A Study of the Motivation System Preference of Female Pet Supplies Sales Representatives

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ABSTRACT

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| The purpose of this study was to explore the preference of female pet supplies sales reps for the motivation system, and the participants were 72 female pet supplies sales reps from the largest pet products retail company of Taiwan, and the two surveys of "intrinsic motivation system" and "extrinsic reward system" and an interview were investigated, aiming to understand the satisfaction and expectations of female pet supplies sales reps with the current intrinsic and extrinsic rewards at work, and analyze the differences between the two. The study found that the company's female pet supplies sales reps were quite satisfied with the company's motivation system and also believed that the job of selling pet supplies was a contribution to society and could get a sense of accomplishment when the work was completed. Having fair opportunities for promotion at work and receiving public praise and praise and rewards from the company were the two main inner motivations. The finding shows that social contribution, motivation travel and promotion are the biggest rewards from internal motivation system, extrinsic financial rewards, and extrinsic non-financial rewards respectively. The implications, limitations, and future research plans are presented in this paper. |

*Keywords: pet supplies, motivation system, work efficiency*

1. INTRODUCTION

Taiwan has gradually become a developing country in the past decades, in which people have stronger personal consciousness, higher level of knowledge improvement whether it is in the pursuit of material or life stability. Having a pet or more than a pet at home is a trend among young generations with a more discretionary income and they are willing to pay more attention on the pets at home and treat them as the important family members. The pet supplies market is also gradually booming with the pace of society. In recent years, women have accounted for an increasing proportion of pet supplies sales. This study aimed to explore the preference of female pet supplies sales reps in the pet supplies company with the highest capitalization in Taiwan.

2. Literature review

The main purpose of this study is to explore the motivation system of Taiwan's pet supplies industry, and to explore the term "motivation system". It is necessary to trace the original meaning of "motivation" and make it clear of the term "motivation" in the first place. In addition, how does it differ from or similar to the meaning of “motivation” in this study is another research question. In response to the above research questions, this study will clarify the questions in the form of literature discussion.

**2.1 Definition of motivations**

Motivation is the original meaning of the ancient Latin movere- to move. It is a driving force, and also an act that inspires, guides and supports through the driving force. For enterprises, it is a way to guide or induce employees to improve their willingness to work and achieve goals (Tang, 2006). What is motivation? For example, Herzberg (1959) believes that motivation is an internalized forced, which means that it is not limited by the external environment, but can be self-energizing, self-controlling and self-satisfied. The scholar Lin (1997) pointed out that motivation is an external stimulus, which in turn stimulates the willingness and action of others to work, so that they can move towards the desired goal. The different views of the definition of motivation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Definitions of motivations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Herzberg (1959) | Motivation is an internalized forced, which means that it is not limited by the external environment, but can be self-energizing, self-controlling and self-satisfied. |
| Vroom (1964) | Motivation is a process that governs people, making them make choices in a variety of voluntary forms and strive to move towards their goals. |
| McCormick & Ilgen (1985) | Job motivation refers to situations that can influence the motivation, guidance, and maintenance of behaviors related to achieving work goals, and it is believed that there are four factors that make work motivation extremely complex:  1. The diversity of reasons why people work.  2. Cognitive impairment of people's work behavior.  3. The same behavior at different times may only be based on different reasons.  4. People are interested in many behaviors related to work motivations, and the reasons for these behaviors are not the same. |
| Jiang (1988) | Motivations can be divided into two types: one is a psychological state that guides individual behavior and the other is that a manager does something to induce others to act in a certain way, and then produces the result required by the organization. |
| Dessler（1994） | Motivation is the reflex of human beings to work to satisfy a certain need. |
| Steers (1994) | Motivation is a driving behavior that inspires, guides, and sustains human beings. |
| D’ Aunno (1994) | A motivation is the power of a stimulus or encouragement that someone feels or thinks about that has enabled them to accomplish a task or engage in a particular behavior. |
| Lin (1996) | Motivation is an external stimulus that stimulates the willingness and action of others to move towards the desired goal. |
| Robbins (2020) | Motivation is an intrinsic condition that is indexed by stimuli; At the same time, it is also a mediating variable, which cannot be directly observed in the internal process; It is the result of the interaction between the individual and the environment. It often varies from person to person and from situation to situation. Motivation is the willingness to work harder to achieve organizational goals while meeting individual needs with three important reasons, which are efforts, demands, and organizational goals. |

