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Exploring Employee Creativity Willingness as Catalyst for Boosting Service Innovation Under Australia’s Diverse Organisational Cultures

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Extended Abstract

Recent evidences suggest that organisational leaders in developed and emerging economies across the globe are inevitably saddled with the challenge of consistently inspiring employees to become more willing to exert creative behaviours that advance sustainable service innovations (Witell et al., 2016). Toivonen and Tuominen (2009 p. 893) defined service innovation as "a new service or such a renewal of an existing service which is put into practice and which provides benefit to the organization that has developed it; the benefit usually derives from the added value that the renewal provides the customers. In addition, to be an innovation the renewal must be new not only to its developer, but in a broader context." Equally, bolstering service innovations is becoming more complex for organisations who are constantly pressured to adapt their respective organisational cultures (OCs) to constant changes impacting the business environment (Ogbeibu et al., 2020). OC mirrors a system of variations, assumptions, and deep-level values which are associated with effectiveness, and shared among employees in an organisation (Martha et al., 2002). Congruent with the work of Cameron and Quinn (1999), disparate OCs such as the clan, hierarchy, adhocracy and market OC that are experienced in a specific country can impact service innovation differently, given the nature of values typified in each OC. No doubt, as a consequence of global technological advancements, a developed country like Australia has been among the top countries around the globe that have experienced the impacts distinct OCs on their service innovation (Global Innovation Index, 2018; Hofstede & Michael, 2010; The Global Economy, 2018; Witell et al., 2016). Yet, Australia is not far aloof from the glooming influence of a future eclipsed by dire financial uncertainties and plagued by constant change (Salignac, Galea, & Powell, 2017). Furthermore, norms of uncertainty avoidance in Australia’s distinct OCs that are also enshrined within values of several organisational employees, gives further reason to question the extent at which creative employees are willing to exhibit creativity that can engender sustainable service innovations within organisations (Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede & Michael, 2010). Consequently, under the influence of distinct OCs, leaders are bound to face severe challenges when employees become unwilling to participate in creativity initiatives associated with fostering sustainable service innovation (Ogbeibu et al., 2020; Chandy & Tellis, 1998). Studies (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Auernhammer & Hall, 2013; Kozbelt, Beghetto, & Runco, 2010; Plucker & Beghetto, 2003) indicate that, although employee creativity and innovation may be influenced by several factors, it does require the willingness of an employee to first decide whether to exhibit creative behaviours. Employee unwillingness to be creative might spring up from
diverse rational reasons, such as avoidance of extra service innovation related responsibilities, or when the creativity and service innovation process is perceived to be a threat to employee health or work-life balance (Amabile & Pillemere, 2012; Ogbeibu et al., 2021). Employees may even be unwilling to exhibit creative behaviours if that means securing their jobs from a leader who already feels threatened by their high level of creativity (Liu et al., 2016). Subsequently, having a workforce of employees who are unwilling to exhibit creativity could cause a steady decline of organisational service innovation (Tajeddini, Martin, & Altinay, 2020). Thus, employee creativity willingness could have a significant influence on the processes fundamental to bolstering service innovation (Hameed et al., 2021). Employee creativity willingness, is therefore, the prime and most compelling unit of thought processes that influences an employee’s conscious and deliberate choice to voluntarily exhibit a specific creative behaviour (Ogbeibu et al., 2021). Moreover, employees who are not willing to be creative are not essentially subordinate or malevolent (Plucker & Beghetto, 2003). To further reinforce sustainable service innovation within Australian manufacturing industry, manufacturing organisations need to fully comprehend the most suitable OC that fosters willingness of employees to continuously drive creativity initiatives towards sustainable service innovations (Caniels & Rietzschel, 2015). Although extant literature suggests a link between OC, employee creativity, and service innovation, how distinct OCs impact service innovation is yet to be given ample consideration (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Santos-Vijande et al., 2021). Considering the plausible dissimilar impacts of diverse OCs, it is yet unclear how employee creativity willingness may influence the relationships between each OC type and service innovation (Santos-Vijande et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies are yet to consider the probable nexus between employee creativity willingness and service innovation. Building on Amabile’s (1997) componential theory of organisational creativity and innovation (CTOCI), we explore the nexus between disparate OCs and service innovation, and how employee creativity willingness could act to bolster service innovation under diverse OCs. While the CTOCI has provoked several significant contributions (Anderson et al., 2014; Birdi et al., 2016) over the years, Amabile (1997) did not emphasize the role of employee creativity willingness, and how it impacts service innovation. Although CTOCI emphasised the importance of engendering creativity and innovation, and that OC can be a plausible barrier or facilitator of innovation, it however, gave no clear insights into how each OC impacts service innovation (Amabile, 1997; Amabile et al., 1996). Our study is conceptual in nature, and the methodology employed is a multilevel review analysis of related literature. Based on thorough review of prior research debates, we therefore, attempt to address the identified conceptual and theoretical gaps and to further contribute by advocating several propositions which are: 1. Clan OC has a negative influence on service innovation. 2. Adhocracy OC has a positive influence on service innovation. 3. Market OC has a negative influence on service innovation. 4. Hierarchy OC has a negative influence on service innovation. 5. Employee creativity willingness moderates the impact of adhocracy OC on service innovation. 6. Employee creativity willingness moderates the impact of clan OC on service innovation. 7. Employee creativity willingness moderates the impact of market OC on service innovation. 8. Employee creativity willingness moderates the impact of hierarchy OC on service innovation. These propositions are relevant for aiding practitioners and policymakers to contribute invaluable insights that would help engender Australia’s service industry innovation prowess, and reduce the gap of service innovation inefficiency. To achieve this, our study attempts to proffer timely insights via thorough exploration of prior and recent evidences. Our propositions could aid to respectively determine what OC dimension(s) is most supportive of service innovation, and how employee creativity willingness predicts service innovation.
Keywords: Employee Creativity Willingness, Service Innovation, Organisational Cultures, Australia

References


