Investigating Foundational Motivational Factors in FMCGs in Bahrain

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Abstract

Motivation is a crucial factor in the success of organizations, particularly in dynamic sectors like Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). This study delves into the motivational dynamics within the FMCG sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain, recognizing its pivotal role in the nation's economy. High turnover rates pose a significant challenge to the sector, necessitating a deeper understanding of the motivational drivers influencing line managers. Through semi-structured interviews with thirty-five managers, this research explores the extrinsic and intrinsic factors motivating line managers in Bahrain's FMCG sector. Drawing on a review of motivational theories, the study contextualizes these theories within the unique landscape of the Bahraini FMCG industry. Findings reveal that extrinsic factors, such as salary increments and career development opportunities, are predominant motivators for line managers in Bahrain. Additionally, gender and marital status emerge as influential factors shaping motivational preferences, -often overlooked in traditional motivational theories. Furthermore, the study examines the cultural context of Bahrain and its implications for motivation within the FMCG sector. Bahrain's collectivist culture and high tolerance for hierarchical power structures influence motivational dynamics, highlighting the need for tailored motivational strategies. This research contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into the specific motivational needs of line managers in the Bahraini FMCG sector. The findings offer practical implications for organizations seeking to enhance employee motivation and retention in this vital industry. Moreover, the study sets the groundwork for future research aimed at addressing the complex interplay of cultural, gender, and organizational factors in motivation within the FMCG sector.

Keywords: *Motivation, Motivation Theories, FMCG, Bahrain*

Introduction

The study delves into the dynamics of motivation within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Recognizing the pivotal role of the FMCG industry in the Bahraini economy, the research underscores the significance of fostering motivation within this sector, particularly given the challenges posed by high turnover rates. Specifically, the study focuses on elucidating the motivational drivers influencing line managers within FMCG organizations, with a keen emphasis on enhancing employee performance and retention. Through a comprehensive review of motivational theories, the paper contextualizes these theories within the specific landscape of the FMCG industry in Bahrain. The empirical investigation draws upon subjective deductive insights gleaned from semi-structured interviews conducted with thirty-five managers operating within the FMCG sector in Bahrain. The findings highlight the predominance of extrinsic factors as key motivators for retaining line

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managers in the Bahraini FMCG context.

Literature Review

Motivation, a psychological construct intrinsic to individuals, cannot be externally imposed (Anderman, 2020; Valei, 2022). However, it is inherently multidimensional, lacking a singular universal explanation applicable across all contexts and individuals (Akhtar, 2015; Cook and Maculay, 2001). Influenced by a myriad of variables, motivation emerges as a complex phenomenon (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Beck, 1990:28), shaped by individuals' evolving and often conflicting needs, which they endeavor to fulfill through diverse avenues (Mullins, 2002). The conceptualization of motivation is elucidated through content and process theories, offering insights into the factors driving individuals to exert effort in their work endeavors. Content theories illuminate the "what," identifying the determinants prompting individuals to engage in work-related activities, while process theories delve into the "how," elucidating the mechanisms through which individuals deploy effort.

Content theories

Maslow hierarchy of needs theory (1954) proposed that people are 'wanting' beings whose needs are based upon hierarchy of needs which consist of five levels. The order of needs is as follows physiological needs, safety and security, affiliation needs, esteem needs and self actualization needs. Once a level of need is satisfied the person moves on to the next level as a 'satisfied need is no longer a motivator' (Mullins 2002: 427).

Alderfer existence, relatedness and growth theory (1972) condenses Maslow's five levels of need into three levels of need based on core needs of existence which are existence, relatedness and growth needs. Alderfer suggests these needs are more a 'continuum' than hierarchical levels as more than one need may be stimulated at the same time. ERG theory states that if a person needs at a particular level are blocked then attention should be focused on the satisfaction of needs at the other levels.

McClelland's learned needs theory (1988) explains three major 'learned' needs influence people's behavior. Need for achievement, power, and affiliation enables to recognize tasks that motivate employees.

Hertzberg motivation hygiene theory (1966) proposes a "two factor theory" which consists of hygiene and content factors. (Mullins 2002:431) points out that "Proper attention to the hygiene factors will tend to prevent dissatisfaction, but does not by itself create a positive attitude or motivation to work…To motivate workers to give their best the manger must give proper attention to the motivators of growth factors."

