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ENTREPRENEURIAL STRESS: A GENDER BASED ASSESSMENT

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BUSINESS RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to assess the entrepreneurial role stress of entrepreneurs based on their gender. Stress is physical, mental or emotional strain or tension.. Stress is importance or significance attached to a particular thing. Role is a position one occupies in a social system, and is defined by the functions one performs in response to the expectations of the significant members of the social system, and one's own expectations from that position. Entrepreneur experience role stress invariably. The research question proposed in this study is "entrepreneurs look their stress from same perspective irrespective of their gender or their gender plays a role. The gender of entrepreneurs play a predominant role in determining their performance as an entrepreneur. This study aimed to find out what entrepreneurs opine about their role stress factors. To achieve the purpose of this study, a sample of fifty women and fifty men entrepreneurs were selected from Cuddalore district, Tamilnadu through probability sampling. The primary data was collected through a well structured questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using t test and chi-square test.

The results of the study showed that the gender of the entrepreneurs have a significant influence on entrepreneurial role stress of entrepreneurs with certain interesting facts.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Role Stress, Gender, Entrepreneurs

Introduction

Stress is the action on a body of a system of balanced forces whereby strain or deformation results. Stress is physical, mental or emotional strain or tension.. Stress is importance or significance attached to a thing. Stress is a threat to the quality of life, and to the physical, and psychological well - being. In the seventeenth century, the word stress originated from latin is popularly used to mean hardship, strain, adversity or affliction (Chakrapani, 1995). Stress is perceived as negative influence, which disturbs the natural equilibrium of the body, and includes within its reference, physical injury, exposure, deprivation, disease and emotional distress. stress refers to a broad class of problems, which are distinct from the other ordinary problems (Wingate, 1972). Stress is an inevitable consequence of socio-economic complexity and to some extent, its stimulant as well.

Entrepreneurial Role Stress

Role is a position one occupies in a social system, and is defined by the functions one performs in response to the expectations of the significant members of the social system, and one's own expectations from that position. Each individual occupies and plays several roles. An entrepreneur can be a daughter or a son , a wife or a husband, a mother or a father, a member of a club, a member of a voluntary organization, and so on. All these roles constitute the role space of that person . At the center of the role space is the entrepreneur.

Role has two subsystems: (i) Role Space – the individual's relationship with own / intra roles) and (ii) Role Set – the individual's relationship with other /inter roles. Role, Role Space and Role Set have a potential for conflict and stress. Role Space is the dynamic relationship between the various roles an individual occupies and his self. Role Space Stress has the following main variables: (i) Self-Role Distance, (ii) Intra-Role Conflict, (iii) Role Stagnation, (iv) Inter-Role Distance, and (v) Role Irrelevance. Role Set consists of important persons who have varying expectations from the role that an individual occupies. Role Set Stress has the following main variables: (i) Role Ambiguity, (ii) Role Expectation Conflict, (iii) Role Overload, (iv) Role Erosion, (v) Resource Inadequacy, (vi) Personal Inadequacy, (vii) Role Isolation, (viii) Result Inadequacy, (ix)Role Inadequacy, and (x) Challenge

Stress. There are various expectations from the role that an individual occupies by the significant others and by one self. Incompatibility among these expectations can result in conflict and stress.

Entrepreneurs face several problems that can generate stress due to the entrepreneurial role they play. Role stress and its conditions refer to constellation of imbalance among behavioural responses, physiological and psychological expression.(Seemaprakalpa, 2013) Entrepreneurs are generally being considered to face a lot of stress in their task of running a business. Entrepreneurs usually have long working hours, high time pressure, role conflicts, they have to react to many economic demands and, eventually, to cope with past failures.(Shobha and Vennila Gopal, 2012).Research into entrepreneurial stress reveals that stress may affect the entrepreneur's propensity to pursue growth, recognize emerging opportunities, or achieve balance between work and family or personal demands (Schindehutte et al, 2006). Entrepreneurial role stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the business or job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the entrepreneurs (Naik, 2011)

Entrepreneurial Role Stress and Gender of Entrepreneurs: Conceptual Facts

Gender of the entrepreneurs has an unquestionable impact on their entrepreneurial performance . It also matters in their problems and prospects inevitably. Gender based stress impact of entrepreneurs is a million dollar question in terms of socio-economic development of a society.

Research studies bring out the truth that women turns into entrepreneurship mostly by push factors whereas men prefer entrepreneurship predominantly by the influence of pull factors. The fact that world is divided into male and female spheres, and the society believes on the idea that male has public sphere and female has private sphere is not new. Nor is it news to anyone that these separate spheres are slowly eroding for the past few decades. This erosion takes a very definite form, namely, the movement of women in to the public sphere including the paid work place. Women's movement to the world of paid work has spontaneously evoked intense need for changes in family roles. It is important to study the responsibilities of women at work. It is, therefore, timely to look in to the changes in the private sphere of life of women.

Comparing both the gender, women entrepreneurs are prone to stress due to balance they have to achieve between work life and family life. Often they find their entrepreneurial role to be demanding in

terms of time and other resources both formally and informally. At the same time the woman entrepreneur has to raise a family, care for children and manage a home. A famous saying expresses that women spread wings when they flourish but their roots are deep into their family commitments. women entrepreneurs are exposed to reconcile with pressures placed on them from multiple role demands. Expectations of role senders are not always clearly understood. However, women attempt to satisfy role demands by constant endeavours. This makes them more vulnerable to role stress than men entrepreneurs.

Review of Literature

Dafna Kariv done a innovative and exploratory research which attempts to assess the differences in entrepreneurial effectiveness in businesses owned by men (MOB) and by women (WOB) while incorporating perceptions of positive and negative stress. Analyses of a national sample of 190 Israeli independent entrepreneurs, produced several significant results: stress experienced by men and women entrepreneurs significantly differs in its negative aspect, but not in its positive aspect; social support had a significant role in men's and women's perceived stress, with both experiencing lower negative perceived stress while obtaining social support; job security emerged as significant only for men entrepreneurs in increasing their positive stress; and significant effects of perceived stress emerged on the two indicators of the business effectiveness investigated in this study, i.e., business profitability and growth in clients' diversity. Implications on the gender differences are discussed.

Justina et al (2016) studied the relationship between attachment, entrepreneurial role stress, and quality of life among father and son metal shop owners and observed whether fathers and sons differ with respect to these variables. A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed to collect data from 120 small scale entrepreneurs of metal supplying stockiest (60 fathers and 60 sons).The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden, 1987), Entrepreneurial Role Stress Scale (Pareek, 1997), and WHO Quality of life-BREF questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF,WHO, 1997) were administered to the participants. Results showed that sons experience a higher financial and health satisfaction than the fathers. Significant correlations were found between attachment, entrepreneurial role stress and quality of life in fathers and sons. These findings illuminate the role of family business succession and communication among fathers and sons in enhancing the level of satisfaction in the coming generations.

Semprakalpa and Manju arora(2012) studied role stress and constraints of women entrepreneurs. Descriptive type of research design was used to study the role stress and constraints faced by 60 women entrepreneurs running both boutiques and beauty parlours. Primary data were collected through interview schedule in zones of Agra city in U.P. during 2002-2005. Percentage was used as a statistical measure. The study showed that majority of entrepreneurs were experiencing stress as being mothers as they were performing dual responsibilities(mother, housewife and as an entrepreneurs). The findings of the study are based on expressed opinions of the entrepreneurs. Hence the objectivity would be limited to the extent of the entrepreneurs' honest opinions. In spite of these limitations, it is hoped that findings of this study would provide a better insight in coping the role stress faced by women.