Based on the above definitions, motivation is mainly a force that achieves expectations through stimulation. This study will pinpoint motivation from a manager's perspective, where the definition of motivation will focus on the motivation or motivation needed to drive employees to be effective at work. Therefore, the meaning of motivation in this study is to explore how to improve the efficiency and satisfaction of employees.

**2.2 Motivation theory**

Motivation theory is a very important part of modern organizational management. There are quite a lot of studies on motivation theory, among which motivation theory is mainly divided into three categories, namely, satisfaction theory, process theory and reinforcement theory. The following will explain the categories of these three motivational theories in detail.

**2.2.1 Uses and Gratification Theory**

In 1974, Katz and Blumler first proposed the theory of Uses and Gratification in the book named The Use of Mass Communication: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research (Katz et al., 1974). The authors have summarized the media contact behavior as a causal chain process of "social factors + psychological factors→ media expectation → media contact → needs satisfaction". In Katz and Blumer’s chain process, there are four key connections among these factors.

1.Demand satisfaction is related to social and personal psychological factors, because the purpose of need satisfaction is mainly to meet one's own needs.

2.In order to meet their needs, people will first contact or use media.

3.The use of media creates personal impressions and evaluations of people, where needs are met or unmet.

4.Whether it is satisfied or not, the choice and use of the media will be affected in the future. The user will revise the existing media impression based on the satisfaction of the results.

And how to satisfy the impression of employees? A motivation system is needed to create a satisfactory impression of employees. It is supported by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) and Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg., et al, 1959).

*2.2.1.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is an internal self-driving force that drives individuals to constantly use their inner potential to the best of their ability, and those who achieve self-actualization will take pride in their work. Maslow believed that there are five levels of needs within each person, and he arranged the five needs in order from high to low: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Fig. 1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory

Self-actualization

Esteem needs

Love and belonging needs

Safety needs

Physiological needs

In Figure 1, it could correspond to the corporate motivation system, and Maslow's physiological needs could take as salary, bonuses and benefits; Safety requirements can take as employee insurance and work environment; Social needs can take as community activities; Self-esteem needs can take as the employee's position and title; Self-actualization can take as education and training or learning and growth groups.

*2.2.1.2 Two-factor Theory*

Herzberg., et al, (1959) developed Two-factor Theory and conducted several investigations into various professional and non-professional industrial organizations. They claimed that when people think that these factors are good, it only eliminates dissatisfaction and does not lead to a positive attitude, which creates a kind of neutral state that is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. And the factors that can really bring about a positive attitude are the factors that can satisfy the individual's self-actualization, including achievement, appreciation, challenging work, increased job responsibilities, and opportunities for growth and development.

The theory mainly distinguishes between internal and extrinsic work factors that motivate employees. Extrinsic work factors, known as health factors, include job security, salary, working environment, company policies, technical supervision, interpersonal relationships, status and benefits. The intrinsic work factors are called motivational factors, including achievement, recognition, promotion, work itself, responsibility, and growth and development.

Additionally, Herzberg's research found that the depth and effect of motivations resulting from satisfying various needs are different. The satisfaction of material needs is necessary, and the absence of it leads to dissatisfaction; But even when satisfied, its effect is often limited and unsustainable. In order to arouse people's enthusiasm, leaders should not only pay attention to external factors such as material interests and working conditions, but more importantly, leaders should pay attention to the appropriation tasks arrangement, suitable people recruitment according to their talents, and give them opportunities, and to keep eyes on giving people spiritual encouragement, praise and recognition, and opportunities for growth, development, and promotion. With the disappearance of the problem of basic physiological needs, the importance of this intrinsic motivation is becoming more and more obvious.