Process theories

Vroom's (1964) model is based on three variables: valence, instrumentality and expectancy which explain that people prefer certain outcomes from their behavior over others. The theory explains how a person can exert effort which leads to performance. Performance will lead to outcome expectancy which is associated with valence. The strength of the valence of an outcome is dependent upon the extent to which the outcome serves as a means to other outcomes. The motivational force lies between the combination of valence and expectancy that determines the person's motivation for a given form of behavior. "The force of an action is

unaffected by outcomes which have no valence, or by outcomes that are regarded as unlikely to result from a course of action." (Mullins 2002: 437)

Porter and Lawler expectancy model (Mullins 2002) considers performance as a whole. They propose that the effort expended (motivational force) does not lead directly to performance, it is affected by individual abilities and traits and person's role perception.

The basic premise of ***equity theory*** (Adams 1963 in Francesco and Gold 2005) is that people try to balance what they bring into work and what they receive from work. Each person has his own perception of the value of these inputs and outcomes which a manager must consider how an employee values inputs and outcomes.

The goal setting theory by ***Locke (1968)*** is based on the idea that people are motivated by intentions to work towards a goal and is considered more as a motivational technique (Francesco and Gold 2005, Mullins 2002). The theory explains that employee participation in goals is not essential as long as there is commitment to the goal and self-efficacy to do the task.

Reinforcement theory states that rewards must be something that the employee values to reinforce positive behavior. Hence managers must understand what is rewarding to the people they wish to motivate.

Understanding different theories of motivation provides a framework to managers within which to direct attention to the problem of how best to motivate staff to work willingly and effectively. There are issues that limit and question the extent of applicability of theories in the work context. Mullins (2002) explains how employers are facing challenges of moving from 'quantity' to 'quality' where managing a more diverse workforce which recognize different needs. To create a motivating environment one must not be limited by theories but develop an understanding of organizations through socio technical systems theory (Robertson and Smith1985, Huczynski and Buchanan 2004). This identifies the interactions that take place between the social and technological elements of organizations by viewing an organization as an open system composed of many different subsystems. By taking a comprehensive model into practice we can realize the motivation concerned with individual behaviors, group behaviors, organization structure, processes, culture and management. Owing to word limit the writer chose to explain about culture, leadership and gender.

Culture

Values across and within cultures are not universal which makes it difficult to find a set of motivating needs or factors that applies to everyone and therefore research results on motivation models indicate a lack of conclusive support (Francesco and Gold 2005). Examining the significance of needs and their hierarchical influence within a specific cultural context offers valuable insights into effective employee motivation strategies for managers. It is evident that the application of motivation theories originating from the United States may not universally resonate across diverse cultural settings (Brook et al., 2020). Thus, managers must carefully consider the cultural connotations of work and the relative value of rewards within the contexts in which they operate. England (1986) underscores the importance of understanding the cultural meanings of work, elucidating three key concepts: work centrality, societal norms, and work goals. While this understanding may impose constraints on managerial actions, it simultaneously broadens management's scope to address employee motivational needs.

An analysis of Maslow's hierarchy of needs reveals that the linear progression of needs as

proposed by Maslow may not universally motivate individuals, as circumstantial factors may prompt individuals to revert to more basic needs levels, with multiple needs concurrently holding significance (Francesco and Gold, 2005). Moreover, cultural variations introduce additional needs beyond those identified by Maslow. For instance, while spiritual needs drive motivation in the United States, the Japanese concept of self-actualization prioritizes harmonious relationships within societal and natural realms (Trompennars, 1999). In feminine cultures like Sweden, social needs such as quality of life and interpersonal relationships emerge as primary motivators (Hofstede, 1997).