Mandira Bhattacharya and Sha (2006) administered a self-report questionnaire on 370 men and women working in eight different occupations. They analyzed the obtained data through step-wise regression method. The result showed that retrospect fit explains stress-strain relationships better in a wider range of variables, while anticipated fit has a rather restricted effect on the variables considered.

Researchers have also focused on identifying the individual orientations in explaining stress. It is stated that stress occurs when demands on person exceeds his adjustment resources (Lazarus, 1969). The researchers have further explained that the environment stressful to one person may not be so for another person. The entrepreneur must be a salesperson, negotiator, money manager, dispute settler, boundary spanner, etc. These overlapping demands may lead to role overload. Role overload is receiving multiple expectations that are legitimate and are not incompatible, but completing all the tasks is beyond the capacity of the individual (Katz and Kahn, 1978: 185). As role overload increases, maintaining a high level of quality in one's work becomes more difficult (House et al., 1979). Role overload and the concern for quality have been shown to lead to high levels of stress (House et al., 1979; Matteson and Ivancevich, 1982).

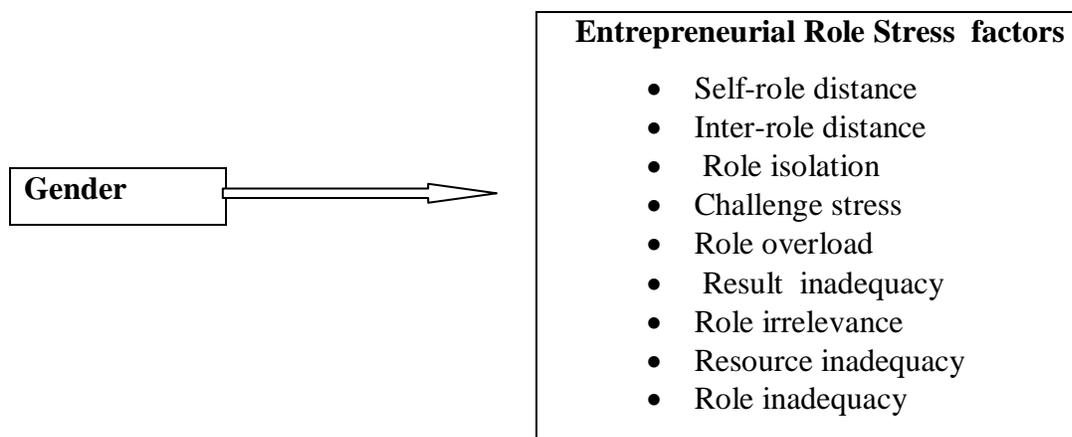
Studies were undertaken to determine the relationship between role stress, gender and marital status. Role stress was the second best determinant of organizational commitment in working women (Bhagat & Chassie, 1981). Findings also suggest that role conflict decreases both sexes' job satisfaction and men's marital satisfaction and increases women's psychophysical symptoms (Coverman, 1989). Gadzella et al (1990) investigated differences in stress by gender and suggested that women reported more stress than men did. In another study, female executives showed greater stress, suggesting that the

difference in work stress was a consequence of work-family conflict, societal expectations, and behavioral norms that women face as they occupy a combination of roles (Beena & Poduval, 1992; McDonald & Korabik, 1991). Babin and Boles (1998) suggested that role stress affected female service providers' job performance more negatively than it did males', and that job satisfaction was related more highly to quitting intent among males.

Objective of the study

To find out the whether there is any association between gender and role stress of entrepreneurs and to find out whether men and women entrepreneurs differ significantly on their entrepreneurial role stress factors.

Research Model



Source : Assumed Model

Methodology

Descriptive research design has been selected for the present study. The study uses both primary and secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from books, journals, internet, published and unpublished papers. Primary data have been collected with the help of well designed structured questionnaire on the basis of literature. For the present study probability random sampling was administered on a sample of 100 entrepreneurs from the district of Cuddalore, Tamilnadu. To prove the hypotheses, “t” test and chi-square test were employed to analyze the primary data to find out the whether men and women entrepreneurs significantly differ on entrepreneurial role stress

Research instrument

The Entrepreneurial Role Stress was assessed through the Entrepreneurial Role Stress Instrument developed by Udai Pareek (1997). It measures the various role stresses experienced by entrepreneurs. Role stress is measured in terms of 9 dimensions, namely, self-role distance, inter-role distance, role isolation, challenge stress, role overload, result inadequacy, role irrelevance, resource inadequacy, role inadequacy. The instrument consists of 27 items that are to be scored on a 5 –point likert scale

- **Inter-role distance:** It is experienced when there is a conflict between organizational and non-organisational roles. IRD refers to the distance among various roles occupied by the same individual
- **self-role distance:** When the role a person occupies goes against his/her self-concept, then he/she feels self-role distance type of stress. This is essentially a conflict arising out of a mismatch between the person and his/her job.
- **Role isolation:** This type of role stress refers to the psychological distance between the occupant's role and other roles in the same role set. It is also defined as role distance which is different from inter-role distance , in the sense that while, role isolation (RI) is characterized by the feelings that others do not reach out easily, indicative of the absence of strong linkages of one's role with other roles.
- **Challenge stress:** The challenge that creates the stress
- **Role overload:** When the role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from the significant roles in his/her role set, he/she experiences role overload. There are two aspects of this stress: quantitative and qualitative. The former refers to having too much to do, while the latter refers to things being too difficult and the accountability in the role.
- **Result inadequacy:** This means that if the situation is not adequate for the entrepreneur or when there is some ambiguity about what entrepreneur is performing and the more entrepreneur thinks that there are too many expectations from her role then, entrepreneur will not feel super-ordinate, i.e., entrepreneur will think that she is not able to serve a larger group of society
- **Role irrelevance:** stress caused when the role occupant feels that there is no relation between himself and the role played by him

- **Resource inadequacy:** This type of stress is evident when the role occupant feels that he/she is not provided with adequate resources for performing the functions expected from his/her role.
- **Role inadequacy:** It arises when the role occupant feels that he/she does not have the necessary skills and training for effectively performing the functions expected from his/her role. This is bound to happen when the organizations do not impart periodic training to enable the employees to cope with the fast changes both within and outside the organization

Analysis and findings

Relationship between Gender and Entrepreneurial role stress

Table 1: Chi-Square Test showing association between Entrepreneurial Role Stress and Gender of the Entrepreneurs

variable	variable	“ F” value	“P” value
Gender	Entrepreneurial Role Stress	15.711	0.001**

** denotes significant at 0.01 %

The proposed hypothesis H01: there is no significant association between entrepreneurial role stress and the gender of the entrepreneurs

The above table-1 show that the obtained significance value 0.001 was less than 0.01 and the proposed hypothesis was rejected . This implies that there is significant association between gender of the entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial role stress.

