work successfully (Hill, 2002; Neumann, 2006; Marques, 2007). Yet, research evidences regarding the psychological processes that would explain how and why different individual passions affect innovative behavior remain under-developed (Cardon et al., 2009; Ho et al., 2011).

## **Objective of the Study**

To explore the factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior among executives and employees of the small hotel business.

## **Scope of Research**

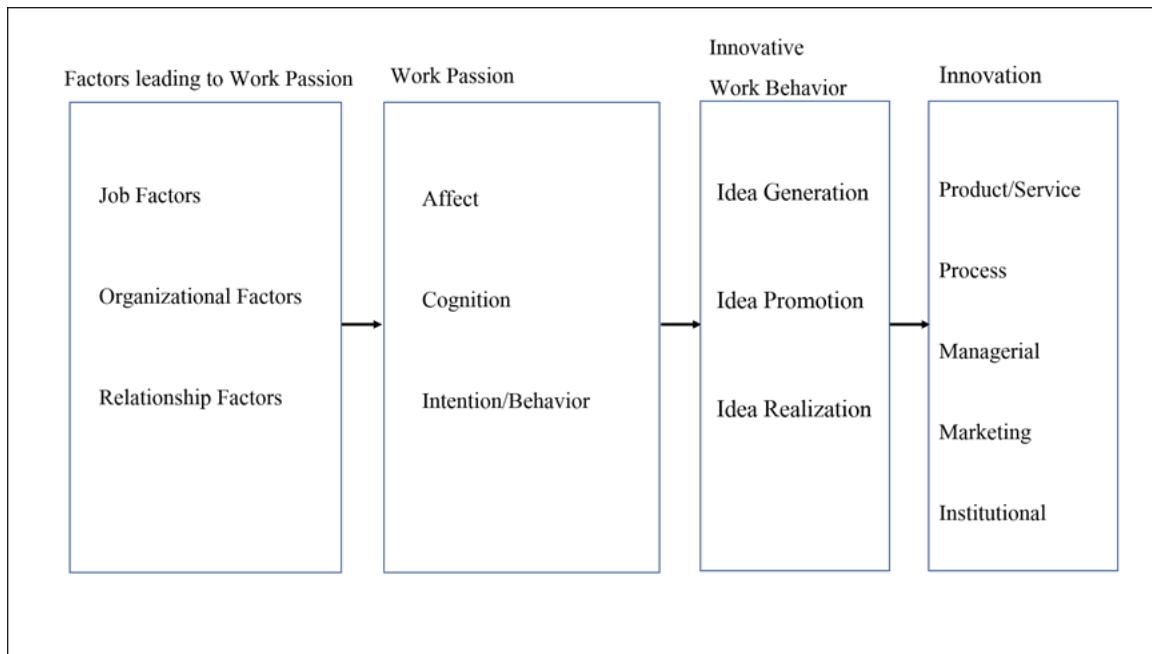
This research explored the factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior of the small hotel business in Thailand. To achieve this, the researcher explains the standpoint of this study.

First, the researcher applied the inductive approach to investigate the factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior among executives and employees of the small hotel business.

Second, the participants of this study were executives and employees of small hotel business, including the boutique hotels and hostels which were located in Thailand. Those small hotels were purposively selected.

Last, this study deployed only a qualitative study using a case study-based approach. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions from an extensive review of the literature was used in this study.

## Conceptual Framework



### Definition of Operational Terms/ Research Terms

Innovative Work Behavior - an employee's action directed at the generation, application and implementation of novel ideas in products, processes, and methods to his or her job position, departmental unit, or organization (West & Farr, 1989). Innovative work behavior is an employee's action directed at the generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas (Janssen, 2000). In summary, the researcher defines innovative work behavior as individual's action at generating and implementing new ideas which benefit to the organization and stakeholders.

Work passion - an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning based state of well-being stemming from continuous, reoccurring cognitive and affective work appraisals, which results in consistent work intentions and behaviors (Zigarmi et al., 2009). In summary, the researcher defines work passion as an individual's positive state of mind from the perception of the situation which results in creating and implementing new ideas.

