

The effect of employees' personality on customer focus in the hotel industry: the role of work motivation*

Personality, customer focus and motivation in the hotel industry

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Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between personality traits, customer focus and work motivation based on the sample of 203 hotel employees in Novi Sad (Serbia). The results show the existence of the mediating effect of Intrinsic motivation on the effect of Extraversion on Customer focus, as well as on the effect of Neuroticism on Customer focus. The study also indicates that Extrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected regulation have a moderating effect on the effect of Agreeableness on Customer focus. The findings of the paper will assist managers to shape an employee profile that will be customer-oriented.

Keywords: work motivation; customer focus; the Big Five inventory; hotel industry; Serbia

JEL Codes: O15, L83

Introduction

In the fields such as tourism and hospitality, which involve direct personal contacts with customers, the personality and motivation of employees are of crucial importance for selecting adequate employees (Callaghan/Thompson 2002; Kim/Leonga/Lee 2005; Jovičić et al. 2011; Chiang/Birth 2011; Fisher/ Cunningham/Kerr/ Allscheid 2017; Baum 2015; Zontek 2016; So et al. 2016). Moreover, it has long been an aim of the organizational psychology to reveal the reasons why individuals vary in their motivation to work as well as how individual differences (such as personality and psychological capital) interact with the influence of individual motivation (Furham 2002; Karatepe/Karadas, 2015). Although employees in the hotel industry and any other service industries should have ad-

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equate skills and competences to provide high performance and additional quality service to the guests (Elbaz/Haddoud/Shehaw 2018; Secchi/Roth/Verma 2020), some studies have shown that kindness and accessibility of staff are more important to guests than competence and technical organization (Callaghan/Thompson 2002; Galičić/Ivanović, 2008; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara/Guerra-Baez 2016; Choi/Young, 2017). Thus, certain psychological characteristics (sociability, openness, agreeableness, etc.) enable employees to meet an increasingly complex demand in the travel industry and provide exceptional focus on customers (Rosse/Miller/Barnes 1991; Petrović/Marković 2012; Aghtar et al. 2015). Moreover, a study by Callaghan and Thompson (2002) indicates that competences and skills can be trained and learned at the workplace, thus personality is to be given priority in this recruitment process. They claim that the management of good customer focus requires a positive attitude which cannot be taught as it is a part of someone's personality. This is why focusing on employee's personality and its influence on different work concepts in service industries is still an important field to study. The authors believe that personality traits are especially important for customer focus, as a component of service orientation, since it involves direct contact with the customer and satisfaction of their needs.

Another important concept related to customer focus and job performance is certainly a work motivation, as business excellence comes as a result of motivated employees (Finck et al. 1998). Employee motivation has been an important issue for managers as the unmotivated staff is likely to avoid the workplace and work below the required quality. Thus, as the nature of the services involves employees interacting with customers, their motivation and their personality are very important issues to consider in the service quality. Schneider and Bowen (1995), in their book *Winning the Service Game* offered 53 rules for winning in services, one of which was "Hire the right personality type – as happier people, who are more positive about themselves and their worlds, are happier and more satisfied at work, and satisfied workers yields more satisfied customers" (p.121). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) also argued that service roles often require emotional labor (display of expected emotions), and there is more pressure for a service provider to identify personality with the role. Moreover, Hogan, Hogan and Bush (1984) were the first to hypothesize a direct relationship between performance in the service role and dimensions of personality, which they labeled service orientation traits (adjustment, sociability and agreeableness). A person with service orientation traits can be described as useful, thoughtful, considerate and cooperative in providing services at the individual level. In the field of tourism and hospitality, service orientation consists of three components: organizational support, customer focus and service under pressure (Dienhart et al. 1992), while the current study focuses particularly on customer focus.

Although both constructs (personality and motivation) are individually proven as important in terms of service quality and customer focus, the theory lacks

studies that would explore inter-relationships between those variables. Employee's personality is mainly related to Herzberg motivation theory in general literature (Judge/Ilie 2002; Furnham/Forde/Ferrari 1998), while no studies are explaining the relationship between personality and Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Identified and Introjected regulation. Moreover, in tourism and hospitality literature, the relationship between personality and work motivation is explored only indirectly through the influence of personality on work involvement and work engagement (Singh/Ramgulam/Lewis/Ramdeo 2019). Additionally, some studies relate employees personality with customer focus and work performance (Aghtar et al. 2015, Bozionelo 2004; Brown et al. 2002; Hurley 1998), but there are no studies explaining inter-relationship between those concepts as well as the role of motivation in relationship between employees personality and work motivation.

Intending to fill in this gap, the purpose of this study was to examine the interrelations between employee personality, work motivation and customer focus and to check the role of motivation in a relationship between employees' personality and customer focus. To achieve this, the paper tends to answer three specific research questions:

1. To determine if there is a relationship between personality (the Big Five personality factors), work motivation and customer focus of employees in the hotel industry?
2. To evaluate whether work motivation mediates the relationship between their personality traits on customer focus?
3. To demonstrate the moderating effect of work motivation in a regression between their personality traits on customer focus?

Literature review

The relationship between personality and work motivation

Personality refers to cognitive and behavioral patterns that show stability over time and across situations (e.g. Cattell 1965). Although personality has been in the focus of scientific papers in the last 25 years until the early 1980s most of the research on personality – particularly on workplace outcomes – concluded that personality did not matter (Barrick/Mount/Judge 2001; Goldberg 1993). However, the emergence of the five-factor model of personality (FFM) made a big change in this conclusion. The “big five” or five-factor model (FFM) of personality comprehensively describe human personality, and its validity is strongly supported by empirical evidence (e.g. Digman 1990; Goldberg 1993; McCrae Costa 1996; O'Connor 2002). The FFM's five factors are Conscientiousness (responsible, organized, efficient), Emotional Stability (self-confident, resilient, well-adjusted) or opposite side of the scale – Neuroticism (low confidence, anxious, often in a bad mood, prone to worry, pessimism), Extraversion (talkative, ambitious, assertive), Agreeableness (friendly, cooperative, loyal), and Openness

to Experience (curious, imaginative, open-minded) (Goldberg 1992; Mount/Barrick 2002). The big five model certainly has its strengths and weaknesses. The model is sometimes considered to be too broad, which is at the same time the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of the model (McAdams 1995). The fact that it measures personality in broad and non-conditional terms makes it easy to use, generalizable, and universally relevant. On the other hand, there are some claims that variation in behavior from one situation to the next, are omitted in the Five-Factor Personality Test. The Big Five traits also do not provide explanations of why or how these personalities exist (McAdams 1995). However, although there are some other personality scales such as, for instance, HEXACO or IPIP-6 (which added one additional trait – Honesty-humility) Big five theory is still considered to be one of the best descriptions of personality structure. Because of its validity and wide acceptance, the Big five model has been extensively used in organizational and other applied research (e.g. Barrick/Mount 1991; Hurtz/Donovan 2000; Judge et al. 2002; Salgado 1997), including hotel industry (Brown et al. 2002; Liu/Chen 2006; Kim et al. 2007; Lin/Worthley 2012; Jani/Han 2014; Jani/Han 2015; Huang/Gursoy/Xu 2015; Ariyabudhiphongs/Marican 2015; Crawford 2018). Parks and Guay (2009) conclude that personality indeed has a meaningful influence on performance, motivation, job satisfaction, leadership, and other work outcomes. This was also confirmed in many previous studies of the impact of personality traits on work-related concepts (Bozionelos 2004; Malouff et al. 1990; Judge et al. 1999; Furnham/Forde/Ferrari 1998; Barrick/Mount/ Strauss 1993; Gellatly 1996; Judge/Illies 2002).