Table 2: T Test for significant difference between the Gender of Entrepreneurs and the Entrepreneurial Role stress Factors

Sl.No	Entrepreneurial Role Stress factors	Male		Female		“p” value
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
1	Self-role distance	4.3	.931	4.66	.478	0.01**
2	Inter-role distance	3.5	1.09	4.16	.817	0.00**
3	Role irrelevance	4.3	.931	4.67	.479	0.01**
4	Challenge stress	4.6	.638	4.46	.578	0.25
5	Role overload	4.5	.762	4.44	.643	0.67
6	Result inadequacy	4.4	.927	4.24	.822	0.30
7	Resource inadequacy	3.8	.864	3.78	.789	0.71
8	Role inadequacy	3.6	.890	4.02	.936	0.06*
9	Role isolation	3.6	.890	4.02	.936	0.06*

* denotes significance at 0.09, ** denotes significance at 0.05 % respectively

The proposed hypothesis H02: there is no significant difference in entrepreneurial role stress factors on the basis of the gender of the entrepreneurs.

Table-2 shows the obtained “P” value for the entrepreneurial role stress is greater than the 0.05 and the null hypothesis is accepted in that dimension. All the other factors namely self-role distance, inter-role distance, role irrelevance have the “P” lesser than 0.05, role inadequacy and role isolation have the “P” lesser than 0.09, this indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected, at 5% and 9% level of significance. Based on the results of the data, there exists significant difference towards all the above said factors of entrepreneurial role stress based on the gender of the entrepreneurs. Based on the mean score, the factor challenge stress was higher than all other factors for male entrepreneurs, whereas for female entrepreneurs the mean score remained higher in the factors self-role distance and inter-role distance.

Discussion

The findings of this study endorsed the findings of previous researchers on two different perspectives. The study found that there is significant association between gender of the respondents and entrepreneurial role stress. Results of the present study showed that men entrepreneurs have mean higher score on the factor, challenge stress. This may be due to the rural Indian social- economical environment. Men entrepreneurs feel and opine that they can challenge stress easily whereas women have certain visible obstacles but women entrepreneurs are also does not differ significantly in challenging stress as entrepreneurs. The findings of this study also endorse that rural Indian entrepreneurs have different order of priority on both their personal life and on their entrepreneurial life. The interesting fact found by this study was both the women and men entrepreneurs do not have significant difference on result inadequacy, resource inadequacy, role overload and challenge stress dimension. This finding indicates that both the gender as entrepreneurs do not differ in their role set factors. This implies that when taking an entrepreneurial career the women and men are ready to take stress knowingly. Talking on the role space factors, men and women entrepreneurs significantly differ. Women entrepreneurs have higher mean score on self-role distance and inter-role distance which are role space factors. The study also further stems out the research question why entrepreneurs differ in role space factors and the reasons have to be researched further.

Conclusion

The study aimed to find out what does both women and men entrepreneurs opine about their entrepreneurial role stress factors. This study brought out the fact that in rural Indian environment both the men and women entrepreneurs exhibit no difference in entrepreneurial role stress factors which arise due to their individual's relationship with other /inter roles (role set factors). At the same juncture the both gender feel subsequently different on the factors on the role Space – the individual's relationship with own / intra roles.

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INTERNSITY LEVEL OF CRITERIA EXPECTATIONS OF IMPORTERS IN INTERNATIONAL SEAFOOD TRADE- EXPORTERS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Trade criteria play a vital role in the international trade. Traders also very conscious and focus their keen observation in the criteria consideration level. Traders have the responsibility to act based on the acceptance given by them before the orders placed. Seafood trade also have certain terms and conditions imposed by the importer and exporter. This research conducted with the objective of to find out the criteria consideration of the seafood importer in the exporters perspective. From the study, it is found that all the criteria are considered by the importers in the international trade but unit value realization is the prime criteria considered by the importers while make the order with the exporter.

Keywords: Criteria, seafood, International trade, Sign test

INTRODUCTION

Criteria is the terms and conditions imposed by the traders before executing the trade in the market. It is mandatory for smooth flow of trade without having the problems. Criteria were not just framed like the mushroom in the rain. It is the long term process in the international trade and added gradually whenever needed, with the acceptance of various stakeholders in the foreign trade. Criteria have its own value in the international trade. In those days, international trade was involved with lot of fraud, issues, problems from the exporters and also importer side. For the purpose of eradicate and maintain the better relationship between the traders' criteria has been evolved.

In the seafood trade, criteria have been initiated by the importers and exporters also. But criterion from the importers side, place the highest importance in the trade, because they are the final deciding authority to make the trade with exporter or not. In addition with this, competition structure, demand in the market determines the criteria intensity level and also deciding person in the market. This paper highlights the intensity level of seafood importers criteria consideration form the exporter before placing an order.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Houcine Boughanmi et.al., (2007) made a study with the objective of identifying the key variables such as firm size and competencies, management characteristics, management perceptions and attitude and marketing strategies impact on the export performance at the firm level and frame the policy implication necessity to enhance the Oman fish exports. The results of the study revealed that the managers' educational level, previous work experience, commitment to export activities, diversification, availability of information about the foreign market of the variables significantly affect the export performance of seafood in Oman.

Jinghua Xie, Oystein Myrland (2010) pointed out a significant trend that consumers in Spain prefer to purchase the new light salted cod fillets to traditional salted cod. The cross price elasticity of Norwegian salted whole cod with respect to frozen light salted fillets is significantly positive. The study suggested that light salted fillets are a strong substitute for Norwegian salted whole cod. Strong substitution effects exist between the salted whole cod from Norway, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands. Norway holds the dominant share of exported traditional salted whole cod, but a strong challenge remains for Norwegian salted fish industry to maintain its position in the Spanish market.

Secretary SEAI (2011) said that the increase in the interest rate of packing credit offered to the seafood exporters was affecting their competitiveness and profitability. In the year 2011, the interest rate has gone up from seven percent to 11.25 percent. The sudden increase of packing credit surge in the interest of export credit affected the seafood industry very seriously. During the fiscal year, the sector has shown an uncomfortable growth rate of both in rupee and US Dollars. However the hike in the cost of export credit not only affects the export growth of seafood but also affects the dwindling of export figures thereby depriving the livelihood of the two million people from the most marginalized sector of Indian society.

Femeena Hassan et.al., (2012) argued that Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) are highly capital intensive, which cannot be borne by small seafood processing units. The costs of implementation of HACCP are realized from the market price of the product and it can be done in the export oriented units. Domestic fish marketing in India is constrained with inadequate infrastructure, limiting consumption to areas in the vicinity of landing centres. The HACCP plan based seafood cannot be purchased by low per capita consumers even though the particular consumers are highly quality conscious in their purchase decisions. The paper looked into the essential elements of implementation of HACCP plan and its cost applicability in the seafood industry. The study concluded that quality

control in seafood can be achieved by economic measures, rather than adopting high cost of international quality infrastructure. For achieving the quality, effective measures should be adapted from the capture of fish to the consumption stage.

Lorayne Meltzer and Jason Oliver Chang (2006) in their article described the historical development, seafood export status, ecological impact and management of the shrimp fisheries industry of Gulf of California. They found that over capitalization and over catching leads to raw materials unavailability are the prominent factors leading to struggle of seafood industry. The opportunities of the seafood industries are local ecosystems, strong export markets, technological development, and increasing consumption habit of the consumers, government support and competency of the management team of seafood companies.

Uma Shankar Singh and Bikash Ranjan Pratap (2013) carried out a research to find out the complication of export procedures and the importance of seafood production from Odisha with the sample size of 50 exporters. From the research findings of the study it is evident that, in India, Odisha has the higher export potential for the seafood, mainly for the reason of adopting modernized aquaculture production methods, demand in the international market and the government initiatives.