Furthermore, the proposition of enriched jobs by Hertzberg fails to account for cultural nuances, as enriched jobs may primarily motivate employees in cultures characterized by high individualism and low power distance, such as the United States (Hofstede, 1997). Taking into account cultural values in goal setting theory we realize that collective participative cultures tend to participate in goal setting as people are more committed to a goal they participate in while high power distance culture are committed for a goal set by supervisor. Vroom's expectancy theory can be applied when people in a culture believe they can control the work environment and their own behavior such as the United States, England and Canada. In cultures such as the Middle East who believe whatever happens is in the hands of God or cultures such as Brazil and China who believe the work environment and their own behaviors are not completely under their control expectancy model may not be applicable (Hofstede 1997). McClelland's, Reinforcement, Porter and Lawler theory talk about motivational differences, but understanding motivational differences in culture enables to strengthen motivational forces within a particular context. For example, praise and appreciation motivate members of family dominated cultures such as Greece, Italy, Japan. Hard currency motivates Russians, companies can either provide cash awards or reward employees with consumer goods (Francesco and Gold 2005).

Referring to Hofstede dimensions, Bahrain is a collectivist society that is considered with belongingness needs (Maslow theory). Bahrain scores high on uncertainty avoidance and prefer to avoid situations of uncertainty.

Gender

There are sex based differences in managerial motivation which differ from men and women which have been overlooked in the theories. Looking at the needs theory we see that women want opportunities for growth, autonomy, challenge, belonging and less concerned with pay and work environment compared to men (Wilson 1995). Even though McClelland included women in his theory which concluded that high achievement motivation is high in men, further studies by Stake 1976 in (Wilson 1995) explained that women need for achievement is enhanced when women perform alone or when they are convinced that their achievements will not be noticed by or offended by men. Acker (1990) and Wilson (1998) explain how glass ceiling for woman and male sexual imagery pervades organizational metaphors and language demotivating women. Males are given an opportunity responsibility and authorities as they are considered to be committed to employment while females have divided commitments are suited for lower ranks (Maheshwari & Nayak, 2022). Hofstede research find that the Arab world is closely balanced between masculine drives of competition and feminine drives of caring and relationship building.

Leadership

Various leadership styles have a significant impact on employee motivation (Drummond, 2000). Rosner (1990) suggests that women have ascended to top management positions not by emulating traditional male leadership styles, but by adopting a participative approach that fosters employee engagement. The conventional command-and-control leadership model, predominantly male-oriented, is becoming obsolete, as organizations increasingly recognize the effectiveness of participative leadership in maximizing employee contributions. Conger, Menon, and Kanungo (2000) elaborate on how charismatic leadership can inspire employees to align with organizational values and beliefs, thereby motivating their active involvement in organizational transformation efforts. Considering the context of Bahrain within the broader Arab cultural framework, Hofstede (1997) notes a high tolerance for hierarchical power structures, where leaders are expected to wield disproportionate authority. In Bahraini workplaces, there is an implicit expectation for leaders to assert significant control and influence over organizational affairs.

Bahrain context

The Middle East is having one of the fastest growing FMCGs sectors as it is driven with a rapid population boom. By 2024, according to Alpen Capital GCC Food Industry Report, food consumption is expected to grow by 3.3% and the retail sector will grow by 4%. Bahrain is considered a very important emerging manufacturing and distribution hub for many FMCG industry business (EDB 2024). The FMCG industry similar to other industries in Bahrain that are non –governmental face the challenge of high turnover of employees, especially with nationals. Typically, there has been a lack of research in Bahrain (AlZgool et al., 2020; Darwish et al., 2021; Galdeano et al., 2019; Darwish et al., 2020; To strengthen the sector of FMCG, there is a need to strengthen the human resources within the sector to ensure competency and high performance. Even though, FMCG business have Bahrainization percentages in their headcounts but yet the challenge of retaining Bahrainis within the sector is competitive. Tamkeen as an authority that regulates human capital development in Bahrain forming support scheme to FMCGs to ensure development of Bahrainis within the sector, yet the turnover of Bahraini is high. Hence, the paper explore the motivational factors within line managers in FMCGs in Bahrain.

Running a library search about FMCG in Bahrain and employment of Bahraini's in Bahrain , generates " 0 results". Hence, the paper aims to form a framework for further research that can build further implications.