When it comes to work motivation, the theory suggests the existence of two different types of motivation: intrinsic motivation (intrinsic value of the work) and extrinsic motivation (desire to obtain some outcomes (rewards) that are apart from the work itself), which are both proved to increase creativity and job performance (Chang/Teng 2017). Gagné et al. (2010) introduced two more dimensions to explain work motivation- Identified motivation and Introjected regulation¹. These two dimensions are particularly interesting to explore in a work context. Introjected regulation motivates people to engage in a behavior or do things because of feeling guilt or compulsion, or to maintain their self-worth (Koestner/Losier 2002). Thus, internal pressure such as guilt, worry, or shame motivates the behavior. This results in individual behaving in a certain way, not because he/she wants to, but because he/she fears not to or out of a sense of obligation. In a work motivation context, Gagné et al. (2010) claim that this type of motivation reflects in individuals' internal pressure to be the winner, to dedicate

¹ The exploratory factor analysis conducted as preliminary analysis for this study showed that these two factors are represented in one. This is why in this study the third factor is called Identified and Introjected regulation.

life to work with a desire not to fail and considering that his/her reputation depends on work.

Identified regulation refers to doing an activity because one identifies with its value or meaning, and accepts it as one's own, which means that it is autonomously regulated. People driven by identified regulation engage in a behavior or commit to an activity based on its perceived meaning or its relation to personal goals (Koestner/Losier 2002). Such an individual doesn't always enjoy the behavior but recognizes that behavior is beneficial toward his/her development and adopts that behavior as his/her own. In the case of introjected regulation, a person isn't motivated by guilt or shame but by the perceived benefit of the behavior. In a work motivation context, such individuals perceive their job as a means of reaching their life goals, fulfilling career plans and are motivated to do the job fitting to their personal values (Gagné et al. 2010).

In both cases, a person usually doesn't enjoy the behavior but it is internally regulated to behave in a particular way. These two types of motivation differ from internal reasons for this regulation.

In terms of the relationship between employees' personality and work motivation, Furnham, Forde and Ferrari (1998) focusing on Herzberg motivation theory, showed a significant relationship between those two constructs. They revealed that extraverts stressed the importance of motivation factors to them, while neurotics rated hygiene factors as more important to them in choosing a particular job. Further, in a review of Gray's (1975) theory of personality, Furnham (1997) speculated that extraverts were more likely to be motivated by intrinsic factors, particularly feedback and recognition. Furnham et al. (1999) also claim that extraversion also positively relates to a preference for intrinsically motivating job features and to work performance motivation (Judge/Illies 2002).

Based on this, Hypothesis 1 can be drawn:

Hypothesis 1: Extraversion has a significant positive influence on Intrinsic motivation and Introjected and Identified regulation

Furthermore, Neuroticism (opposite to Emotional stability) encompasses characteristics that include excessive worry, pessimism, low confidence, and tendencies to experience negative emotions. Because they tend to interpret experiences under a negative light, individuals who score high on neuroticism should be less likely to develop positive attitudes towards their work (Bozionelos 2004). Furthermore, due to lack of confidence and optimism, those who score high on neuroticism should be less likely to develop ambitions regarding their careers and to set performance and career goals accordingly. Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that neuroticism is negatively related to the tendency to be goal-oriented (Malouff et al. 1990). Hence, due to the relative absence of career and work

goals, individuals who score high on neuroticism should be less likely to devote themselves to their work as well as to be highly motivated for work. Empirical findings coincide with the above line of reasoning. Meta-analytic research conducted by Judge and Ilies (2002) suggests that neuroticism is negatively related to work performance motivation. Furthermore, individuals who score high on neuroticism tend to value hygiene-related features of jobs, like security and working conditions, instead of intrinsically motivating features, like the nature of the work and opportunities for achievement (Furnham et al. 1999).

Based on this, Hypothesis 2 can be drawn:

Hypothesis 2: Neuroticism has a significant negative influence on Identified and Introjected Regulation

Agreeableness is associated with altruism, friendliness and modesty, while low agreeableness includes antagonism, impression management and selfishness. Individuals tend to be involved in their work when they view work and career achievement as means for the maintenance and enhancement of their feelings of personal worth and esteem (Jans 1982; Rabinowitz/Hall 1977). Hence, individuals who score low on agreeableness should be more involved in their work because of their antagonistic and impression seeking nature, which must direct them towards seeking advancement and acknowledgment in their work environment; as these serve as sources of esteem. On the other hand, because of their altruism, modesty and good nature, individuals who score high on agreeableness must prioritize relationships with others overwork and career success (Judge et al. 1999), thus, they might be less likely to report high involvement in their work.

Based on this, Hypothesis 3 can be drawn:

Hypothesis 3: Agreeableness has a significant negative influence on Intrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected Regulation

Furthermore, Barrick and Mount (1991), found that only Conscientiousness had consistent effects on all job performance criteria across all occupational groups they have studied. Similarly, Hurtz and Donovan (2000) confirmed that Conscientiousness appeared to have the strongest effect on overall job performance. In another meta-analytic study, Salgado (1997) found Conscientiousness and Emotional stability as valid predictors across occupational groups and job criteria.

Parks and Guay (2009) confirm that there is strong evidence that personality – especially Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability – has an impact on motivational constructs, which in turn relate to performance. For example, Barrick, Mount, and Strauss (1993) found that Conscientiousness was related to the tendency to set and be committed to goals and that these constructs partially mediated the relationship between Conscientiousness and performance (sales volume

and performance ratings). In a lab study, Gellatly (1996) found that Conscientiousness was related to expectancy (for success), which was related to the goals set by participants and to performance. Judge and Ilies (2002) meta-analytically reviewed articles evaluating the relationships between personality and motivation. Their study revealed that Conscientiousness and Neuroticism were significantly related to motivation. Conscientiousness and Neuroticism are also the two personality traits that are most consistently predictive of job performance (Hurtz/Donovan 2000).