RESEARCH GAP

Seafood is the food extracted from the sea for the consumption of human beings. From the review of previous studies, numerous studies are conducted in the seafood export with the focus of export performance, credit facility and problems of the seafood. But the very limited studies only conducted in the field of criterion consideration of the seafood importers in the international study. So this study conducted with the objectives of fill the gap of previous studies with the importers criteria consideration in seafood export.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the criteria expected by the importers in the international seafood trade
2. To analyse the significant difference in the response of the respondents in the criteria consideration level of seafood.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is a significant difference in the responses of the respondents towards the criteria consideration in the international seafood market.

METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily based on the primary data. It is collected from the seafood exporters of Tamil Nadu by using the interview scheduled. Every seafood exporter is met separately and asked their response towards the cost involved in the seafood. Simple random sampling method is used to collect the 230 responses from the total population of 283 seafood exporters in Tamil Nadu. The total number of respondents list has been collected from the Marine Product Export Development Authority websites.

Sign test have been applied to test the hypothesis used in this study.

ANALYSIS

CRITERION EXPECTED BY THE IMPORTERS

In the international trade, the exporters do the sales contract before executing the contract. In the sales contract, importer is the key player to fix the criteria of export. The trade criteria refer to certain terms and conditions in order to make the smooth flow of trade between the exporters and the importers. The criteria demanded by the importers are mainly for the reason of pressure from customers, risk taking ability of importer and the country's legislative measures. Table 1 explains the criterion expected by the importers.

TABLE.1 Criterion Expected by the Importers

Sl. No	Criteria	<i>Definitely Considered</i>	<i>Might or Might not be considered</i>	<i>Not considered</i>	<i>Total</i>
1	Stringent quality standards	154 (66.95)	60 (26.08)	16 (6.95)	230 (100)
2	Quality packaging requirements	147 (63.91)	62 (26.95)	21 (9.13)	230 (100)
3	Safe Eco-labeling system	100 (43.47)	71 (30.86)	59 (25.65)	230 (100)
4	Unit value realization	222 (96.52)	8 (3.48)	----	230 (100)
5	Laboratory test	157 (68.26)	63 (27.39)	10 (4.34)	230 (100)
6	Certification from EIC	172	42	16	230

		(74.78)	(18.26)	(6.95)	(100)
7	Documentation languages	86 (37.39)	115 (50)	29 (12.60)	230 (100)
8	Credit facility	108 (46.96)	84 (36.52)	38 (16.52)	230 (100)
9	Varieties of seafood products	131 (56.96)	76 (33.04)	23 (10)	230 (100)
10	Responses from the exporters	197 (85.65)	20 (8.70)	13 (5.65)	230 (100)

Source: Primary data

As could be seen from Table 1 that, criteria like stringent quality standards, quality packaging requirements, safe eco-labeling system, unit value realization, laboratory test, certification from EIC, documentation languages, credit facility, varieties of seafood products and responses from the exporters are definitely considered by the importers. Unit value realization contributed high level importance and the documentation languages have contributed lower level importance in the criteria for consideration.

CRITERIA EXPECTED BY THE IMPORTERS - SIGN TEST

Importers expect certain criteria from the exporters while importing the seafood from them. The researcher has given ten criteria which is important in the seafood sales contract that is considered by the importer from the exporter. Each and every variable has its own significance. The opinion of the respondents about the criteria considered by the importer while exporting the goods from Tamil Nadu has the significant impact on the trade. In order to ascertain whether there is any significant difference in the responses of the respondents about the criteria considered by the importer from them, the sign test has been applied.

Sign test is one of the non-parametric tests in statistics. It can be used for the nominal or ordinal data. It requires less restrictive assumption concerning the level of data measurement. Moreover, for recording the number of responses of the respondents about the criteria considered while dealing with the export sales contract “+” sign is recorded if the respondent number of responses are as “definitely considered” for each statement framed for the study “-“ sign is recorded, if the respondents number of responses might or might not be considered for the statement. Using this procedure the number of respondents of all sample respondents are recorded in terms of “+” or “-“ signs. The numbers of respondents who have said that “not considered” are ignored while applying the sign test³.

This test can be applied for small sample cases ($n < 20$) and for large sample cases ($n > 20$). Here, “n” refers to number of respondents who responded to each criteria considered while dealing with the sales contract. Hence the following formula has been used to test the level of significance.

$$|Z| = (X - n \times p) / \sqrt{n \times p \times q}$$

Where, ‘X’ denotes the number of ‘+’ sign.

n= Number of respondents on ‘Definitely considered’ and ‘Might or Might not considered’.

$$p = q = 0.5$$

TABLE 2 CRITERIA EXPECTED BY THE IMPORTERS- SIGN TEST

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>No of + Sign</i>	<i>No of - Sign</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Result</i>
1	Stringent quality standards	154	60	214	6.42	Significance
2	Quality packaging requirements	147	62	209	5.88	Significance
3	Safe Eco- labeling system	100	71	171	2.21	Significance
4	Unit value realization	222	8	230	14.1	Significance
5	Laboratory test	157	63	220	6.33	Significance
6	Certification from EIC	172	42	214	8.88	Significance
7	Documentation languages	86	115	201	-2.04	Significance
8	Credit facility	108	84	192	1.73	Not significance
9	Varieties of seafood products	131	76	207	3.82	Significance
10	Responses from exporters	197	20	217	12.00	Significance

Source: Primary data

No of ‘+’ sign = Number of exporter responses “Definitely Considered”

No of ‘-’ sign = Number of exporter responses “Might or Might not be considered”

N= Number of responses of the respondents on “Definitely Considered” and “Might or Might not be considered”.

The null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between the numbers of respondents of the responses of each variable. It is clearly found from the Table 4.21 that the Z value is not within acceptable region of null hypothesis ($Z = -1.96$ to $Z = +1.96$) for nine factors and for one factor credit facility it is acceptable region of null hypothesis. Since the majority of the calculated value is not within the acceptable region for nine factors, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is significant difference between the responses towards the factors considered by the importers while ordering the

seafood from the exporters. The result of the sign test reveals that importers considered all the factors while importing the seafood from Tamil Nadu.

CONCLUSION

Seafood exports have the good scope in Tamil Nadu. The results of the study reveals that seafood importers give utmost important for all the criteria in the international seafood trade but among the criteria unit value realization is the important one in the seafood order. This research is useful for the stakeholders of the seafood trade such as importers, exporters, policy makers and so on.

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OF SONY ELECTRONICS: A CASE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Sony is an electronic giant with revenue of more than \$70Billion and a leader in innovation, but recently feeling the heat of disruptive changes in the competitive environment. Sony's principal business operations include Sony Corporation (Sony Electronics in the U.S.), Sony Pictures Entertainment, Sony Computer Entertainment, Sony BMG Music Entertainment, Sony Ericsson and Sony Financial Holdings.

Sony should focus its recruitment and selection on matching the capabilities and inclinations of prospective candidates against the demands and rewards inherent in the given job which is derived from the company's vision. Recruitment and selection lie at the heart of how businesses procure human resources required to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage over rivals. In the electronic industry, technological changes are rapid and product life cycles are short, the major source of competitive advantage will be the individual worker.

