

INFLUENCE OF CERTAIN VARIABLES ON ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT: A CASE STUDY IN THE HOTEL SECTOR OF CORDOBA

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The hotel industry is characterised by close and direct contact between the employee and the customer. For this reason, one of the most effective ways to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty is to ensure that employees who provide the service feel committed to the organisation where they work. By doing so, hotel businesses can gain a sustainable competitive advantage and improve organisational performance. Based on these premises, this article aims to determine the relationships between certain variables associated with the job and the organisational commitment of the individual. The hypotheses tests reveal a strong relationship between stable and permanent employment and higher levels of organisational commitment among hotel employees.

Keywords: *Hotel employment, organisational commitment, Spain*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

The success of a company is only possible if it understands analyses and puts in place measures which encourage employees to commit to their business projects and consider corporate objectives as personal objectives. Similarly, business objectives take into account individual and group objectives which motivate employees. Moreover, business owners should pay attention to each area of employment and provide a personalised improvement programme which is directed at various groups in



accordance with the employment characteristics of that group (Lee & Way, 2010).

The empirical evidence shows that, to a certain extent, customer satisfaction is the result of employee satisfaction and commitment (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991; Larshon & Shina, 1995; Kutanls et al., 2012). The link between the external client and the employee arises from the satisfaction and commitment of both parties, as well as in the continuity of the relationship between them. Perhaps the most pressing issue in the hotel sector is clients' perception of the quality of the service they have received as this is closely associated with the level of organisational commitment felt by employees (Hartline et al., 2003). The highly significant nature of this within the hotel sector is due to the fact that hotel management differs from other kinds of businesses and organisations given the high level of contact between clients and employees. According to a study by Hawkings and Lee (1990) on the factors which lead an employee in the hotel sector to demonstrate a certain degree of commitment to their organisation, employee commitment is based upon job satisfaction and professional commitment. There are a series of determining factors or characteristics which can lead to the commitment (or not) of an individual (Galup et al., 2008; Katsaros & Tsirikas, 2012). Furthermore, managers and directors of hotels must listen to their employees' thoughts and concerns (Chiang, 2010).

The start of the new decade has revealed itself to be the bearer of an unprecedented economic crisis. In spite of this difficult and dramatic situation, tourism is proving to be highly resistant to the worst consequence of the crisis: unemployment. Particularly noteworthy are the data from the World Tourism Barometer (United Nations World Tourism Organization –UNWTO-, 2011), which show that tourism is directly responsible for 5% of world GDP (and 9% indirectly), represents 30% of world services trade and provides employment to one in twelve people across the globe. According to the International Labour Organization – ILO- (2012), the world needs to create 600 million new job posts in the next decade in order to maintain economic growth. The ILO also states that for every job created in tourism, one and a half is generated within the economy related to tourism.

The main objective of this paper is to determine the influence of certain job-related variables on the organisational commitment of hotel industry employees in Cordoba (Spain). To achieve this aim, we test hypotheses on the type of contract (full-time or part-time contracts and duration of employment), the length of service and family dependence on the income earned by the hotel employee. With the same purpose and

methodology, we also attempt to determine the possible relationship between employee gender and organisational commitment towards the hotel where the services are provided.

The paper is structured as follows. Following the introduction, we provide some background on the conceptualisation and dimensions of the organisational commitment construct. This is followed by a description of the study area. We then describe the methodology used and the hypotheses that are tested. The next section includes results drawn from the analysis and a discussion of the most significant findings. Finally, conclusions are drawn in the last section.

BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the 21st century, Davis and Newstrom (2001) defined commitment as the extent to which an individual identifies with an organisation and wishes to continue participating actively in it. These authors maintain that commitment is usually stronger among employees with a longer tenure within an organisation (because they will have experienced personal success within the business) and among those who work within a group of committed employees. As defined by Arciniega (2002), organisational commitment is a set of linkages which keep a subject attached to an organisation. According to Testa (2001), organisational commitment can also be seen as an emotional response by an employee to a positive appraisal of the work environment. This response should be considered as an endorsement of the organisation, particularly when the individual firmly believes in the values and goals of the organisation or when he or she shows a strong desire to remain within the organisation (Scholarios & Marks, 2004).

Commitment therefore functions as a link which includes either behaviour or an attitude. It is necessary that this link brings with it a particular way of acting or a positive attitude towards an organisation which predisposes the individual to behave in such a way that will be of benefit to the organisation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). However, it goes further than loyalty, leading to an active contribution towards the achievement of goals within the organisation. Moreover, it often reflects employees' support of the mission and goals of the organisation they work for, their willingness to exert effort to achieve them and their intention to continue working for the organisation (Davis & Newstrom, 2001).