Data Collection

Analyzing motivational factors from the above literature review the researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews from thirty five line managers working in the FMCG sector in Bahrain. The interview questions revolved around the below themes:

- Extrinsic motivation
- Intrinsic motivation
- Factors that will retain line managers in FMCG sector

The research aimed at finding a relation whether

- H1: Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are important to line managers in FMCG
- H2: Extrinsic motivation is important to line managers in FMCG
- H3: Intrinsic motivation is important to line managers in FMCG

Findings

Reviewing the above literature, the motivational factors are assessed in a FMCG in Bahrain. The research is based on qualitative interviews with 35 line managers working in FMCG in Bahrain. The aim is to explore the motivational factors from the view of line managers.

Several line managers pointed towards the extrinsic motivation as they commented :

"Working in a multinational FMCG is more preferred than a local Bahraini agent holding a license to sell international food brands in Bahrain for payment schemes and yearly increases".

Others were motivated as well by development of career *" Am motivated towards both higher salary and training development. Wokring in the finance and accounting department am motivated by provision of technical qualifications like CPA or ACCA."* Other are motivated as clearly stated *" I look forward for challenging assignments outside Bahrain."* Therefore, reflecting back to *Maslow's theory* we realize that as a person reaches a certain level, he looks towards the next level. The different views reflect that there are different motives even within line managers in FMCGs. Some look forward towards pay while others look forward towards career development through challenging assignments. Others emphasize the need for high salaries.

Another factor which was analyzed from the interviews is the differences among groups based on gender and marital status that theories overlook. Gender and martial status is not reflected in theories but theories reflect the existence of motivational differences between individuals such as *McClelland's, reinforcement, Porter and Lawler theory*.

Single line managers emphasized education, career development, and flexible work time while married employees preferred day care, child education, saving plans. Men emphasize entertainment, further education, loan, compared to woman who liked maternity leave and flexible work time.

" As a mother , am motivated to work within a flexible working environment such as options of working from home on some days."

"Growth is important to me but compensation will attract me to stay along with flexible working hours."

"Compensation is the first factor to consider when considering a promotion or a move to another organization, if the promotion does not have a strong increase , I'd rather stay at my level to balance my family commitments "

Other line managers pointed that *" It is important that besides monetary rewards my organization reward practices such as corporate gym, cafeteria, trips to resorts, insurance and saving plans appeal to employees to motivate us."* This reflects *ERG theory* where more than one need is stimulated at the same time. It also indicates that the rational economic concept of motivation motivates to the best of employees' abilities but is not the only motivator.

Other line managers pointed to *"The importance of enriching jobs to employees for increasing employees' scope to avoid 'routine'" "I need to feel 'challenged' by enriching my job"*

"We need links between jobs and motivation as it provides a basis for designing jobs that are both satisfying and motivating."

"Tasks that are too easy or too difficult do not appeal to me"

"We prefer to have friendly relationships with others and prefer cooperative rather than competitive situations.

This reflects **Hertzberg theory** of motivation through job enrichment and it is therefore wrong to assume that everyone is motivated by pay. The emphasis on forming enriched jobs is also recommended by (Robertson and Smith1985) through the job characteristics model that helps to produce high internal motivation and high quality work.

"As a line manager, I need my organization to assess my performance and discuss developmental needs. The foucs is just on achieving goals but even though being a line manager, I need to know where I will be in years to come".

"Top management needs to provide me feedback through key performance indicators."

"We need an opportunity to receive feedback about performance."

"As an employee I expect that performing goals will be awarded with salary increments, growth opportunities and development." Thus we can relate this with **Vroom's expectancy theory**, as the employees motivational force between the combination of expectancy that effort expended shall lead to outcomes such as salary increases, development trainings, promotions and other non monetary benefits. Such rewards have a value to employees in the work place. We therefore realize that **reinforcement theory and Porter and Lawler** study that intrinsic rewards can be rewarding works in the real work environment. Having intrinsic rewards as a motivator makes the team feel that work is important, has control over one's own resources, gains a sense of accomplishment, and develops an opportunity to influence events (Armstrong 2000).

"Even though we have benefits as intrinsic rewards but we expect higher financial increases of more than 5% yearly." It indicates that needs are more of a continuum as indicated by **Alderfer** both intrinsic and extrinsic needs are needed to keep employees motivated.