Based on this, Hypothesis 4 was drawn:

Hypothesis 4: Conscientiousness has a significant positive influence on Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected Regulation

Although no previous studies were examining the role of Openness to experience and work motivation, some assumptions can be still drawn from the previous studies on similar concepts. For instance, the study by Arora and Rangnekar (2016) revealed significant positive impacts of Extraversion and Openness interactions on the career resilience dimension of career commitment. This means that in the long-term, the performance of open individuals is likely to increase to a greater extent than in the case of less open individuals, as they acquire more job-related knowledge and skills and respond more adaptively to their work experiences. Similar findings were obtained by Minbashian, Earl and Bright (2013), who studied the relationship between Openness and job performance. Moreover, Payne, Youngcourt, Beaubien (2007) argue that highly open individuals are more prone to setting challenging goals, the use of more effective learning strategies, higher levels of effort and planning, which might be connected with their Identified and Introjected regulation. Besides, Openness is also known to highlight an individual's tendency to seek performance feedback from others (Wanberg/Kammeyer-Mueller 2000; Payne, Youngcourt/Beaubien 2007) which might be in form of award, recognition, pay rise or similar which might be related with Extrinsic motivation. If we add to this that persons Open to experience are prone to the imagination (fantasy), aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, and intellectual curiosity, this may also connect this trait to Intrinsic motivation. Thus, based on this, Hypothesis 5 can be suggested:

Hypothesis 5: Openness to experience has a significant positive influence on Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected Regulation

Personality, work motivation and customer focus

In terms of hospitality literature, personality has been found to influence customer focus (Brown et al. 2002), turnover intention (intention of employees to leave the organization) (Ariyabuddhiphongs/Marican 2015), customer emotional loyalty response (reflected in affinity, attachment and trust and referring to consumers buying not based on incentives, but rather customer service, storytelling, trust, and philanthropy) (Jani/Han 2015), employees' burnout (syndrome consisting of feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and professional accomplishment) (Kim et al. 2007), and work engagement (Singh/Ramgulam/Lewis/ Ramdeo 2019), etc. When it comes to customer focus, there is a lack of studies in hospitality literature that explore antecedences of customer focus. The studies mainly show the positive influence of job satisfaction (Lee et al. 2006) and emotional intelligence (Lim 2017) on higher customer focus. When it comes to similar concepts such as service orientation, the antecedents can be divided into employees' attributes (personality traits, length of employment, job position), organizational support and leader actions, environmental attributes and marketing strategy (Teng/Barrows 2009). However, these studies lack research on how work motivation and personality influence customer focus, as well as inter-relation between personality and motivation in the context of their impact on customer focus or generally, work involvement.

In the more general business literature, some papers are emphasizing the influence of personality and work motivation on work involvement (the extent to which an individual is generally interested in, identifies with, and is pre-occupied with one's work in comparison to other aspects of one's life (Kanungo 1982)) and attitudes towards work. The authors found this important to discuss as work involvement and attitudes towards work can be useful in explaining the employee's customer focus. In this context, Bozionelos (2004) studied the relationship of the big five personality traits and work involvement, and revealed that scores on agreeableness negatively influenced scores on work involvement and the total hours worked per week. His research also indicated that extraversion and openness interaction made a positive contribution to scores on work involvement. His study, thus, emphasizes that those who report high scores on extraversion are more likely to possess the need to occupy a central position in their work environment so they can satisfy their ambitious and domineering tendencies, and are therefore more work involved. Empirical research is in line with the above reasoning, as it suggests a positive relationship between instrumentality and work involvement (Berthiaume et al. 1996). Instrumentality shares common characteristics with extraversion, such as assertiveness and action tendencies, and has been empirically found related to extraversion (Kimlicka et al. 1988).

Furthermore, Hurley (1998) has suggested that employees' personality does influence customer focus and that superior service providers tend to be higher in extraversion and agreeableness. Recently, there is a growing interest in examining personality in the services area, especially as a predictor of service quality (Schneider/Bowen 1995). Hogan, Hogan, and Busch (1984) were the first to hypothesize a direct relationship between performance in the service role and dimensions of personality, which they labeled service orientation (adjustment, sociability, and agreeableness). Taking into account that customer focus is an important aspect of service orientation, there is a rationale to assume the relationship between employees' personalities and their customer focus.

Getzels and Guba (1954) were the first to conceptualize a lack of fit between personality and job as a possible source of role conflict. In short, given that personality-role incongruence may affect worker productivity and service quality, a systematic study of how service provider personality influences customer focus behavior seems of great importance. This is the reason why it is essential to investigate how certain personality traits affect customer focus, especially in areas such as hospitality. Hurley (1998) suggested that extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively related to customer focus, while emotional instability is negatively related as it may result in sudden changes in desire and motivation to serve customers and meet their needs. The described conditions largely match the situation in hospitality, where service quality is of the largest importance. However, the most relevant study in the context of the current research is the one done by Brown et al. (2002), which revealed that three basic personality traits (emotional stability, agreeability, and the need for activity) have a positive influence on the customer focus of service employees.

In terms of the specific dimensions of personality that matter, in this retail setting, extraversion and agreeableness are related to customer service. Work by Hogan, Hogan, and Busch (1984) and Rosse, Miller, and Barnes (1991) suggested that customer focus was related to agreeableness (they called it likability) and sociability. Hurley (1998) also indicate that that extraversion, agreeableness, and adjustment are the traits of the good service provider. The Day and Silverman (1989) study noted that client relations were related to the interpersonal orientation (affiliation, nurturance, exhibition, social recognition), while Aghtar et al. (2015) revealed that openness to experience is one of the strongest predictors of employee engagement. The results of these studies indicate that there is a relationship between the dimensions of personality that concern how a person relates to others (agreeableness and extraversion) and work performance reflected in customer focus and quality service. In connection with this, Frei and McDaniel (1998) reported that customer focus appears to have strong relationships with agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness.

Based on all this, it can be assumed that personality traits can have a crucial role in customer focus of employees, thus the following hypothesis can be drawn:

Hypothesis 6: Extraversion has a significant positive influence on Customer focus

Hypothesis 7: Neuroticism has a significant negative influence on Customer focus

Hypothesis 8: Agreeableness has a significant positive influence on Customer focus

Hypothesis 9: Conscientiousness has a significant positive influence on Customer focus

Hypothesis 10: Openness to experience has a significant positive influence on Customer focus

Although this is the first study to explore the mediating role of motivation in a relationship between personality and customer focus, some assumptions can be drawn from the studies exploring similar concepts. For instance, Barrick, Mount, and Strauss (1993) found that Conscientiousness was related to the tendency to set and be committed to goals (which coincides motivation construct) and that these constructs partially mediated the relationship between Conscientiousness and job performance. De Feyter et al. (2012) have studied the moderating and mediating effects of academic motivation on a relationship between personality and performance, revealing the significant mediating role of motivation between Consciousness and performance. Moreover, the study by Barrick, Stewart and Piotrowski (2002) explored mediating effects of motivation on regression between personality and job performance among sales representatives and revealed that motivation mediates effects of Extraversion and Consciousness on job performance. Based on this, as well as the strong connection between personality, work motivation and customer focus, and the fact that employees' personality and motivations make basic predispositions for work involvement and service orientation, the last two hypotheses can be suggested:

Hypothesis 11. Work motivation will mediate the relationship between personality and customer focus

Hypothesis 12. Work motivation will moderate the relationship between personality and customer focus

Methodology

Participants

The total number of respondents (N) was 203 employees of 10 city hotels in Novi Sad (the second-largest city in Serbia) – "Park" (5*), "Best Western Prezident" (5*), "Novi Sad" (4*), "Planeta Inn" (4*), "Centar" (4*), "Zenit" (3*), "Gymnas" (3*), "Putnik" (3*), "Vojvodina" (3*), and "Mediterraneo" (1*). The study included all hotel categories in the city and hotels of different sizes (ranging from 20 to 113 hotel employees). The criteria for selecting employees for completing the survey were that they work in some of the seven major hotel sectors (Management, Front Office, Kitchen, Restaurant and bar, Sales department, Housekeeping and Administration) and that they are taking part in the research voluntarily. The reason for including employees who do not have direct contact with the customer (i.e. administration, housekeeping) is based on the assumption that Customer focus should be a mindset in the organization and that all employees regardless of their position should have it, because all employees through their activities may contribute to the satisfaction of the customers. Moreover, in hotels in Novi Sad, it is a usual practice that employees working with customers at reception, sales or restaurant, also do administrative work or housekeeping, so the authors considered important to include those employees in the final sample (although there are only a few employees in those sectors – see table 1).

Procedure

The research was conducted from February until May 2015. The research was carried out by using a classic pen and paper questionnaire procedure. Initially, managers of 17 hotels (which was the total number of hotels in Novi Sad at that moment) were contacted and asked if they are willing to permit survey distribution in their hotels. A total of 10 managers agreed and showed a willingness to participate and help in the survey distribution. Managers in different hotels suggested different periods for conducting the research (based on their obligations and amount of work), which influenced a longer time for collecting data (almost four months). General managers then asked the various department/ sector managers to ask their employees to fill in the survey and to return it in the box placed at the hotel reception. This method was used to keep the anonymity of employees. All employees who expressed an interest to take part in this research took a questionnaire from the reception and returned it in the box after filling it in. This means that the sampling technique was convenient. The respondents had about ten days to fill in the questionnaire and were reminded by their manager to return them to the reception (in the previously described manner). Afterwards, in order to increase the rate of handed questionnaires, the deadline was extended for seven days after which they were collected by researchers. The response rate at hotels ranged from 30 to 70 % (45.5 % on average). Participants were in-

formed about the main purpose of the study and that participation in the survey is anonymous and that results will be used only for scientific purposes.

Instruments

The survey used to collect the data for this research consisted of four parts. The first part included socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education, income, marital status and residence). This part also included some important information regarding their job (in which hotel they work, department, their function, etc.). Moreover, the respondents were asked about their work status (full time, part-time, or something else).

The second part of the questionnaire included the scale for measuring the personality of respondents. For this purpose, the authors used the Big Five Inventory (BFI) scale with 44 items, developed by John, Donahue, Kentle (1991). The respondents were asked to rate, on the 5-point Likert scale, the degree in which they agree or disagree with the mentioned 44 items (1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I mainly disagree, 3 – I am not sure, 4 – I mainly agree, 5 – I strongly agree).

The third part of the questionnaire measured service orientation by applying the scale developed by Dienhart et al. (1992). The respondents were asked to rate, on the 5-point Likert scale, the degree in which they agree or disagree (1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I mainly disagree, 3 – I am not sure, 4 – I mainly agree, 5 – I strongly agree) with nine items of service orientation. The scale measures three dimensions of service orientation: organizational support, customer focus and service under pressure (Kim/Leonga/Lee 2005). The analysis in this study was done focusing on the third dimension – customer focus because the main aim of the paper was to see how the personality of hotel employees affects their focus on the customer (this is the only dimension of service orientation referring to direct contact with the consumer) and how their motivation mediates this relationship. The other two dimensions were not analyzed as they are currently out of the main scope of the paper.

The fourth part consists of 12 items related to work motivation. We used the Motivation at Work Scale (MAWS) developed by Gagné et al. (2010). The scale was developed on a sample of 1,644 workers, obtaining a four-factor solution: Intrinsic motivation (3-items referring to enjoying the work, having fun and pleasure at work), Identified regulation (3-items referring to the role of job in reaching life goals, career plans and fitting personal values), Introjected regulation (3-items including having to be the winner, work being the life and don't wanting to fail and reputation depending on work) and Extrinsic motivation (3-items including doing the job because of a certain standard of living, making a lot of money and paycheck).

Respondents were again asked to rate, on 5-point Likert scale, the degree in which they agree or disagree (1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I mainly disagree, 3 – I am not sure, 4 – I mainly agree, 5 – I strongly agree) with the mentioned 12 items.

Results

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

The sample consists of a slightly higher number of female (54.18 %) respondents. The average age of the entire sample is 32.5 years (range=20–58; Std. 8.014). In terms of education, the highest number of respondents has finished high school (44.82 %) and faculty (29.55 %). The majority of them live in the city (71.92 %) and are married (33.99 %) or in a relationship (34.97 %). Regarding monthly income, the highest percentage of respondents (43.84 %) has an income below t² salary in Serbia (151 to 300 €). Also, the majority of respondents work at Front Office and Restaurant and bar. The main characteristics of the sample are further described in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (N=203)

Gender		Monthly income	
Male	45.81 %	Below 150 €	7.40 %
Female	54.18 %	Between 151–300 €	43.84 %
		Between 301–500 €	35.96 %
		Between 501–800 €	11.33 %
		Under 800 €	1.47 %
Age (average)		Marital status	
32.5 years		Single	11.18 %
		I have a Girlfriend/Boyfriend	34.94 %
		Life partner (extramarital)	10.83 %
		Married	34.01 %
		Divorced	5.91 %
		Widowed	2.95 %
Place of birth		Education	
Village	12.81 %	Secondary school	44.82 %
Town	15.27 %	Higher school	3.08 %
City	71.92 %	Faculty	29.55 %
		Master studies	9.35 %

2 He average salary in Serbia in 2015 was 45601 Serbian dinars which was approximately 379.53 €.

Job position/hotel sector	
Management	10 (4.92 %)
Front office	70 (34.48 %)
Restaurant and bar	80 (39.4 %)
Kitchen	20 (9.85 %)
Sales department	10 (4.92 %)
Housekeeping	8 (3.94 %)
Administration	5 (2.46 %)

Direct effects between Personality traits, Work motivation and Customer focus

Firstly, to test the hypothesis related to the causal relationship between personality traits, work motivation and customer focus the authors conducted the linear regression analysis with 1) personality traits as predictors and customer focus as dependent variable 2) personality traits as predictors, and work motivation as the dependent variable, 3) work motivation as predictor and customer focus as a dependent variable. Table 2 summarizes these results.