**2.2.2 Process Theory**

The theory mainly explains how human behavior begins, initiates, continues, modifies, and terminates. The motivation process model mainly explores the process or process of motivation, which focuses on the comparison of personal expected cognition and results, including personal self-comparison fairness, and fair comparison with others, if there is an unfair situation in the comparison results, employees will automatically adjust their personal behavior to achieve a state of satisfaction. In this regard, the motivation process model can be subdivided into Vroom's (Vroom, 1964) expectation theory and Adams's equity theory.

(1) Expectation theory: It is asserted that the output of employee behavior is a prudent and rational conscious choice and process, and this kind of conscious choice is to give a comparative evaluation of the choice of different behaviors. It mainly contains factors such as expectations, preferences, and outputs. The higher the probability that the employee's expected output will be achieved, and the stronger the preference for output, the greater the motivation effect.

(2)　Equity Theory: The main focus is on the consideration of remuneration as an important motivator of behavior. Employees are not only concerned about the relationship between their own input and compensation, but also how they compare themselves to others. Employees feel satisfied when they feel that they are being paid fairly and reasonably for their work, and when they compare the ratio of their work to their work and pay with other reference groups, they will feel unfair when they find that there is unfairness, and they will be motivated to take action to reduce the unfairness.

**2.2.3 Reinforcement Theory**

A theory proposed by American psychologists and behavioral scientists such as Skinner, Hussey, Blanchard, and others. The basic spirit is to constrain behavior through reinforcement, regardless of the agent's internal cognition. That is, positive and negative reinforcement is used to control and change the behavior, or the original behavior is repeated by using motivations. And for unwanted behavior, it is weakened or no longer recurred by means of punishment. According to the related theories, there are three types of reinforcement: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and natural regression.

(1)　Positive reinforcement. When people take a certain behavior, they can get a pleasant result from others, and this result, in turn, becomes a force that pushes people to tend to or repeat such behaviors. For example, enterprises use some attractive results (such as bonuses, vacations, promotions, recognition, praise, etc.) to express the affirmation of employees' efforts to carry out safe production behaviors and then enhance employees' safety production behaviors to further comply with safety regulations.

(2)　Negative reinforcement. It refers to the negation of an unpleasant consequence of a non-conforming behavior. For example, if a company's safety manager informs workers that they don't follow safety protocols, they are criticized or even denied safety rewards. Therefore, in order to avoid such undesirable results, workers carefully follow the operating procedures to carry out safe operations.

(3) Natural extinction. It refers to the revocation of an otherwise acceptable reinforcement of a behavior. If it is not strengthened for a certain period, it will naturally decline and gradually subside. The enterprise once rewarded the employees for working overtime to complete the production quota but later believed that this was not conducive to the health of the employees and the long-term interests of the enterprise, so they no longer paid the rewards, so that the number of employees working overtime gradually decreased.

3. Research design

In this study, there was a 26-item survey used to meet the research questions. The survey has two parts and combined with three miner surveys. The first part is intrinsic motivation systems with one miner survey named internal motivation system, whereas the second part is extrinsic motivation systems with two miner surveys named external financial remuneration and external non-financial remuneration. The purpose of the two parts is to understand the satisfaction and expectations of female insurance professionals with the current intrinsic and extrinsic motivations at work, and to analyze the differences between the two. The amount of the surveys is shown in Table 2.

(1) Internal motivation system

The remuneration that employees receive for the work itself is usually intangible, including participation in decision-making, training and refresher opportunities, work autonomy to increase employees' enthusiasm and freshness in their work.