The organisational commitment construct has been a topic of research interest due to the fact that, as mentioned above, it is associated

with many of the main factors inherent to the success of a business such as performance, absenteeism, employee turnover, and quality of working life (Porter et al., 1974; Mowday et al., 1982; Reichers, 1985; Griffin & Baterman, 1986; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Salvador, 2005, among others). This study of organisational commitment has mainly been marked by its multidisciplinary nature, which has led to it being defined, measured and studied in various ways over the years.

It can be said that the origins of research into commitment under the umbrella of organisational behaviour can be found primarily in the work of Porter and colleagues (Porter et al., 1974; Mowday et al., 1982). In the 1980s, after nearly a decade of research into the topic, Mowday et al. (1982) published a study which has become a clear point of reference for the academic community. In their research, Mowday et al. (1982: 27) define organisational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation”. With regards to developing a model of organisational commitment, this has traditionally revolved around either a one-dimensional or multi-dimensional approach. In the case of the former, the model developed by Porter et al. (1974) is noteworthy. Despite the authors’ three-dimensional definition of commitment, they treat the construct as being one dimensional. Reaching a consensus on how to model organisational commitment is an incredibly difficult task, even more so when trying to arrive at a multidisciplinary theoretical framework. Nevertheless, the bulk of current research accepts and is based on the multi-dimensional model (Meyer et al., 2004) However, according to Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), there is also a lack of consensus about the multi-dimensional model originating from: differences between earlier one-dimensional concepts, studies carried out within a theoretical context, and some combination of these factors.

Moreover, they understood the second component (continuance commitment) to be the need an individual has to remain with an organisation without necessarily having any emotional links to it. An individual with a high level of continuance commitment perceives staying with the organisation as a necessity. This need is borne of individuals’ binding choices (McGee & Ford, 1987) which lead them to a situation where the costs associated with leaving the organisation are perceived as greater than the costs of staying. These binding costs arise for various reasons. For example, they might be linked to the sacrifices already made to remain with the organisation and those which arise from the lack of alternatives to the current organisation. To summarise, this dimension is related to the threat of loss as a factor inciting a person to commit to the

organisation. This may be a result of the direct threat of loss (i.e., the value they attach to their current post) or by the indirect threat of loss (i.e., the lack of alternatives to change or improve upon the circumstances relative to their current job).

It is also important to point out that managers who design and implement strategies within the hotel sector must evaluate and ascertain which factors (i.e., the work environment, working conditions, professional training and development, supervision, pay policies, working status, etc.) play an important role in providing what employees expect from employment (Lee & Way, 2010; Kutans et al., 2012). In having an understanding of these factors, organisations can develop the appropriate human resource policies which will make it possible to achieve the organisational commitment of their employees. To move closer to this objective, this study reflects upon the importance of certain variables inherent to the job position and attempts to demonstrate that these variables have repercussions on commitment.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

Spain, as a whole, can be considered one of the premier tourist destinations worldwide given the number of tourist arrivals and tourism expenditure. In 2012, a total of 57.7 million international tourists came to Spain, which represents a year-on-year increase of 1.8% or one million more tourists over 2011 (National Statistics Institute –NSI-, 2013a). In 2012, a total of 982,109 tourists visited Cordoba.

The hotel sector of Cordoba plays a key role in the socioeconomic development of the province due mainly to the sector's dynamic nature and its ability to create employment. This is significant within an environment of widespread crisis. Indeed, according to the Working Population Survey 2013 (NSI, 2013b) unemployment in the province reached extremely worrying levels in the third quarter of 2013, with 37.16% of the population unemployed (adults aged 16 and over). The hotel sector, however, is maintaining its levels of employment. These data confirm that the hotel sector is very strong: employment growth is good during growth periods in the economic cycle, while the sector is highly resistant to times of economic recession as it maintains and even improves levels of employment. In order to attain these positive figures, Cordoba has differentiated its tourism offering by investing in quality cultural and rural tourism services. The main data on the hotel sector of the province of Cordoba are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Key figures for the hotel sector in Cordoba. Year 2012

Hotel Category	Number of Hotels	Rooms	Staff
Five star	3	284	65
Four star	17	2,271	506
Three star	23	1,818	283
Two star	27	1,365	135
One star	17	877	85
TOTAL	87	6,615	1,074

Source: NSI (2013a)

METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork was carried out from April to October 2010. After considering the use of personal interviews, telephone surveys, and other survey instruments, a written questionnaire was considered to be the most appropriate survey methodology. The questionnaire included various sections, but for the purposes of this study the section referring to the “General vision of organisational commitment” is the most important. The questionnaire was developed based on the well-known Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) of Porter et al. (1974). In the first phase of the survey, a personal telephone call was made to hotel managers, in which the project was presented and their collaboration was requested. *In situ* meetings were arranged in order to explain the main objectives of the project and distribute the questionnaires and blank envelopes.