Table 2. Regression of personality traits and customer focus (up) and work motivation and customer focus (down)

Regression of personality traits on work motivation and customer focus								
Independent								
Dep.	Ex-traver-sion	Agree-able-ness	Con-scious-ness	Neu-roti-cism	Open-ness to experi-ence	R ²	F	Sig.
β								
Intrinsic Motivation	.354**	-.234**	.043	.016	.143	.195	5.462	.000
Extrinsic Motivation	.016	-.239**	.159	.153	.329**	.138	3.630	.000
Identified and Introjected Regulation	.236**	-.395**	.151	.120	.143	.201	5.671	.000
Customer focus	.234**	.147	.348**	-.182**	.433**	.230	6.702	.000

Regression of work motivation on customer focus						
Independent						
Dep.	Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation	Identified and Introjected Regulation	R ²	F	Sig.
β						
Customer focus	.336**	.259**	.123	.179	8.063	.000

**. β is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. β is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Employees' personality affects work motivation

The results presented in Table 2 show some significant influence of personality traits on work motivation. Specifically, the results indicate the following relationships:

Extraversion positively affects Intrinsic and Identified and Introjected Regulation (indicating that Hypothesis 1 is supported). This means that employees who score high on extraversion are more likely to be motivated by the possibility to achieve their career plans, personal goals and values, desire to win and retain and build their reputation.

Agreeableness negatively affects all analyzed motivation factors: Intrinsic, Extrinsic and Identified and Introjected Regulation. This indicates that Hypothesis 3 is partially confirmed, as the negative influence on extrinsic motivation was not expected. According to the findings, more agreeable persons are generally less likely to be motivated to work (by achievements, the fulfillment of career plans and goals, pure enjoyment, or payment).

Openness to experience positively affects Extrinsic motivation. Hypothesis 5 was partially confirmed, as the positive effect was expected in the case of all analyzed motivation factors, however, it was confirmed only in case of Extrinsic motivation. This means that persons who are open to experience are more likely to be motivated by the financial benefits of the job they do.

Hypothesis 2 and 4 are not supported, as the results did not confirm the direct effect of Neuroticism and Consciousness on work motivation, meaning that being emotionally stable or conscientious does not influence the level or type of employees' motivation.

Employees' personality affects Customer focus

The current study indicates that certain personality traits influence employees' customer focus. Specifically, it is revealed that Extraversion, Consciousness and

Openness to experience have a significant positive effect on Customer focus, while Neuroticism shows the negative effect (Hypothesis 6, 7, 9 and 10 are supported). However, Hypothesis 8 is rejected, as the results show no direct influence of Agreeableness on Customer focus. This means that employees who are more extravert, conscious, emotionally stable and open to experience are more likely to show greater customer focus; while agreeableness is the only personality trait that is not related to the level of customer focus they tend to express.

Work motivation affect Customer focus

The results of the third linear regression indicate the significant positive influence of both Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation on Customer focus. However, no significant influence was found in the case of Identified and Introjected Regulation. This means that employees who are motivated by personal joy, pleasure and financial benefits that job brings to them, are more likely to show greater customer focus.

Work motivation mediates the relationship between personality traits and customer focus

Firstly, the study explored the mediating effect of Intrinsic motivation between personality traits (Big Five) and Customer focus. The results revealed Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between Extraversion and Customer focus. After the inclusion of Intrinsic motivation, the value of the model changed from ($R^2=.055$; $F=6.810$; $p<.010$) to ($R^2<.144$; $F=9.865$; $p=.000$). Table 3 shows that after the inclusion of Intrinsic motivation (IM), the significance of the effect of Extraversion changed from significant $p<0.010$. to insignificant, $p <0.183$, which indicates the existence of full mediation. Also, the regression coefficient for Intrinsic motivation is significant $p<0.001$, which confirms the mediating effect of Intrinsic motivation.

Table 3. Regression Coefficients – Intrinsic motivation as a mediator of the effect of Extraversion on Customer focus

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.469	.315	11.020	.000
	Extraversion	.223	.085		
2	(Constant)	3.147	.314	10.007	.000
	Extraversion	.117	.087		
	IM	.143	.041		

a. Dependent Variable: CF

This finding suggests that extraverts show higher intrinsic motivation, which in turn results in their greater customer focus. The results also indicate that Intrinsic motivation mediates the effect of Neuroticism on Customer focus. After the inclusion of Intrinsic motivation, the value of the model changed from ($R^2=.033$; $F=4.029$; $p<.010$) to ($R^2=.154$; $F=10.689$; $p<.000$). Intrinsic motivation (IM) lead to a decrease in significance (p) for Neuroticism which changed from $p<0.047$. to insignificant $p <0.075$ (Table 4), which indicates the existence of full mediation. Also, the significance of Intrinsic motivation is $p<0.000$, which confirms the mediating effect of Intrinsic motivation. Table 4 also shows that the beta coefficient is negative for Neuroticism, meaning that employees who are emotionally stable show higher intrinsic motivation which in turn influences their greater customer focus.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients – Intrinsic motivation as a mediator of the effect Neuroticism and Customer focus

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	4.731	.230	-.182	20.570	.000
	Neuroticism	-.178	.089		-2.007	.047
2	(Constant)	3.885	.299	.350	13.002	.000
	Neuroticism	-.150	.084		-1.796	.075
	IM	.156	.038		4.100	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CF

The mediating effect of Extrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected Regulation on the effect of Personality traits on Customer focus was not confirmed in the study. This means that Hypothesis 11 was only partially confirmed.

Work motivation moderates the effect of Personality traits on Customer focus

The findings of the study suggest that Extrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected Regulation moderate the effect of Agreeableness on Customer focus. The results presented in Table 5 show that R^2 reported in Model 1 increased significantly in Model 2 (from 0.164 to 0.320).

Table 5. Regression Coefficientsa – moderating effect of Extrinsic motivation on the effect of Agreeableness on Customer focus

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.168	.354		8.955	.000
	EM	.130	.029	.380	4.433	.000
	Agreeableness	.184	.083	.191	2.222	.028
2	(Constant)	3.067	.321		9.551	.000
	EM	.131	.027	.383	4.926	.000
	Agreeableness	.203	.075	.211	2.706	.008
	A*EM	-.211	.041	-.395	-5.106	.000
Sample with low Extrinsic motivation	(Constant)	1.348	.565		2.388	.024
	Agreeableness	.688	.137	.682	5.021	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CF

A*EM – regression between Agreeableness and Customer focus after inclusion of Extrinsic motivation as a moderator

Moreover, the regression coefficient of the moderator (A*EM) (Table 5) is significant meaning that EM moderates the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus. It is interesting to notice that the beta coefficient for (A*EM) is negative, which means that there is a need for further analysis of the given result. For that purpose, two subsamples were formed – one with low and one with high Extrinsic motivation. In the sample with low Extrinsic motivation, all respondents who scored 1.5 (median) and less on this factor were included. The findings suggest that in the sample with low Extrinsic motivation, Agreeableness has a significant positive effect on Customer focus. This means that agreeable employees, who are less motivated by the financial benefits of their job, are more likely to show greater customer focus. Figure 1 shows the difference between the sample with low and high extrinsic motivation regarding the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus.