(2) Extrinsic financial rewards

Financial remuneration is tangible and belongs to external remuneration, which can directly or indirectly improve employee benefits, including three bonuses, employee bonuses or allowances, bonuses.

(3) Extrinsic non-financial rewards

Non-financial remuneration is an external non-financial reward aimed at improving the quality of work and making the employee's work life better. These include non-material monetary motivations such as leave, promotion opportunities, networking activities.

Table 2 Question number of the survey

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | The name of the survey | Number of questions | Question number |
| 1 | Intrinsic motivation system | 9 | 1,2,3,4,7,8,9,27 |
| 2 | Extrinsic financial rewards | 10 | 10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 |
| 3 | Extrinsic non-financial rewards | 7 | 20,21,22,23,24,25,26 |

(4) Reward system

Based on the company's reward method, the top three favorites of respondents were selected according to their preferences, and the most preferred reward system for female business employees was discussed.

According to the public information of the 2025 Taiwan company registration, the capital of the company with the largest capital in the pet products retail industry is NT$832 million. The 72 participants were all from the company and they are current female salespeople in the company. The reason why this study sample the participant from the biggest company in the pet supplies industry is that the size of the capital is closely related to the size of the company, and the larger the company, the more feasible the business philosophy that the business philosophy will motivate employees to grow, so that employees can efficiently achieve their work goals and get satisfaction.

4. Results

This study surveyed female pet supplies sales reps through a questionnaire survey to determine their satisfaction with the company's internal motivation system, extrinsic financial reward satisfaction, extrinsic non-financial reward satisfaction, and the preference of the motivation system as a complete survey and statistics. The details are shown as follows.

(1) Satisfaction of intrinsic motivation system

In Table 3, the motivation satisfaction rate of " I feel that I am contributing to society from my current job " is the highest, which shows that many salespeople are quite competent for their job positions, and at the same time, they also think that their work contributes to society, which indicates that female salespeople have a high sense of accomplishment in their current work in principle.

Table 3 Satisfaction of intrinsic motivation system

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| content | average | standard deviation |
| I can realize my ideals and ambitions from my current job. | 4.22 | 0.72 |
| I can bring my personal talents to the table in my current job. | 4.18 | 0.81 |
| I get a sense of accomplishment from my current job. | 4.28 | 0.75 |
| I feel that I am contributing to society from my current job. | 4.47 | 0.71 |
| I get satisfaction when my work is done. | 4.40 | 0.64 |
| I feel that my current job is in line with my interests. | 4.00 | 0.87 |
| I get the opportunity to participate in decision-making in my current job. | 3.75 | 0.87 |
| I have the opportunity to train and refresh myself in my current job. | 4.40 | 0.64 |
| I feel that this job will give me the opportunity to expatriate and rotate between positions. | 3.18 | 0.74 |

1. Satisfaction of extrinsic financial rewards

In Table 4, it can be seen that the motivation satisfaction of " I'm happy with the motivation travel that the company is currently offering." is the highest, while the motivation satisfaction of " I feel reasonable about the New Year's or birthday prizes that the company is currently offering." is low. It can be inferred from this that the motivation travel is well planned and that every member has the opportunity to enjoy this reward as long as there is good performance. On the other hand, the female sales reps feel unreasonable for the annual festival or birthday prizes provided by the company, and the reason why the pet store can not grasp this block may be because their working time is to be out of the office and seldom be in office or only come by office for routine morning meetings so that it is low cost-effect for them to step in office for celebrations or ceremonies because stepping in office may lead to a decline in the annual business performance to the lost of annual bonuses.