The widespread use of this instrument among the scientific community studying organisational commitment is attributable to its sound psychometric properties. The OCQ consists of 15 items in which respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the items on a five-point Likert scale. The scores obtained from the responses are added up and a mean score is calculated. The higher the mean score, the higher the individual’s organisational commitment. The research specifications of the fieldwork are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Research specifications of fieldwork

Geographical scope	Province of Cordoba
Target population	Hotel staff
Population size	1,074 employees from 87 hotels
Measurement instrument	Structured and closed-ended questionnaire
Sample size	585 respondents
Response rate	54%
Error	2.735%
Data gathering period	April-October 2010

The SPSS 15.0 software package and two groups of statistical techniques were used for processing the data. The basic data for the study was obtained by means of a descriptive statistical analysis technique, while analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression were used to test the hypotheses on organisational commitment and identify potential relationships between the independent variables and the construct.

The hypotheses that we aim to test are put forward and described below:

Hypothesis 1. There is no difference in level of organisational commitment between genders.

This hypothesis is in line with the literature on the most common job roles and those specific to the hotel sector (Aranya et al., 1986; Jacobsen, 2000).

Hypothesis 2. Organisational commitment is lower among part-time employees.

Some studies (Ross & Wright, 1998; Van Dyne & Eng, 1998; Sinclair et al., 1999) conclude that part-time employees show a lower level of organisational commitment. The above hypothesis also takes into account the logic arising from theories of partial inclusion and social exchange.

Hypothesis 3. Permanent employees are more committed.

This hypothesis suggests the existence of a direct relationship between job security derived from permanent or indefinite contracts and employees' organisational commitment resulting from a greater emotional attachment to the organisation (Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford et al., 1989; Van Dyne & Eng, 1998, Buonocore, 2010).

Hypothesis 4. Greater family dependence on income leads to higher commitment.

Several authors (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Dunham et al., 1994; Mueller et al., 1994; Kim et al., 1996; Lam et al., 2001, among others) have reported that there is a positive relationship between organisational commitment and relative income. However, the main difficulty lies in measuring the relationship. This hypothesis proposes the existence of a direct relationship between family dependence on income and level of commitment.

Hypothesis 5. Commitment increases with length of service.

This hypothesis has been put forward based on the assumption that length of service is a fundamental factor of socialisation within the company. Despite there being no clear line of investigation within the scientific research, the most recent studies are inclined to suggest a positive relationship between length of service and organisational commitment (Morris & Sherman, 1981; Sarker et al., 2003; Kim & Rowley, 2005, among others).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the main socio-professional variables of the respondents surveyed.

Table 3 shows that most workers earn between €750 and €1,500 per month and that many of them have full-time, permanent contracts. The table also shows that length of service (almost 7 years on average) is an important variable in determining job stability and providing employees opportunities for career growth and development.

Some conclusions can be drawn from Table 4 regarding employees' organisational commitment in the hotel sector of Cordoba and its relationship with the variables studied. The idea is that these results can aid hotel directors and managers to manage their human resources more efficiently and gain a better understanding of the principal factors which influence the commitment levels of the individuals they employ.

Table 3 Socio-professional variables

Variables		
Salary (€/month) (N=579)	Less than €500	2.9%
	€500- €750	9.0%
	€750- €1,000	40.5%
	€1,000- €1,500	42.3%
	€1,500- €2,500	4.3%
	More than €2,500	1.0%
Type of contract (N=577)	Permanent	65.6%
	Temporary	34.4%
Working hours (N=541)	Full time	80.0%
	Part-time	20.0%
Average length of service at the hotel (years)		6.70

Table 5 shows the scores of the items on the questionnaire relating to organisational commitment. The data contained in the table highlight one of the main problems affecting the Spanish economy in general and the services sector in particular, namely the lack of flexibility among the workforce to adapt to new stages of the economic cycle. Therefore, incentivising measures need to be put in place in order to support functional (and geographical) mobility. The aim is that when the overall economic situation takes the ‘recession’ route, the quantitative workforce of businesses must not only adapt to the changing circumstances by reducing staff numbers (as is currently happening, unfortunately), but also through an appropriate functional mobility policy (flexibility) which allows employment to be maintained.