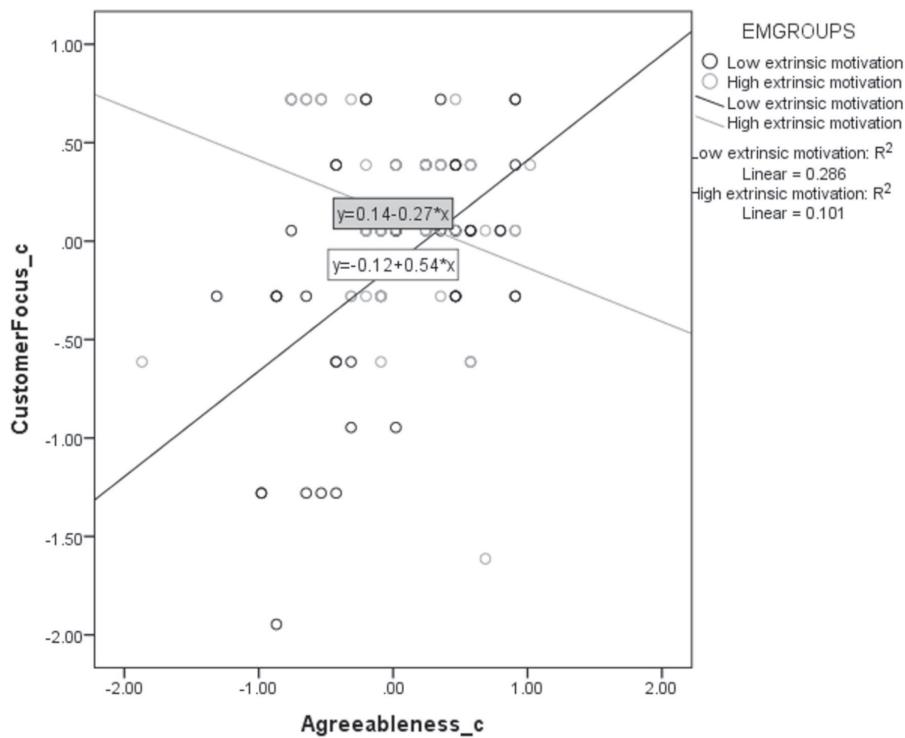


Figure 1. Moderating effect of Extrinsic motivation on the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus

Furthermore, the study also revealed a moderating effect of Identified and Introjected regulation on the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus (Table 6). The results show that R^2 reported in Model 1 increased significantly in Model 2 (from 0.079 to 0.192) after the inclusion of the moderating variable (Identified and Introjected regulation). Moreover, a beta coefficient for the moderator ($A * IIR$) is statistically significant. It is interesting to notice that the beta coefficient for the moderator is negative, which indicates the need for further analysis of the given result. Again, for this purpose, two subsamples were formed – one with low and one with high Identified and Introjected regulation. In the sample with low Identified and Introjected regulation, all respondents who scored 1.9 (median) and less on this factor were included.

Table 6. Regression Coefficientsa – Identified and Introjected regulation as a moderator of the effect of Agreeableness on Customer focus

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.706	.363		10.215	.000
	Agreeableness	.144	.090	.147	1.600	.112
2	(Constant)	3.096	.420		7.369	.000
	Agreeableness	.204	.091	.208	2.255	.026
	IIR	.099	.037	.248	2.683	.008
3	(Constant)	2.808	.402		6.985	.000
	Agreeableness	.269	.087	.274	3.101	.002
	IIR	.095	.035	.238	2.743	.007
	Agreeableness *	-.232	.058	-.342	-3.98	.000
	IIR				4	
Sample with low Identified and Introjected regulation	(Constant)	-.375	.832		-.451	.659
	Agreeableness	1.105	.192	.839	5.764	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CF

In Figure 2 we can see the difference between sample with low and high identified regarding the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus.

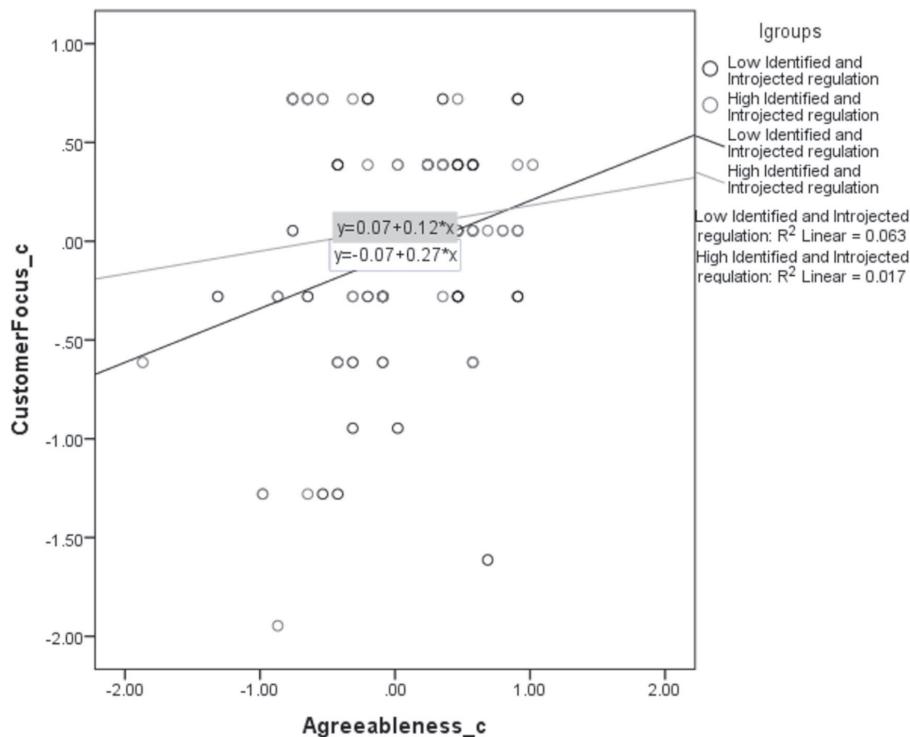


Figure 2. Moderating effect of Identified and Introjected regulation on the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus

The results revealed that in the subsample of respondents with low IIR, Agreeableness has a significant positive effect on Customer focus. This means that agreeable employees whose personal goals, values and reputation are not so important motivating factors, are more likely to show greater customer focus.