Table 4 Satisfaction of extrinsic financial rewards

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| content | average | standard deviation |
| I feel reasonable about the basic salary offered by the company at the moment. | 3.30 | 1.02 |
| I feel reasonable about the group performance bonus currently offered by the company. | 3.81 | 0.82 |
| I am comfortable with the individual performance bonuses that the company is currently offering. | 3.79 | 0.80 |
| I feel reasonable about the year-end bonus offered by the company at the moment. | 3.83 | 0.85 |
| I feel reasonable about the performance contest prize money that the company is currently offering. | 3.93 | 0.93 |
| I feel reasonable about the New Year's or birthday prizes that the company is currently offering. | 2.87 | 1.12 |
| I'm happy with the motivation travel that the company is currently offering. | 4.08 | 0.72 |
| I feel reasonable about the group insurance currently offered by the company. | 3.93 | 0.65 |
| I am satisfied with the retirement plan currently offered by the company. | 3.81 | 0.86 |
| I am comfortable with the low interest rate concessional loan offered by the company at the moment. | 3.41 | 0.94 |

1. Satisfaction of extrinsic non-financial rewards

In Table 5, "I think the company's promotion opportunities are good and fair" has the highest motivational satisfaction, while "I think the company has a good leave system" has the lowest motivational satisfaction.

Table 5 Satisfaction of extrinsic non-financial rewards

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| content | average | standard deviation |
| I think the company has a good leave system. | 3.83 | 0.49 |
| When I do a good job, I get public recognition. | 4.40 | 0.64 |
| When I work hard, I can be praised and rewarded by my supervisor in a timely manner. | 4.38 | 0.68 |
| The company will publish the outstanding deeds of employees in journals or websites. | 4.15 | 0.79 |
| I think the company's promotion opportunities are good and fair. | 4.43 | 0.76 |
| I am satisfied with the current selection system of the company's honor committee. | 4.37 | 0.72 |
| When I make a significant contribution to the company, it means a lot to me that the company designs a personalized award ceremony or award for me. | 4.33 | 0.67 |

1. The preference of the motivation system

In Table 6, it shows that for female pet supplies sales reps, promotion can get the company's affirmation, and after the rank is promoted, there is more face, overseas travel can go to various places to play, and work partners or family members can walk, public praise can build confidence and be approved by everyone, and the prizes provided by the company are very good and practical, so there are a lot of people who like it, and the bonus part will be divided into dividends if the performance is achieved. "Promotion" is the most popular way to choose motivations, because above the rank, there can be more subordinates to increase their sense of honor, bonuses are the last one they choose to motivation, because their bonus and welfare system is complete and perfect, so what everyone prefers is not in money, but in material and other additional benefits.

Table 6 The most anticipated reward methods

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| item | Number | percentage |
| Publicity | 10 | 13.9 |
| bonus | 8 | 11.1 |
| prize | 9 | 12.5 |
| Overseas travel | 12 | 16.7 |
| Promotion | 33 | 45.8 |

For other secondary motivation systems such as public praise, bonus system, prize system, and overseas travel, the motivation system that cannot adopt a different approach. The detailed analysis is as follows.

1. Praise the project

In Table 7, the most anticipated public praise options are 'Weekly or Monthly Meeting', 'Publication Praise', 'Overseas Travel Praise', and 'Hero Praise'.

Table 7 The most anticipated forms of public praise

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| item | Number | percentage |
| Praise at weekly or monthly meetings | 10 | 13.9 |
| Publications praise | 49 | 68.1 |
| Overseas Travel Praise | 6 | 8.3 |
| Hero Praise | 6 | 8.3 |
| others | 1 | 1.4 |

According to the results, 70% of the female sales reps were expected to praise in publications, and this item accounted for 70% of the 49 respondents. The praise is clearly visible to every employee of the company in the publication. The least expected ones are praise on overseas travel and praise on the hero list, most of which are because it is not clear to colleagues who is being praised.

1. Bonus system

Table 8 Most anticipated bonuses

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| item | number | percentage |
| Group Achievement Bonus | 2 | 2.8 |
| Individual achievement bonus | 21 | 29.2 |
| Raise the base salary | 20 | 27.8 |
| Increase the number of pieces bonus | 29 | 40. |

In Table 8, the most anticipated motivation bonus for female pet supplies sales reps in performing business work is "increase in the number of pieces bonus", the second is "individual achievement bonus", and the least expected bonus is "group achievement bonus".