Sony encourages individual growth of employees as they follow a strategy of long-term if not life time employment. However taking into the realities of the corporate world and the recent changes company has moved away from ethnocentrism and now even its CEO recruit is an American. It's a visible sign that the recruitment and selection strategy at the company is changing. The company has understood the significance of work life balance and has designed a flexible working plan. There are a number of employee programs and policies in place at Sony designed to make employees feel valued and appreciated which in turn, amount to happy and motivated employees. However the proof of all these strategies will be reflected in the organizational outcome and this will reflect the capabilities of the existing system.

It is a counter-cultural worldview within Sony and involves changing the behavior of those leading Sony's fiefdoms. The central question is whether Sony can learn and adapt, and to sustain its competitive edge the organization must do so.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sony has traveled a long way ever since its inception and was respected in the industry as a very innovative company which was committed for the wellbeing of the employees and customer. Akio

Morita, the cofounder of Sony observed that “the most important mission for a Japanese manager is to develop a healthy relationship with his employees, to create a family like feeling within the corporation, a feeling that employees and managers share the same fate”. (Akio Morita, 1985, p 130) This statement explains why Sony was successful in its long years of operation. However as many big companies have faced Sony is also feeling the heat of disruptive changes in the competitive environment. There are many new comers in the music industry which has conquered the heart of customers as Sony did way back when it launched the ‘walkman’.

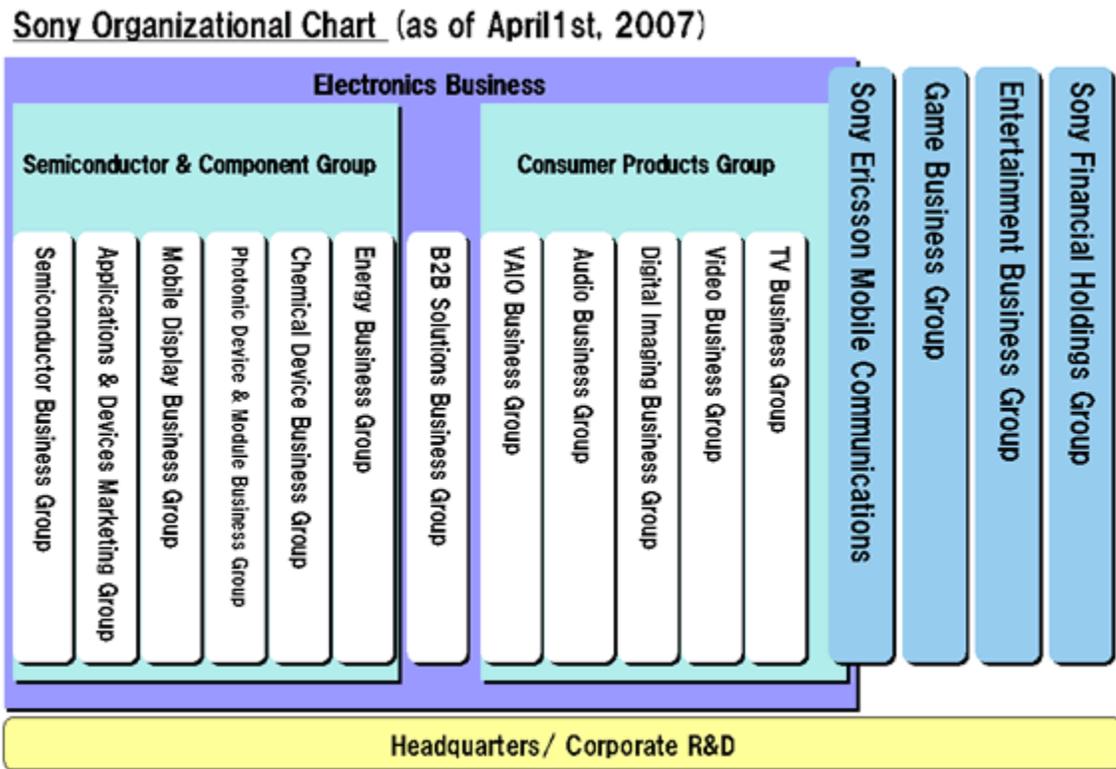
Hence it’s important to see to it that the company build around its vision and sustain its competitive advantage through continuous innovation. Recruitment and selection process will be the starting stage for this. This can help the company to screen the candidate and admit those candidates who are compatible with the vision and objectives of the company. There are many sources that Sony uses and one of the most encouraged sources is employee referrals for which the company gives incentives to the existing staff. Performance management and reward systems are comparable with the industry, however it need to be aligned with the over all objectives of the company.

In the third phase of this paper there is a discussion on learning, its importance in Sony as ‘Knowledge management’ it self is becoming a source of competitive advantage. The coming chapters of the assignment shall consist of employee recruitment and selection, performance management and reward system and importance of learning in the disruptive business environment.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE COMPANY

The Sony Group, based in Minato, Tokyo, Japan, is primarily focused on the Electronics (such as AV/IT products & components), Game (such as PlayStation), Entertainment (such as motion pictures and music), and Financial Services (such as insurance and banking) sectors (refer to exhibit 1). Not only the company represents a wide range of businesses, but they remain globally unique. Company’s aim is to fully leverage this uniqueness in aggressively carrying out the company’s convergence strategy so that they can continue to emotionally touch and excite customers.

Exhibit 1: Sony organizational chart



Sony has registered revenue of \$70.303 billion as of 2007. Sony is one of the leading manufacturers of electronics, video, communications, video games and information technology products for the consumer and professional markets. Sony's principal business operations include Sony Corporation (Sony Electronics in the U.S.), Sony Pictures Entertainment, Sony Computer Entertainment, Sony BMG Music Entertainment, Sony Ericsson and Sony Financial Holdings. As a semiconductor maker, Sony is among the Worldwide Top 20 Semiconductor Sales Leaders. Its slogan is Sony. Like no other.

Exhibit 2: Sony Corporation and Consolidated Subsidiaries

* U.S. dollar amounts have been translated from yen, for convenience only, at the rate of ¥118=U.S.\$1, the approximate Tokyo foreign exchange market rate as of March 30, 2007.



Sony makes a good case of analysis as it has registered its worst performance in the year 2006 and the human capital that Sony considers most valuable has to be reassessed and problems need to be unearthed.

3. STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Sony should focus its recruitment and selection on matching the capabilities and inclinations of prospective candidates against the demands and rewards inherent in a given job (Herriot, 1989). Recruitment and selection lie at the heart of how businesses procure human resources required to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage over rivals (Walker, 1992) and hence staffing positions, especially managerial posts, in organizations may well represent one of the most important human resource management functions. Plumbley (1985) suggests that the profitability and even the survival of an enterprise usually depends upon the caliber of the workforce and it has been argued that the costs of ineffectual commercial viability can often be attributed to decades of ineffective recruitment and selection methods. Hence it should be analyzed the actual reason of Sony's failure to sustain its competitive and innovative edge.