Small Hotel Business - Hotel can be classified by different criteria. However, this study classified hotels on the basis of size. A small hotel business is a hotel with 60 rooms or less (National Statistical Office, 2005). In summary, the researcher defines the small hotel business as a hotel renting accommodations on a daily or weekly scale from 3-60 rooms with the common service.

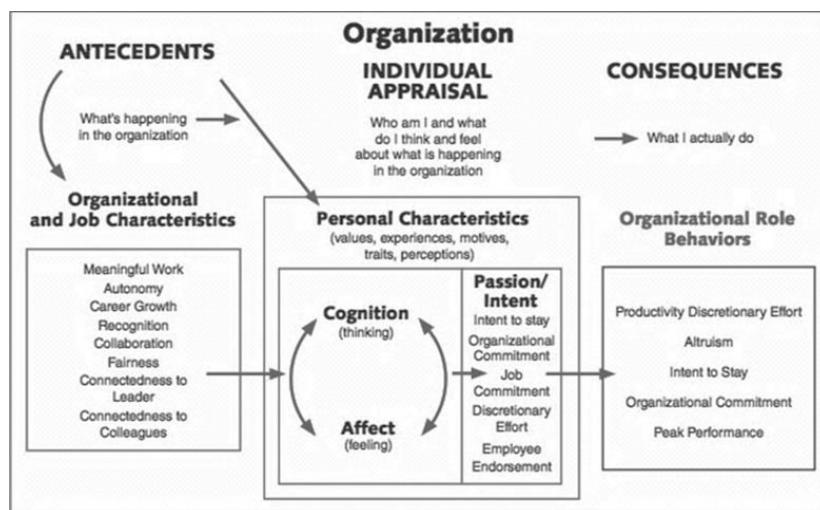
## Literature Review

This section provides an overview and review of literature on the work passion, innovative work behavior, factors leading to work passion, and the small hotel business in order to answer the objective of the study.

### Work Passion

Passion is “the enthusiasm, joy, and even zeal that come from the energetic and unflagging pursuit of a worthy, challenging and uplifting purpose” (Smilor, 1997, p. 3421). In scholarship, Zigarmi, Houson, Diehl, and Witt’s (2010) well-established definition describes passion as “an enduring, positive, internalized state of contentment resulting from favorable cognitive and affective work appraisals”. Similarly, Vallerand et al. (2003) discussed work passion as an enjoyable activity to which one can contribute time and energy.

Zigarmi et al. (2009b) provided a vivid framework of how work passion occurs. They defined work passion as “an individual’s persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based state of well-being stemming from continuous, reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations, which results in consistent, constructive work intentions and behaviors”.



Source: Zigarmi, Nimon, Houston, Witt, and Diehl, 2009b. From Engagement to Work Passion

### Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)

Innovative work behavior (West & Farr, 1989; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Yuan & Woodman, 2010) is a concept related to employee’s individual characteristics within particular forms of activity. It is defined as the individual’s intentional actions of generation, promotion and

implementation of new ideas within the work, group or organization for better performance of the unit (Janssen, 2000), or any level of the organization (West & Farr, 1989).

### **Factors Leading to Work Passion**

The Initial research of Zigarmi et al. (2009b) identified eight interdependent key factors responsible for driving work passion as mentioned in Figure Work Passion Model. These include meaningful work, autonomy, collaboration, fairness, recognition, career growth, connectedness to colleagues, and connectedness to leader. However, those factors were not sufficient to explain employee work passion, as Zigarmi et al. (2013) further developed an additional factor that might drive employee work passion, which was classified into three different categories as 1) organizational factors: including collaboration, performance expectation, growth, procedural justice 2) job factors: including autonomy, meaningful work, feedback, workload balance, task variety 3) relationship factors: including connectedness with leader, connectedness with colleagues.

### **Small Hotel Business**

Since the researcher focuses this research on the small hotel business, the concept of the boutique and hostel will be discussed as follows.

#### *Boutique Hotel*

The global increase of the boutique and lifestyle hotels has been a watchful trend in the hospitality sector. A boutique is defined by Webster's dictionary as "a small fashionable specialty shop or business" and the term has been applied to specialty hotels while Day, Quadri, Lawrence, and Jones, (2012) define as unique small hotels that provide authentic cultural or historic experiences and interesting services to guests in high level of service. In summary, the most important defining characteristics of boutique hotels are the cultural, historical, and being genuine. A boutique hotel is an independent hotel that provides interesting and unique services.