Based on the presented study findings, Hypothesis 12 can be partially confirmed, as Intrinsic and Identified and Introjected is found to moderate only the relationship between Agreeableness and Customer focus.

Discussion

Direct effects between employee's personality, work motivation and customer focus

The basic premise of the current study was that there is an interrelation between personality traits (the Big Five personality factors), work motivation and customer focus in the hotel industry. Specifically, the study assumed that there is a direct influence of personality traits on work motivation and customer focus

(Hypothesis 1–10), which was confirmed in the study. This provided an answer to our first research question related to the existence of direct relationships between personality and work motivation and the customer focus of employees in the hotel industry. The study showed that employees who are an extravert, emotionally stable, conscious and open to experiences are more likely to express greater customer focus. This is in the line with previous studies (Hurley/1998; Day/Silverman 1989; Brown/2002; Frei/McDaniel 1998; Aghtar et al. 2015) that revealed that openness to experience, extraversion, emotional stability and consciousness are the predictors of employee engagement and customer focus.

The current study showed that extraverted hotel employees are more intrinsically motivated, which is in line with the findings of (Furnham/1997; Furnham et al. 1999; Judge/Ilie 2002). Extraverts are more likely to be motivated by personal goals, values, career plans and reputation their job provides. The previous studies (Berthiaume et al. 1996; Furnham/1997; Judge/Ilie 2002; Bozionelos 2004) showed that extraverts are more likely to be motivated by intrinsic factors such as feedback and recognition, but they also tend to occupy a central position in their work environment so they can satisfy their ambitious and domineering tendencies (they want to succeed, to have a good reputation, to fulfill their career plans), which explains why they are motivated by Identified and introjected regulation. Their motivation by Identified and Introjected regulation could also mean that they are doing their job either because of the feeling of guilt or compulsion or they identify with the value of the job. They also tend to show higher customer focus. Thus, when it comes to service industries such as hotel industry, it might be that extraverts find their value and fulfilment of their inner motives through focusing on customers' needs and requests or they might feel the compulsion to do that to feel they do good work and in order to gain the proper reputation.

When it comes to agreeableness, although some studies suggest agreeableness as a predictor of customer focus, this study did not confirm this. The possible explanation, as suggested by Judge et al. (1999), might be those agreeable persons due to their altruism, modesty and good nature, prioritize relationships with others overwork, meaning that they may be less involved and focused on customers. This is in line with the empirical finding of Barrick and Mount (1991) who concluded that the agreeableness trait, such as being courteous, trusting, and soft-hearted, has a smaller impact on job performance than other personality traits such as extraversion. This may also explain why Agreeableness negatively affects all analyzed motivation factors: Intrinsic, Extrinsic and Identified and Introjected Regulation.

Hotel employees open to experience are more likely to be motivated by the financial benefits of their job or by extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, people open to experience are more engaged to work (Akhtar et al., 2015), have a

preference for variety (Costa/McCrae 1992), which may affect their tendency for extrinsic motivators such as salary or higher living standard. Employees open to experience also like to seek performance feedback from others (Wanberg/Kammeyer-Mueller 2000; Payne/Youngcourt/Beaubien 2007) which might be in the form of material rewards. In addition, according to Arora and Rangnekar (2016), individuals open to experiences show more career commitment which in the context of the hotel industry, where the central focus of work efforts is customer, might explain their higher customer focus. Moreover, in the hotel industry, open individuals might focus on the customer in order to satisfy their need for feedback about their performance (in form of reviews or positive comments to the manager), which is in many cases results in financial or other awards (customer focus is also positively related to extrinsic motivation).

In the current study, Consciousness is positively related to Customer focus, while Neuroticism is negatively related. This is in line with Brown et al. (2002) who found that emotional instability (or neuroticism) is negatively related to customer focus and the study of Barrick, Mount, and Strauss (1993) who argues that Consciousness is an important predictor of work performance. In addition, according to Hurtz/Donovan (2000), Conscientiousness and Neuroticism are two personality traits that are most consistently predictive of job performance. If we consider that in the hotel industry, job performance is largely measured by a satisfied customer and quality service, it explains why emotionally stable and conscientious employees will be more focused on customers.

The study also confirmed the significant positive effect of Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation on Customer focus. Employees motivated by financial benefits but also joy, fun and pleasure their job provides will be more engaged and show higher customer focus.

Intrinsic motivation mediates the regression between personality traits and customer focus

The other two research questions were related to demonstrating the moderating and mediating effect of the work motivation in regression between personality traits and customer focus (Hypothesis 11 and 12).

The findings suggest that extraverts show higher intrinsic motivation, which in turn results in their greater customer focus. This is in line with the study of Barrick, Stewart and Piotrowski (2002) who explored mediating effects of motivation on regression between personality and job performance revealing that motivation mediates effects of extraversion on job performance. In the context of the hotel industry, customer focus is certainly one of the indicators of job performance. Thus, extraverts mainly motivated by joy and pleasure at work may satisfy these inner motives by focusing on satisfying customers' needs and requests, as it is in their nature to be open and focused on other people in their

surroundings. In turn, this provides better job performance. In this way, by satisfying the needs of their customers and through pleasant communication and interaction with them, they can enjoy their work, and perceive their work duty as fun and pleasurable. Furthermore, as extraverts are often intrinsically motivated by as recognition and feedback (Furnam, 1997), which may be in the form of a feedback of hotel guests about good service they provided. Also, empirical evidence from the hospitality literature reveals that intrinsically motivated employees show higher organizational commitment (Karatepe/Uludag 2007) and that intrinsically motivated hotel employees are capable of dealing with customer complaints more effectively (Yavas/Karatepe/Babakus 2010), which can be connected with a higher customer focus.

Moreover, the items of Extraversion such as communicativeness, enthusiasm and sociability are personality traits that are of immense importance for customer focus, especially in the hotel industry where the quality of service largely depends on the pleasant interaction with customers. Extraversion is also characterized by traits such as assertiveness, social dominance and orientation towards action, thus Bozionelos (2004) consider that people who are extroverts are also people who are more dedicated to work and show high work involvement. Empirical research is in line with the above reasoning, as it suggests a positive relationship between instrumentality (specifically assertiveness and action tendencies) and work involvement (Berthiaume et al. 1996). Thus, it can be concluded that extroverts, motivated by intrinsic motivators will show higher customer focus and work engagement and will take care of satisfying the customers' needs. In addition, in the study by Hurley (1997), it was revealed that superior service providers are those who have higher scores in extraversion and agreeableness.