Much of the recent literature on personnel management has emphasized the necessity for the recruitment and selection of employees who are committed to the goals of the organization. Recent waves of organizational restructuring have dramatically changed and, in many cases, destroyed existing employment relationships. As traditional autocratic structures flatten and organizations utilize multidisciplinary teams to remain competitive, the need for strategic and transparent systems becomes paramount (Raghuram and Arvey, 1996). Hearty *et al.* (1997) suggest that, increasingly, many organizations are being transformed from structures that are built on functions and jobs, to those where focused, self-directed work teams, made up of empowered individuals with diverse backgrounds, are replacing traditional specialized workers. For example the systems in Nintendo was flexible and it helped organization to understand that the barrier to new consumers using video game systems was the complexity of game play, not the quality of existing graphics. Not only it was able to spot the opportunity but it has been able to compete against nonconsumption and create a significant growth business. It is a classic disruptive strategy. Burack and Singh (1995) highlight that firms need adaptable people who can adjust to rapidly changing customer needs and operational structures, while Pfeffer (1994) argues that employees, and the way they work, comprise the crucial difference between successful and unsuccessful organizations. Sony is an electronic company where in technological changes are rapid and product life cycles is short, the major source of competitive advantage will be the

individual worker. Krauthamer and Dorfman (1996, p. 49) further develop this view of the prevailing business environment and highlight that:

With the sweeping changes in today's business climate and the rise of reengineering to meet the needs of organizations in the area of downsizing or cost diminution, (search) firms must be equipped to recruit individuals who can operate in a non-structured or "virtual" organization. Even in today's technically advanced business environment, the human factor will always be instrumental to the success of an organization.

Furthermore, Terpstra (1996, p. 16) indicates that, as companies downsize, "delayer" and try to boost productivity with fewer people, those that remain are being asked to assume more tasks, roles and responsibilities. He proposes that, as this trend continues, companies will be asking fewer employees to know more, do more, change more and interact more and thus interest is increasingly focused on identifying the recruiting sources that are most likely to yield high quality employees and the selection methods that best predict future job performance. Arguments such as these have led Ripley and Ripley (1994) to suggest that the critical organizational concern today is the hiring or promoting of the best qualified people while still meeting all regulatory requirements.

Now let us consider this. Sony's competitor, Nintendo innovated in a different direction. It focused its effort on making game play significantly simpler and more intuitive. Nintendo's stock is up close to 50% this year, and its market capitalization has surged past Sony's market capitalization. Sony's video game unit recently reported losses of close to \$2 billion. Sony needs to catch up quickly, too. Nintendo's simple DS handheld system has similarly outpaced Sony's more sophisticated PlayStation Portable. (Christensen and Anthony, 2007) One solution could be investing in smarter people and linking the HR strategy to the Sony's goals and objectives.

3.1. Failures in the recruitment and selection process

A study commissioned by the IPD's Recruitment Forum (Kilibarda and Fonda, 1997) highlighted a number of common failings in the recruitment and selection process. Included among these failings were:

- no obvious link with HR strategy, resourcing strategy and broader business and organizational goals;
- use of referencing for short listing;
- unclear use of structured interview design and application;
- increasing use of invalid prediction methods;

- lack of widespread monitoring and lack of remedial action in those organizations that did monitor recruitment;
- Lack of validation of situation specific selection procedures.

These results are suggestive of an inability or unwillingness to appreciate the strategic imperative of effective recruitment and selection practices. Smith and Robertson (1993) argue for greater precision in recruitment and selection and caution that a company can be dragged to its knees by the weight of ineffective staff which decades of ineffectual selection methods have allowed to accumulate. Kilibarda and Fonda (1997) note that the problem of inefficiency may be as a result of a difficulty in distinguishing good practice from common practice. Should this be the case then the problem may lie less with the processes utilized and more with the traditional perception of what constitutes effective, valid recruitment and selection practices.

The traditional perspective on recruitment and selection assumed a rational framework, where the largely objective qualifications of the individual were matched to the requirements of the job (Judge and Ferris, 1994). The assumptions of the rational model imply that those making the decisions have real knowledge about the job, real knowledge about the applicants' job-relevant qualifications, can objectively compare these qualifications with the job demands and select the applicant with the best match. However, more recently, there is growing evidence to suggest that the notion of "fit" as it relates to suitability has assumed heightened significance in organizational settings. Chatman (1989) defines "fit" as the degree to which the goals and values of the applicant match those of individuals considered successful in the organization. Montgomery (1996, p. 94) further highlights this notion of fit as the key to job success:

More specifically, Ferris *et al.* (1991) identify the "organizational chameleon" as a corporate creature who embodies the perfect fit in terms of organizational demands for values, beliefs, attitudes and so forth, while Bowen *et al.* (1991) advocate that an organizational analysis be carried out prior to making staffing decisions to identify the dominant values, social skills, and personality traits required of potential job applicants. Such an approach challenges the rational model of recruitment and selection and brings into focus the "form versus substance" issue. According to Ferris and King (1991), the core of this problem is associated with the difficulties involved in distinguishing candidates who are truly qualified (i.e. substance) from those who simply construct images of qualifications and competence (i.e. form). This problem is compounded in a situation where candidates actively seek to alter and manage images of competence, with the result that the decision maker is attempting to hit a moving, rather than a stationary, target (Judge and Ferris, 1994).

Sony also has found problems with the batteries that are to be used in laptops and also there were security problems with its latest products. The flaw affects three models of Sony's MicroVault USB sticks with fingerprint readers. Although the spokesperson said that the models have now been discontinued, they are still available to purchase through several websites. The flaw was in software that came bundled with the USB devices. The program used virus-like techniques to create a hidden directory on a computer's hard drive. (BBC business report, 2007) Many of these problems are internal that could be rectified. Adkins *et al.* (1994) conclude that this requirement for “fit” encapsulates the congruence of the personality traits, beliefs, and values of the employee with the culture, strategic needs, norms and values of the organization and thus reinforces the necessity for greater empirical evaluation of the mechanisms employed to measure such characteristics.

3.2. Recruitment methods utilized

The company needs to align its mid-term corporate strategy when it develop an appropriate recruitment policy and finalize on the sources of new recruits. In line with its Mid-Term Corporate Strategy, announced in September 2005, Sony is pursuing restructuring and growth initiatives aimed at increasing its competitiveness and reinforcing its operating foundation. Restructuring initiatives—including the streamlining of business operations, the consolidation of manufacturing sites and the elimination of organizational and business process duplication to enhance the efficiency of administrative sections—have resulted in both the shift of employees to growth businesses and the reduction of head count. Top management sought to encourage the sharing of information and ensure understanding of the purpose and necessity for such structural changes by communicating with employees regarding the above initiatives. At Sony Corporation in Japan, an early-retirement program was introduced to facilitate the provision of economic assistance to retiring employees. In Europe, personnel were shifted from manufacturing cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions to liquid crystal display (LCD) and other flat-screen televisions following the termination of production of the former, and job adjustments were made with the closure and downsizing of manufacturing sites. In pursuing further restructuring initiatives, Sony continues to try to convey its objectives clearly as well as to promote appropriate dialogue with employees. (Sony and people; moving forward, Sony corporate website.)

Various organization characteristics are found to have some influence on the strategies employed by responding organizations. In terms of organization size, larger organizations are more likely to adopt a greater range of strategies than are their smaller counterparts. This is particularly so in terms of the use of those strategies that requires substantial resources, such as improving the market image of the organization, relocation, or increased pay.