#### *Hostel*

Given the relative newness of the hostel concept, there is little research surrounding the industry. Hotels and hostels, the two core businesses of the hospitality industry, target different groups of customers. The hotel industry is now popular amongst multinational companies while hostels target low budget travelers and backpackers. Hotels mainly offer

a private room for travelers to rest while hostels offer facilities that may require guest to share (such as bathrooms and kitchen) (Bunda, 2014).

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed the qualitative method in order to serve the research question. In-depth interviews, focus group, and participants observation were employed to investigate the factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior.

Forty participants from 6 boutique hotels and 4 hostels from Bangkok, eastern, northeastern, and Southern of Thailand that were granted innovation award or total experience awards by Thailand Boutique Award or received online review from tripadvisor.com and booking.com as innovative small hotel were selected. The data were collected via interviewing and observing technique by recruiting 40 participants (10 owner/executive and 30 employees). The participants were selected based on purposive sampling technique. However, the participants were distributed to cover all levels in the hotel which included owner, executive, supervisor, and employee. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

### **Results**

The objective of this study was to explore the factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior among executives and employees of small hotel business in Thailand. It encompassed the participants' perceptions of the factors driving their work passion. The interviewees contributed different amounts of information and the factors of work passion for innovative work behavior could be divided into four themes and thirteen subthemes, which included: meaningful work, task variety, autonomy, feedback, engagement in the organization, performance expectations, development program, collaboration, organizational strategy, engagement with the customer, connectedness with colleagues, connectedness with leader, and personality. The summary of findings was described in Table 1.

No	Theme/Sub-theme	Operational Definition	Sample Quotes
<b>Job Factors</b>			
1	Meaningful work	The perception of the importance of their job for themselves and others both inside and outside of the hotel.	<i>When I serve a new menu of drink and guest give me a compliment, it really energizes me to do more and more. I feel so proud.</i>
2	Task variety	The perception of different jobs and different needs of customers that keep them motivated	<i>The details of job itself really challenge me such as to serve different needs of guests, reach the best solution for hotel or seek a new target group of guests.</i>
3	Autonomy	The feeling of empowerment to make decisions about their work and to be in control of their work	<i>My boss trusted me to handle with guests and other related issue on behalf of her while she was away from the hostel. I also feel so good when she accepted my idea and allowed to implement.</i>
4	Feedback	Receiving valuable information from the managers regarding the work.	<i>My boss is not a kind of commander. She always motivated us to think and give some advice when needed so we have a clear direction in our mission.</i>
<b>Organization Factors</b>			
5	Engagement in the organization	The positive attitude toward the organization with the determination to see the organization's growth	<i>I would like to see the hotel's growth. I tried to see any opportunities to increase the numbers of visiting guests.</i>
6	Performance expectations	The awareness of the standard level and goals to be attained	<i>I look forward to see the growth of hotel which motivated me to concern more on the efficiency of the process of work or how to set the systematic flow of tasks.</i>
7	Development program	The perception of HRD activity that drive them to continue thinking/ creating	<i>Joining field trip to visit other hotels and some hotel fairs really opened my view. I found the new trends and life style of guests as well as sharing ideas with other hotels' marketers.</i>

No	Theme/Sub-theme	Operational Definition	Sample Quotes
8	Collaboration	The positive feeling toward collaboration among team members without competitiveness	<i>This hotel is a big family where everyone shares a positive energy. If there is a problem, we try to find how to solve instead of finding who did it.</i>
9	Organizational strategy	The perception of the organization mission, strategy, and policy including CSR activities that drive them to continue thinking/ creating	<i>Our hotel is an innovative organization and our mission is quite clear for everyone. We can't stop creating an innovation for the hotel. We have to be a market leader.</i>
<b>Relationship Factors</b>			
10	Engagement with the customer	The positive feeling toward customers and driving the effort for the best service	<i>Guests are the factor leading to my passion. I don't know, umm. I just have to make sure that they are impressed and happy with our service and all meals because they chose us as their destination. I can do anything at all to please them.</i>
11	Connectedness with colleagues	The feeling of love, appreciation, and trust in their colleagues	<i>My colleagues are very good. We all made one another happy to work here together. This drove me to think and create more for the growth of business.</i>
12	Connectedness with leader	The positive feeling toward the empowerment, and being supportive of leader which leads to motivation in creating/developing	<i>We work together as a team with a supportive from my leader especially when we try to launch new project.</i>
<b>Individual Factor</b>			
13	Personality	The perception of how the job matches their personality	<i>I am a kind of outgoing person. I like to meet and talk with others which is beneficial me to do the service job. This turned to be my motivation in creating a distinguish service to my guests.</i>