Table 4 Mean differences and ANOVA

Variables	Category	Commitment (mean)	F (p-value)
Gender	Male	3.74	0.378 (0.539)
	Female	3.70	
Family dependence on income	Less than 40%	3.61	32.309 (0.100)
	40%-75%	3.69	
	More than 75%	3.78	
Working hours	Full-time	3.70	0.631 (0.427)
	Part-time	3.75	
Department	Administration	3.71	1.687 (0.099)**
	Accounts	3.45	
	Restaurant	3.73	
	Reception	3.60	
	Maintenance	3.78	
	Housekeeping	3.84	
	Kitchen	3.73	
	Management	4.03	
Others	3.67		
Hotel category	One star	3.71	6.219 (0.000)*
	Two star	3.45	
	Three star	3.73	
	Four star	3.60	
	Five star	3.78	
Type of contract	Permanent	3.80	10.519 (0.001)*
	Temporary	3.60	
Length of service (in years)	Less than 10	3.70	0.435 (0.728)
	10-20	3.79	
	20-30	3.61	
	More than 30	3.76	

*Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 10% level

This need is even more pressing, if possible, within the hotel sector given that it is a business environment which suffers from additional difficulties, particularly in terms of human resource planning (quantitatively in terms of numbers of employees and qualitatively in terms of the necessary skills) as a result of the instability and seasonality of demand. There is no doubt that if the sector wishes to move towards so-called '*flexicurity*' (flexibility and job security), it will have to develop

policies which make this very modern and important facet attractive to employees as a means of guaranteeing improved productivity and competitiveness among the organisations operating in the sector. Indeed, European institutions are calling for this route to be followed in various productive sectors of the Spanish economy.

Table 5 Scores on items relating to organisational commitment

I am willing to put in a great deal of effort in order to help this organisation be successful	4.39
Deciding to work for this organisation was a definite mistake on my part (R)	4.37
I really care about the fate of this organisation	4.25
I feel very little loyalty to this organisation (R)	4.15
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation	4.03
There's not much to be gained by sticking with this organisation indefinitely (R)	3.89
I talk up this organisation to my friends as a great organisation to work for	3.87
It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organisation (R)	3.81
I am extremely glad that I chose this organisation to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined	3.67
I find that my values and the organisation's values are very similar	3.50
For me, this is the best of all possible organisations to work for	3.49
This organisation really inspires the very best in me in terms of job performance	3.43
I often find it difficult to agree with this organisation's policies on important matters relating to its employees (R)	3.19
I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organisation	3.00
I could just as well be working for a different organisation as long as the type of work was similar (R)	2.71
Total mean organisational commitment	3.72

(R) is the inverse transformation of the scores as the items included a negative rather than an affirmative statement.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine a possible relationship between the independent variables (predictor and explanatory

variables) and the dependent variable (criterion, explained or response variables), which in this case is mean organisational commitment. The multiple regression analysis is presented in Table 6. The independent variables were coded as follows:

- Family dependence (a continuous variable which refers to the percentage of total family income that is dependent upon the hotel employee's income)
- Type of contract (0-temporary, 1-permanent)
- Working hours (0-part time, 1-full time)
- Length of service (a continuous variable which measures the number of years an individual has worked in the hotel sector)
- Gender (0- male, and 1-female)

Table 6 Multiple regression analysis

VARIABLE	B coefficient	Error	t value	Significance
Family dependence	0.059	0.044	1.337	0.182
Type of contract	0.340	0.076	4.461	0.000*
Working hours	-0.233	0.089	-2.607	0.009*
Length of service (years)	0.000	0.000	-0.594	0.553
Gender	-0.012	0.066	-0.174	0.862
Constant	3.551	0.120	29.486	0.000

**Significant at the 5% level*

The R-squared value shows a goodness of fit of 42%

In what follows the five hypotheses regarding the dependent variable 'organisational commitment' are accepted or rejected based on the results of the ANOVA and multiple regression tests.

Hypothesis 1. There is no difference in level of organisational commitment between genders.

Both the ANOVA test and the multiple regression analysis showed that there was not a significant difference in means between commitment and gender. The multiple regression analysis also yielded a negative coefficient (-0.012). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between level of organisational commitment and gender and the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2. Organisational commitment is lower among part-time employees.