Turning to the process of recruitment, the most immediate decision facing recruiters is whether to recruit internally from those already employed by the organization, or to source from the external labor market. The decision to access the internal labour market, (and here we perceive that an internal labor market exists to the degree that vacancies are filled from within the organization), brings with it a number of distinct advantages. It is cost effective, both in terms of eliminating the need for external advertising/sourcing and also in terms of reducing the induction or settling in period. It is also considered to be good personnel practice, for not only may it be viewed as a positive motivator by current employees, but the quality of the internal labor market is continuously upgraded and maintained through high quality recruitment, selection, promotion, career development and multiskilling. Sony encourages individual growth of employees as they follow a strategy of long-term if not life time employment. However, Cappelli (1995, p. 569) suggests that a number of infrastructural developments such as the proliferation of “headhunter” or placement firms, temporary agencies for part-time and contingent work and the growth of subcontracting, make it easier for organizations to rely on the outside labor market for securing skills. He further argues that demands for greater product/service innovation can often result in companies hiring skills from outside the organization and dropping employees with the obsolete skills to avoid carrying the associated costs:

An examination of the data relating to recruitment practices indicates that a broad spectrum of recruitment methods is being utilized to fill managerial vacancies. Perhaps the most commonly recognized recruitment method is the advertisement, at local or national level or through internet. Sony has a separate website that help the company to recruit employees i.e., <http://www.sonyglobalcareers.net/>. In the home page links to internship and other job links are clearly mentioned. The company also encourages employee referrals and who ever referrers employees and are getting selected, the company offers special incentives for them. Plumbley (1985) suggests that where advertising judgments are based on reliable and relevant factors, and where they are effectively communicated, external advertising serves as a powerful recruitment tool. In relation to explaining variations in staffing practices, country of origin is essentially used as a proxy variable to assess the impact of managerial values. This is based on the rationale that managerial preferences in HRM policy areas will closely reflect underlying managerial values associated with country of origin of the organization (Gunnigle *et al.*, 1997).

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND REWARD SYSTEM

Performance management involves building on the process of performance measurements, adding the relevant communication and action on the progress achieved against predetermined goals. (Bourne et

al, 2003) Simply put, performance management includes activities to ensure that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. Performance management can focus on performance of the organization, a department, processes to build a product or service, employees, etc.

Competition is becoming intense in the consumer electronic industry and product lines are moving closer together. With complacency setting in at Sony, resources became stretched too thinly, managers became less demanding and creativity was made over-complicated. Corporate culture had to change. Although the maverick spirit is still present, the company's growth has made it tougher to keep the old culture alive and healthy. The case of Sony questions whether efficiency and productivity really go hand in hand with creativity and innovation. The corporation is struggling to find a balance between the drive to stay innovative and the corporate need to not fall behind the competition in key markets. It must decide whether it is leading, following or simply standing still.

With a flat hierarchy, Sony has traditionally comprised arrogant, demanding managers, proud, headstrong engineers and free-thinking inventors. Fiercely independent business divisions were viewed as rivals, while product developers continually challenged engineers. Product planning meetings were based on creating demand, rather than researching it. Decision-making bordered on the reckless. This all point to a lack of managing performance of employees, in other words driving the employees towards obtaining from them what they are really capable of. This requires astute performance management at the organization. It would also help Sony to avoid complacency among its rank and file. Wright and McMahan (1992), drawing on Barney's (1991) resource-based theory of the firm, contended that human resources can provide a source of sustained competitive advantage when four basic requirements are met. First, they must add value to the company's production processes, and second, the skills that the firm seeks must be rare. Since human performance is normally distributed, all human resources meet both of these criteria. The third criterion is that the combined human capital investments a company's employees cannot be easily imitated. Finally, a company's human resources must not be subject to replacement by technological advances or other substitutes if they are to provide a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

Wright and McMahan's work points to the importance of human resources in the creation of company-specific competitive advantage. The issue is then whether companies can take advantage of this potential source of profitability. Bailey (1993) contended that human resources are frequently "under-utilized" because employees often perform below their maximum potential and that organizational efforts to elicit discretionary effort from employees are likely to provide returns in excess of any relevant costs. This may be also because of their failure to align to the organizational goals. Bailey

argued that HRM practices can affect such discretionary effort through their influence over employee skills and motivation and through organizational structures that provide employees with the ability to control how their roles are performed.

To make Sony a high-performance workplace, the company must take a strategic view and be clear about the objectives of the company, the costs of introducing the program, and the value of the new capabilities the program is expected to create (Hunter, 2002). HRM must assist in the connection of the external and internal environments of the company since competitive environment features rapid technological change and knowledge about the emerging environment is held, to an increasing extent, in the heads of people.

Understanding the importance of performance management and reward, Sony pictures, one of the subsidiaries of Sony has restructured its reward program by recruiting BBC's head of reward, Roger Fairhead, in the role of head of international compensation and benefits in June 2007. In his new role, Fairhead will be responsible for all Sony's operations outside the US. The company understands the significance of work life balance and has designed a flexible working plan. There are a number of employee programs and policies in place at Sony designed to make employees feel valued and appreciated which in turn, amount to happy and motivated employees. The company offers a stimulating, challenging and highly supportive work environment – exactly the kind of environment one would expect from a company with an outstanding reputation for exceptional quality and services.

4.1. Work/Life Balance initiatives at Sony

Work life balance (WBL) would create a healthy working environment, able to develop positive attitude towards employees' performance and leads to achieving organizational goals and objectives. Sufficient evidence could be found in the work of experts where in WLB efforts have been linked with higher job satisfaction, increased employee loyalty to the organization, and increased levels of employee commitment to the success of the organization as measured by employee commitment, retention, and productivity (Gover and Crooker, 1995)

Sony recognizes and respects employees' commitments outside of work. The company understands that today's employees look for employers that are compassionate and understanding to their personal quest for work-life balance. Not only the company firmly believes that this is absolutely necessary for health-related reasons, studies further show that a balanced employee means a more productive employee.

Needless to say, helping staff maintain a healthy work-life balance is a top priority. Sony has a number of family-friendly policies and programs in place to help achieve this. The company offers generous vacation policy plus floater days, compassionate sick leave policy, paid leaves of absences, flexible

work arrangements, Employee Assistance Program (covering a wide spectrum of issues), as well as health and wellness programs are all reflective of the company's commitment to achieving employee work-life balance.

4.2. State of the art technology and facilities

Hertzberg identifies work environment as a maintaining factor in his study, an absence of which can cause dissatisfaction. As the leader in the electronics industry, Sony employees are privy to the latest developments in the technology sector. Employees naturally thrive knowing they are part of a company that is setting industry trends and making technology history. The company facilities house state-of-the-art technology tools to help employees excel in their jobs. Head office employees enjoy wireless connectivity throughout the buildings, while warehouse staff work in modern facilities with all the latest technology aides designed to increase productivity.

4.3. Recognizing Success

The company puts a lot of emphasis and thought into recognition awards, which reward employees for loyalty to the company and for performance. Also recognized is community volunteerism, which feeds into company's commitment as a responsible corporate citizen. The most prestigious award, "Samurai" award, comes with \$5,000 in Sony bucks for recipients to spend at the Employee Store towards the purchase of extraordinary Sony products.

4.4. Total Reward program at Sony

When considering a new career opportunity, employees assess the full job offer package for a true indication of the real value of the position being offered. These days, an attractive base salary is simply not enough. Sony is well aware of today's increasingly competitive work environment, and has created a highly lucrative Total Rewards program to attract and retain employees.

Sony's approach to Total Rewards focuses on a variety of means to reward employees for their contribution to the organization. The company offers performance-driven pay, results driven bonus program, a comprehensive benefits program, professional development opportunities, and a work environment conducive to both professional and personal fulfillment. Sony expects a lot from the people who work there, but in return provides a supportive and challenging work environment for everyone. Simply speaking, the company hires outstanding people and reward them well for outstanding performance.

