Examining Motivation Systems Among Female Sales Representatives in the Pet Supplies Industry

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ABSTRACT

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| The purpose of this study was to explore the preferences of female pet supplies sales representatives regarding motivation systems. The participants were 72 female sales reps from Taiwan's largest pet products retail company. Two surveys one focusing on the "intrinsic motivation system," assessing internal job satisfaction and growth opportunities, and another on the "extrinsic reward system," evaluating financial and non-financial benefits along with interviews, were conducted to understand their satisfaction and expectations. The study found that the participants were generally satisfied with the company’s motivation system, with social contribution, motivational travel, and promotion opportunities being the highest-ranked rewards in the respective systems. Fair promotion opportunities and public recognition were key intrinsic motivators, while the primary external rewards were motivational travel, promotion opportunities, and financial incentives. The findings suggest that improving motivation systems and emphasizing recognition can significantly enhance employee satisfaction. The paper also offers suggestions for pet stores, including the need for one-on-one consultations with employees and group panels to improve communication and understanding. Limitations of the study include its focus on only one company in the pet supplies industry, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore a broader range of companies and industries, particularly in relation to job satisfaction and performance. The implications highlight the importance of tailoring reward systems to employee preferences in order to foster motivation and job satisfaction. |

***Keywords:*** *Pet supplies, motivation system, work efficiency, satisfaction and growth opportunities*

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

This section reviews foundational motivation theories that will frame the understanding of motivation in the context of female sales representatives in the pet supplies industry. It is necessary to trace the original meaning of 'motivation' and clarify the term from the outset. Examining the motivational system of Taiwan's pet supplies industry is the first research question. 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 Motivation by Various Scholars

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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: the diversity of reasons why people work, cognitive impairment of people's work behavior, the same behavior at different times with different reasons, and work-related behaviors and their reasons |
| 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



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 (Olagbaye, 2020). 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 (Ryan and Deci, 2021).

**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.

While much has been written on motivation theories in the workplace, there is a lack of research on the specific motivation systems for female sales representatives, particularly in niche industries such as pet supplies.

3. Methodology

This study utilized a 26-item survey designed to address the research questions. The survey has two parts and combined with three minor surveys. The first part is intrinsic motivation with one minor survey named internal motivation, whereas the second part is extrinsic motivation with two minor 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 motivation at work, and to analyze the differences between the two. The distribution of survey questions is shown in Table 2

(1) Internal motivation system

 The rewards that employees receive are usually intangible, including participation in decision-making, training and refresher opportunities, tasks flexibility.

(2) Extrinsic financial rewards

 Financial remuneration is tangible and represents external rewards, 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. Non-financial rewards include benefits such as leave, promotion opportunities, and networking activities.

**Table 2** Survey Structure

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Survey Name | 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 participants were 72 female sales representatives from the largest company in Taiwan's pet supplies industry, with a capital of NT$832 million. The choice to sample from the largest company in the pet supplies industry was based on the assumption that larger companies with greater capital are better equipped to implement effective business philosophies that foster employee motivation and satisfaction.

4. Results and Discussion

This study surveyed female sales representatives in the pet supplies industry to assess their satisfaction with various motivation systems offered by the company. The results are divided into four key areas: satisfaction with the intrinsic motivation system, satisfaction with extrinsic financial rewards, satisfaction with extrinsic non-financial rewards, and preferences for motivation systems. The details are shown as follows.

(1) Satisfaction with 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 with 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

Table 4 shows that the highest motivation satisfaction is associated with 'I'm happy with the motivation travel that the company is currently offering.' In contrast, satisfaction with 'I feel reasonable about the New Year's or birthday prizes' is lower. 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 find it unreasonable annual festival or birthday prizes provided by the company, and the reason why the pet store may struggle with this because sales reps are often out of the office, limiting their participation in office celebrations or ceremonies. Stepping in office may lead to a decline in the annual business performance to the lost of annual bonuses.

Table 4 Satisfaction with 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 with 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 with 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 rewards 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 strongest intrinsic motivation for female pet supplies sales reps is the sense of contributing to society, which suggests that these employees value the societal impact of their work and find personal fulfillment in their roles.

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 consultation is recommended. The analysis shows that female pet supplies sales reps have fewer opportunities to participate in the formulation of their benefits and policies due to spending most of their working hours 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 sales 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 organize regular team-building activities or social events to foster better communication and camaraderie among employees. This will help create a more collaborative work environment. 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.

Consent:

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the study, ensuring that ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research.

Ethical approval:

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.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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