"We work in an organization structure that is based on a flat hierarchy and has an open communication culture where employees can approach managers flexibly and express their views but yet financial rewards are more attractive"

"Approaching the general manager with no prior appointment motivates me to come to work as I feel am coming to my second family, but I wish I can explain to him that we need more salary increases"

"We have equal opportunities as Bahraini women but our work requires to work longer hours which is not rewarding to me to as a mother."

"During project deadlines we motivate one another by words of encouragement creating an emotionally supportive and trusting atmosphere."

Way Forward:

This paper provides a comprehensive exploration of motivation within the FMCG sector in Bahrain. Building upon an extensive literature review, the study investigates the motivational factors influencing line managers, employing both theoretical frameworks and empirical data from semi-structured interviews.

Moving forward, the paper can serve as a foundation for further research and practical implications in several ways:

Empirical Validation: The findings from the semi-structured interviews with thirty-five line managers provide valuable insights. To strengthen the validity of these findings, future research can employ quantitative methods such as surveys to gather data from a larger sample size, allowing for statistical analysis and generalization of results.

Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies can offer a deeper understanding of how motivational factors evolve over time within the FMCG sector in Bahrain. Tracking changes in motivational dynamics and their impact on employee performance and retention can provide valuable insights for organizational strategies.

Comparative Analysis: Comparing the motivational dynamics between FMCG sectors in Bahrain and other countries or regions can shed light on cultural and contextual differences. Understanding how motivational factors vary across different contexts can inform global HR practices and strategies for multinational FMCG companies.

Intervention Design: Based on the identified motivational factors, future research can focus on designing and implementing interventions within FMCG organizations in Bahrain. These interventions could target both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, aiming to enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

Policy Implications: The paper highlights the challenge of retaining Bahraini nationals within the FMCG sector despite efforts by organizations and regulatory bodies like Tamkeen. Further research can explore policy implications and recommendations to address the high turnover rate among Bahraini employees, considering factors such as career development, work-life balance, and cultural preferences.

Cross-Sectoral Analysis: While the paper focuses on the FMCG sector, future research can explore motivational forces across different sectors in Bahrain. Comparing and contrasting motivational dynamics between sectors can provide valuable insights for HR practitioners and policymakers in addressing sector-specific challenges.

Leadership Development: Given the influence of leadership styles on employee motivation, future research can delve deeper into the role of leadership in fostering a motivating work environment within FMCG organizations in Bahrain. Exploring effective leadership practices and their impact on employee engagement and performance can guide leadership development initiatives.

Limitations

The limitations of the research is the access to statistical figures about FMCG employment in Bahrain. Hence, the paper aims for further collaboration with researchers to work on statistical data that can form a framework to serve the FMCG sector in Bahrain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research delved into the motivational forces driving line managers within the FMCG sector in Bahrain. Through an extensive exploration of motivational theories and empirical data collected from semi-structured interviews with thirty-five managers, this study has provided valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of motivation within this context.

The findings underscore the significance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in influencing the performance and retention of line managers. While extrinsic factors such as salary increments, career development opportunities, and benefits play a substantial role in retaining talent, intrinsic rewards like job enrichment, recognition, and a supportive work environment are equally crucial in fostering employee motivation and satisfaction.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of considering cultural, gender, and marital status differences in understanding motivational dynamics within organizations. Cultural nuances, gender expectations, and family commitments shape individual preferences and priorities, thereby necessitating a nuanced approach to motivational strategies.

Ultimately, the research suggests that a comprehensive understanding of motivation goes beyond traditional theoretical frameworks, necessitating a tailored approach that acknowledges the diverse needs and aspirations of employees. By addressing both extrinsic and intrinsic factors, organizations can create a conducive environment that promotes employee engagement, productivity, and retention, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance in the dynamic FMCG landscape of Bahrain.

Overall, the research dealt with exploring factors within and outside motivational theories to explain the multidimensional concept of motivation in a work setting. Relating motivational aspects in FMCGs indicated that motivation in real life has factors to be considered beyond that proposed by theories. Line managers in Bahrain consider extrinsic motivation in terms of monetary rewards more motivating. It is noteworthy to mention that career development and participative leadership style play a role within FMCGs. But "salary increases "high compensation" was strongly evident in the data collection.

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