## Discussion

Referred to the study of Zigarmi et al. (2013), the findings showed some similar factors in each theme as follows; theme 1) job factor - meaningful work, task variety, autonomy, feedback; theme 2) organization factor - growth, performance expectations, collaboration; theme 3) relationship factor - connectedness with colleagues and connectedness with leader. The consistence with previous literatures is discussed below.

Most participants perceived the importance of their job to themselves and others both inside and outside the hotel. Participants believed that the contribution of their time and effort to jobs toward the hotel are worthwhile, and guest satisfied with their new products and services launched. This finding factor – meaningful work is consistent with many scholars (e.g. Ahlrichs, 2003; Wagner, & Harter, 2006; Bhatnagar, 2007). By the nature of small hotel business with a small scale of staff, participants had a chance to cover all tasks in the hotel. The participants perceived that different jobs and different needs of customers keep them motivated. Moreover, they also reported that the autonomy motivated them to have work passion in thinking and creating a better standard of work, product, or service which is consistent with a study of Fernet et al. (2014). Interestingly, participants also mentioned that the small hotel business with less number of employees encourage an opportunity to work closely with the owner which consequently led to sharing and learning to create new ideas/projects. This is supported by the research of Liu et al. (2011). Participants revealed their determination to improve, adjust, and develop their job in order to reach the standard or beyond the expectation of guests which is leading to the organization's growth.

However, comparing a finding from this study to a framework of Zigarmi et al. (2013) in employee work passion, there are two factors not found as in a framework of Zigarmi et al. (2013) which are; workload balance and procedural justice. The participants mentioned that the working environment of their hotel made them feel relax so they did not feel like really working. They got feeling of staying home while working and all guests came to visit their home. Then the workload is not concerned by participants. The other factor of procedural justice is also not found from the current study. The researcher observed that the working environment as a family might lessen the participants concern in this factor.

Interestingly, there are four emerged factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior in this study which is different to a framework of Zigarmi et al. (2013) as follows;

development program and organizational strategy (organizational level), engagement with the customer (relationship factor), and personality (individual factor). The participants mentioned how organizational strategy, corporate social responsibility activity, training and development program, including field trip of the hotel helped them in creating new product/service and process of work. This is similar to the study of Chotiros Dumrongsanti (2011). Engagement with the customer considered as a factor leading to participant's work passion because of a strong relationship with their guests, especially the repetitive guest. The desire to impress and take care of their guests is clearly seen in most participants because their interest toward the service job matched their personality. This finding is similar to the literature of Vallerand et al. (2003).

In conclusion, comparing factors leading to work passion for innovative work behavior between executives and employees of small hotel business, the findings showed top leading factor for executive group is personality (individual factor) while meaningful work was the top leading factor for employee group. Moreover, relationship factor has definitely no effect to executive's work passion for innovative work behavior.

## **Recommendation/ Implication**

### **Implication of the Study or Research**

The finding reported that executives and employees perceived meaningful work, engagement in the organization, and personality as an important factor which could lead them to have more work passion for innovative work behavior. The researcher can touch and feel how participants put their identity into their work which consequently lead to the innovate products and services serving their guests. From the study finding, the researcher proposed the executive or owner of the small hotel business to set up the policy related to training and development program including business trip to other hotels in order to stimulate their innovation.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research are proposed based on the literature review and the findings presented here. The following are recommendations for other researchers to explore and further improve this research.

First, the quantitative research of the proposed conceptual framework from this study is recommended for future research in order to be generalization. However, there might be

other aspects that could be explored through the quantitative analysis such as the relationships between the constructs and the relationships between the groups of analysis.

Second, since the findings found Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a factor to increase work passion for innovative work behavior of small hotel business, then the researcher recommended to conduct further study under the topic of “Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a factor leading to work passion for small hotel business”.

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