The study also indicates that emotionally stable employees show higher intrinsic motivation which in turn influences their greater customer focus. This means that employees who are emotionally stable and are motivated by joy, fun and pleasure they get at their job will be more focused on customers, their satisfaction and the provision of high-quality service because this will help them achieve these intrinsic motivators. The logical explanation might be in the fact that persons who have low scores in neuroticism are persons who are emotionally stable, relaxed, calm and capable of dealing with stressful situations. Customer focus in the hotel industry usually requires a lot of effort to deal with requests and needs of the guests which might be emotionally exhausting (Choi et al. 2014). Thus, emotionally stable individuals, who are more resistant to stressful situations and driven by pleasure and joy at work, are logically more ready to maintain good interaction with customers. On the other hand, Neuroticism is characterized by worry, pessimism, low self-assurance and negative emotions. Due to the tendency to interpret their experience in a negative light, they are less likely to develop a positive attitude towards work. The research also shows that they are often not goal-oriented (Malouff et al. 1990). Based on this, it can be

concluded that there is less possibility that individuals, who are not goal-oriented and have high scores on neuroticism, will be dedicated to their job and be focused on customers. Furthermore, individuals who score high on neuroticism tend to value hygiene-related features of jobs, like security and working conditions, instead of intrinsically motivating features, like the nature of the work and opportunities for achievement (Furnham et al. 1999). Items of this dimension such as depression, anxiety, worry and tendency to easily get upset and nervous suggest that those persons are not convenient for communication with customers and dealing with problems, which implies their lower customer focus and direction towards customer satisfaction. These features could also explain why persons with high neuroticism value hygiene-related features of jobs more than intrinsic motivators, as it is more important for them to have such working conditions that will enable them to work without pressure, stressful situations and anxiety.

Extrinsic motivation and Identified and Introjected regulation moderate the relationship between employees personality and customer focus

Study findings suggest that agreeable employees who are not primarily motivated by money (Low extrinsic motivation), tend to show higher Customer focus. Supposing that agreeable person is altruistic, with high empathy and desire to help others, it is logical that the in case of persons for whom the money is not so important motivating factor, higher agreeableness will result in higher customer focus and intention to provide a better service. In the hotel industry, employees who show a tendency to cooperate with others, to be careful, open and kind are certainly more predisposed to show higher focus on customer needs and requests (Jans/1982; Rabinowitz/Hall 1977). In the case when the money is an important motivating factor, persons who are agreeable by nature may be less customer-focused in situations when they are not satisfied with salary and conditions (this could affect their desire to be committed to the customers and their needs). In the contexts of the tourism and hotel industry in Serbia, where hotel employees often have low salaries, the agreeableness of employees may not result in their care for customer needs as their lack of motivation may lead to their lower performance.

The research also revealed that agreeable hotel employees, when they are not highly motivated by personal goals, values, the fulfillment of career plans, reputation, but also when they don't do things because of the feeling of guilty etc. (low Identified and Introjected regulation), are more likely to show higher customer focus. This could be explained by the fact that people who show more empathy for others, and at the same time are not so focused on themselves and their aims, are more likely to be focused on satisfying the customers' needs and desires. In the hotel context, such employees high in agreeableness are likely to

be more sensitive to guest's needs and foster a long-term positive relationship with guests (Jones and Jones, 1990), which is in this case moderated by low Identified and Introjected regulation.

Agreeableness is the trait, which is often connected with altruism, friendliness and modesty. People with high scores on this trait are more involved in their work, as they see their work achievements as a way to increase their satisfaction and self-respect (Jans/1982; Rabinowitz/Hall 1977). Due to their altruism, modesty and good nature, those who score high on Agreeableness give priority to relationships with others more than their success in their carrier (see Judge et al. 1999). This could explain why agreeable people with low scores on Identified and Introjected Regulations have a higher focus on customers and the provision of high-quality service.

Conclusion

The current study provided the answers to the main objectives of the study and thus contributed to the existing theory in several ways: Firstly, the current study contributed to the fairly limited literature on the antecedents of customer focus in the hotel industry. Secondly, this is the first study to explore and confirm direct relationships between employees' personality, work motivation and customer focus of employees in the hotel industry. The study has found that greater customer focus could be expected from hotel employees who are an extravert, emotionally stable, conscious and open to the experience. In addition, the financial benefits of the job are most likely to be the main motivator for extraverts and people open to experience, while agreeable employees show low motivation in case of all factors. Extraverted hotel employees tend to be motivated by identified and introjected regulation. The study demonstrates that hotel employees that are motivated by financial benefits but also joy, fun and pleasure at a job, will be more engaged and show higher customer focus.

Finally, the study filled in a research gap in general and hospitality literature about the role of motivation in a relationship between personality and customer focus by exploring and demonstrating the existence of mediating and moderating role of work motivation. The study confirmed that Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between personality and customer focus in a way that extraverts and emotionally stable hotel employees show higher intrinsic motivation, which in turn results in their greater customer focus. Additionally, Identified and Introjected regulation has shown to be a moderator between Agreeableness and Customer focus, indicating that agreeable employees whose personal goals, values and reputation are not so important motivating factors, are more likely to show greater customer focus.

The practical implications of the study are discussed in the following chapter.

Practical implications of the study

The major practical contribution of the current study is the finding that work motivation mediates and moderates the relationships between employees' personality and customer focus. This means that selection of employees who will show higher customer focus but also enhancement of the customer focus of the current employees, should be based on both their personality traits and type of work motivation that is most efficient for them. The use of personality and motivation scales in the selection process can assist in choosing those employees who will show higher customer focus, but also, those scales should be used in obtaining the profile of the current employees. According to our study, those employees who are likely to show greater customer focus are: 1) extraverts and emotionally stable employees who are motivated intrinsically (by joy, fun and pleasure they feel at work, 2) agreeable employees who are not highly motivated by financial benefits of work but also who are not so motivated by fulfillment of career plans, personal goals, values, reputation, etc. (Identified and introjected regulation). The first group of employees is particularly interesting, as extraverts and emotionally stable employees are likely to show customer focus only in case they are intrinsically motivated (intrinsic motivation is a mediator), so employers should emphasize rewards that will make them feel joy and pleasure at work. Some of the intrinsic rewards that are recommended for better engagement are (Kenneth/2009): giving employees sense of meaningfulness – providing them with the opportunity to accomplish something of real value, sense of choice – trust and giving employees the freedom to select those work activities that would lead to the task accomplishment, sense of competence – by delegating demanding tasks that meet or exceed employees personal standard while providing them with positive feedback, sense of progress – encouraging employees that their efforts are accomplishing something.

Study limitations and future research

The study also has some limitations. The research has a local character, as it is limited to the hotels of Novi Sad, which reduces the generalizability of the obtained results. Some future research should include a bigger sample and employees from other city hotels (from Serbia and the wider region), as the given results could be relevant for a wider geographical area (Eastern Europe or Balkans).

Some future research could also explore some personal values of employees and their relation to customer focus and work motivation. Moreover, the authors consider that it would also be interesting to analyze the relationship between the analyzed variables and job satisfaction, as a construct, which is often connected with work motivation and service orientation.

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