For pet supplies sales reps, they expect higher bonus system accumulated with individual bonus. Although pet stores have grouping, most of sales reps want to carry out more business pieces on individuals. Therefore, it can be seen that if the performance is higher in the group, the higher the bonus, and the higher the job satisfaction of the relative sales reps.

1. Prize items

In Table 9, the most anticipated prize is "high-tech products ", while the least anticipated prize is " home appliances ". Since most of the female pet product salesmen are young, they will want to use the high-tech products that they often use, and most of the reactions to home appliances are not interested.

Table 9 Most anticipated prizes

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| item | number | percentage |
| High-tech products | 10 | 52.8 |
| Home appliances | 8 | 2.8 |
| Famous brand boutique | 9 | 19.4 |
| Audio-visual and entertainment products | 12 | 18.1 |
| others | 33 | 6.9 |

1. Precious items

In Table 10, it shows that more than half of the female pet supplies sales reps for foreign travel pay the most attention to the choice of location, location will affect the willingness to travel, followed by the arrangement of the itinerary, for the hotel level but will not be very demanding, only pay attention to safety and simplicity can sleep for a full night, not for luxury, gorgeous style. Therefore, location will be the biggest motivation.

Table 10 The most important items

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| item | number | percentage |
| place | 46 | 63.9 |
| food | 10 | 13.9 |
| Restaurant | 2 | 2.8 |
| Play | 14 | 19.4 |

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

According to the above results, conclusions and suggestions are made as follows.

**5.1 Conclusions**

After analyzing the collected data, there are three conclusions.

1.The most intrinsic motivation for female pet supplies sales reps at work is that they feel that they are contributing to society.

2.The highest "external financial reward" for female pet supplies sales reps at work is motivation travel.

3.The highest external non-financial compensation at work for female pet supplies sales reps at work is promotion opportunities.

Overall, female pet supplies sales reps are highly satisfied with the company's motivation system, and also believe that the profession of this job is a contribution to society and can get a sense of accomplishment when the work is completed.

**5.2 Suggestions**

Based on the above analysis and conclusions, the three suggestions are to provide for pet stores and future researchers. First, a one-on-one council is needed. From the analysis, it is found that female pet supplies sale reps have fewer opportunities to participate in the formulation of their own related benefits and policies, because most of the working hours of sale reps stay outside the company. Therefore, the company can arrange a short period of time for the supervisor to explain and ask for opinions, so that employees feel that the company thinks about them and has the opportunity to fight for the benefits they want, so that the sale reps will be willing to invest more time and energy, so that the company's performance continues to rise. Secondly, a group panel is necessary. Female pet supplies sale reps is a field job that there will be a lack of interaction and communication between colleagues and between themselves and the company. The company should create an occasion to strengthen understanding between members, enhance friendship, promote mutual acceptance between members, and improve compatibility between members of the enterprise. Finally, in this study, the relevant data were collected by questionnaire and interviews to collect data. The research topic only investigates the motivation system and expected reward methods of female supplies sale reps, and it should be possible to further explore, compare and verify job satisfaction or job performance. The sample of this study is limited to female pet supplies sale reps of Taiwan's largest pet supplies company with the largest capital, so future research can add other pet supplies companies or sales reps in different pet-related industries for further research.

AcknowledgEments

The author would like to thank all colleagues who contributed to this study.

Competing interests

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

Authors’ Contributions

The author designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Consent (where ever applicable)

Informed consent was obtained from legal guardians, and assent from participants, prior to any study procedures.

Ethical approval (where ever applicable)

All authors hereby declare that all experiments have been examined and approved by the appropriate ethics committee and have therefore been performed in accordance with the ethical standards.

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