The results of the ANOVA test showed no statistical significance for the difference in means between organisational commitment and the two categories of the variable 'working hours' (part-time and full-time). Nevertheless, the multiple regression analysis showed a negative (in favour of those hired on a part-time basis) and significant coefficient, thus rejecting the independence of both variables. The hypothesis is therefore rejected and it cannot be stated that more working hours increases organisational commitment. In fact, and in line with Still (1983) and Thorsteinson (2003), the opposite occurs.

Hypothesis 3. Permanent employees are more committed.

The ANOVA test showed that the difference in means between type of contract and organisational commitment is statistically significant. The multiple regression analysis confirms this result as the coefficient is positive and significant (coded as 0 = temporary contract, 1 = permanent contract) and rejects the independence of the variables, thus indicating a greater level of commitment among employees with permanent contracts in line with Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) and Nikolaou et al. (2005). This hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 4. Greater family dependence on income leads to higher commitment.

The ANOVA test showed that the relationship between family dependence on income (a concept similar to relative income) and organisational commitment is increasing, with a difference in means that is significant at the 10% level. The multiple regression analysis, however, showed a positive coefficient but no statistical significance. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 5. Commitment increases with length of service.

A clear trend was not found for the relationship between organisational commitment and length of service. Although organisational commitment increases marginally from the time the employee joins the company until reaching 20 years of service, it then decreases and does not return to previous levels until reaching 30 years of service with the company. This initial conclusion is also confirmed by the ANOVA test, which showed no statistical significance for the difference in means between organisational commitment and length of service. The multiple regression analysis showed a neutral and non-significant coefficient, thus suggesting that a shorter or longer length of service does not reduce or increase the level of commitment. Therefore, the hypothesis

that commitment increases with length of service must be rejected as in Sarker et al. (2003).

CONCLUSIONS

In recent decades, companies in general have come to view their intellectual capital, which primarily comprises human resources, as cornerstone to ensuring quality services for increasingly demanding customers. This is of even greater importance in the hotel sector where contact between employees and customers are particularly intense. Furthermore, customer satisfaction with their hotel stay largely depends on the service and attention customers they receive from hotel employees. However, to ensure that hotel employees provide a quality service, they must feel satisfied with their work and be committed to the hotel that employs them. Hotels whose employees are committed to the company's organisational culture and strategic business goals will no doubt achieve a sustainable competitive advantage over time.

Based on the fieldwork, we have identified the relationships between organisational commitment and some of the most important variables related to the job, such as working hours (part time or full time), type of contract (permanent or temporary), length of service, the degree of family dependence on the income earned, and an individual or personal variable of importance in the sector, namely the gender of the employee (given the large presence of females in the sector). Understanding these relationships could be of aid to hotel managers in managing human resources more efficiently through the implementation of specific job practices and policies that foster the organisational commitment of their employees.

The results of the analyses for the hotel sector in Cordoba (Spain) have shown that despite what is generally believed in the sector, hotel employment is quite stable over time, with many workers employed full time and earning an average salary of between €750 and €1,500, which must be analyzed taking into account that 20% of workers have a part-time contract. The results have also shown that the mean organisational commitment of hotel employees is 3.72 (out of 5), indicating that they have a medium to high level of commitment. This suggests that hotel managers are managing their human resources in an appropriate manner and fostering job motivation and job satisfaction, which although more temporary in nature, translates into a stable level of organisational commitment over time.

The hypotheses tests did not reveal a relationship between employee gender and organisational commitment; a surprising finding in a sector

that employees a large number of women. As regards the job-related variables, we found that stable employment results in a significant level of organisational commitment. This could be considered a logical result given that employees with a permanent contract enjoy greater job security, and hence feel greater affective loyalty towards the company. Hotel managers should reflect upon this as they too often string together precarious temporary contracts, thereby reducing the job commitment of employees who have contracts of this type. The results of the statistical analyses did not reveal a significant relationship between organisational commitment and working hours, length of service or family dependence on the income earned.

Future lines of research could be aimed at a more in-depth study of the relationship between organisational commitment and effective client orientation to measure the results achieved with the development of this construct. In this sense, it would be convenient to promote the use of quality circles to engage employees in assessing work-related issues, proposing strategies of action and finding solutions with a view to improving organisational commitment. Similarly, these future lines of research could also explore such as other aspects of human resource management, particularly with regard to more modern theories of motivation in order to verify the possible association between these attitudinal concepts.

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