4.5. Competitive Base Salary

Sony only conducts annual salary reviews to ensure employees are paid in line (or in most cases, above) industry average rates. Along with keeping abreast industry salary averages, individual performance is assessed annually in order to fairly distribute raises and bonuses – particularly, to high achievers. The company lives by a pay for performance philosophy and as such, pay increases are tied into a merit-based pay system. This is one of the factors that Sony needs to reconsider. Performance management must be an on going exercise and shouldn't be an annual routine, because in a hyper competitive industry like electronics two years is pretty long.

4.6. Lucrative incentive plan

All employees are part of a corporate Incentive Plan which is in place to reinforce the company's key business goals of profitable sales growth. Performance is linked to business results, and incentives exist to reward the contributions towards key corporate objectives like revenue and market share growth, profitability and customer satisfaction. Company shall also introduce team based incentive plans along with individual and company wide plans so that it helps improve team work, which is considered essential in today's organizations.

4.7. Flexible Health & Dental Benefits

It's worthwhile to note that Sony has recognized the diversity of company's employees; hence flexible benefits are offered to provide full-time and part-time staff with the opportunity to tailor a benefits package best suited to individual needs. Employees choose from a variety of options that range from extensive coverage, to basic, or no coverage. Our benefits program covers Vision Care, Dental, Medical, Travel Insurance, Disability, Life Insurance, Alternative therapies and Accidental Death and Dismemberment coverage.

4.8. Pension Benefits

Sony's retirement plan is a valuable part of planning for a secure financial future. The company offers a defined contribution pension plan, whereby Sony provides a dollar for-dollar match for employee contributions to the plan (up to 5%). This plan has achieved good returns over its investment lifetime. To further help plan for retirement, employees can choose to have contributions automatically arranged through payroll deduction.

4.9. Professional Advancement/Development Opportunities

The company's size, growth, and global presence mean the people can take advantage of infinite career opportunities and new challenges. To help you grow, we provide cutting-edge technology, world-class

knowledge tools, extensive learning programs, and continuous counseling. Sony supports employee development and actively encourages opportunities for career advancement. The company offer tuition reimbursement, coverage for professional association membership fees, ongoing training opportunities to address work-specific and professional development needs, and a mentorship program.

The company also gives hefty discounts on Sony products (which can be paid for over a period of time interest-free), home and auto insurance discounts, group fitness membership rates, as well as discounted concert and entertainment tickets. Free parking and subsidized cafeteria meals are just one more way Sony employees save money. And if employees want to add even more dollars to their pocketbook, they could always participate in the Employee Referral Program.

Sony would be able to regain its focus once the employees are able to clearly understand the linkage between their effort and performance. This would help them to keep motivated to achieve the organizational objectives along with achieving the outcome they value highly, as is being clearly delineated in the expectancy theory of motivation. (DuBrin et al, 1989, p 374)

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sony, the electronic giant need to find the agility to keep the momentum going. The company has recently faced severe competition from Apple, as it crossed the industry boundary by launching iPod. If that is the case with Sony's music business, the gaming business is under pressure recently, as its competitor Nintendo launched a new gaming device which is easier to operate and cheaper. Hence it's important for the company to change with the changes in the environment to sustain its competitive advantage.

Strategic human resource management is systematically linked to the strategic needs of an organization, and aims to provide it with an effective workforce while meeting the needs of its members and other constituents in the society. In contrast to strategies, human resource departments also employ varying tactics periodically. Tactics are methods, procedures, or systems employed by human resource professionals to achieve specific strategies. It is important that human resource strategies and tactics be mutually consistent at Sony. Even the best-laid strategies may fail if they are not accompanied by sound programs or procedures. (Pfeffer J, 1994) For example, a strategy of attracting and maintaining a technically qualified and innovative workforce is unlikely to be successful unless accompanied by sound hiring and training and development procedures.

Organizations are operating in a dynamic environment, though the Human Resource Department may not be directly involved with the customers as the marketing department, however the goals of the HR

department is linked to the company vision and they are no more working in isolation. The vision of the company is to differentiate itself from others as could be observed in its new motto 'Sony. Like no other'. Human resource management, including selection of right employees who can live up to the vision of the organization needs to be hired. Once they are hired company must aim to retain the talent through appropriate performance management strategies.

Human resource (HR) managers who make no attempt to learn and adapt to changes in the global environment will often find themselves reacting rather than innovating. Such businesses will become uncompetitive and will fail. Competitive advantage has been described as the ability of one business to outperform other businesses because it produces desired goods or services more efficiently and effectively than its competitors (Jones and George, 2003). This business is superior in efficiency, effectiveness, innovation and responsiveness to its customers. Organisations are constantly seeking ways to use their resources more effectively and to improve efficiency to stay competitive. Walker (2004) suggests that competitive advantage is the goal of strategic thinking and the primary focus of entrepreneurial action. Management's vision and the organisation's future should motivate the managers to keep their competitive advantage. Therefore the organisation must offer value to its customers at a cost that produces economic performance superior to their rivals.

Learning must be made an on going process in the organization and the infrastructure must be built to facilitate faster learning and adaptability. The infrastructures that need to be carefully designed include the structure, culture, and communication that facilitate learning. Once the company is able to do it, it will be able to perform better in the market place and bring back the past glory of Sony under its great leader Akio Morita.

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**ONLINE SHOPPING ATTITUDE AMONG THE YOUTH: A STUDY ON
ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KARAİKUDI, SIVAGANGA DIST.
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ABSTRACT

Online shopping has become a new trend of shopping nowadays and is quickly becoming an important part of lifestyle. Due to wide spread internet access by people and e-commerce usage by traders, online shopping has seen a massive growth in recent years. Young people have been the majority shoppers online and thus this study finds out the attitude of youth towards online shopping. This particular paper attempted to find out whether there is any impact of five factors like internet literacy, gender, educational qualification, website usability and online product price on online shopping. The study was undertaken among the students of Alagappa University. The results of the study highlighted that there is a significant relationship of online shopping with gender, internet literacy, and online product price. Similarly the study also highlighted that there is no significant relationship of online shopping with education and website usability.

Keywords: Online Shopping, Website usability, Internet literacy, educational qualification

Introduction

The beginning of Internet era in India can be cited back to 1986 with the introduction of ERNET project startup email exchange program between national centre for software technology, Bombay and IIT Bombay. Since then India saw several levels of up-gradation, modifications and installation and different organizations set up their own website. ICICI bank became the first of its kind to launch online banking site in 1997. The visible presence of subscription base websites can be made from the subscription sites of thenewspapertoday.com and NaiDunia.com in 2001. Similarly in 2003, Air Deccan launched India's first online air ticketing site (Team CCDS). India now has 3rd largest Internet population in the world with 150 million Internet users, after China (at 575m) and the US (at 275m). At 150 million total Internet users, the Internet penetration in India remains at 12 per cent vs. 43 per cent in China and 80 per cent in the US. India has nearly 950 million mobile subscribers and close to 50 million or fewer than 6 per cent of these mobile subscribers access Internet via mobile handsets. Thus India has a huge prospect of online banking due to massive number of internet users.

Literature Review

In his study of internet shopping behavior of college of education students, tried to find out the role of familiarity and income and possession of credit card on online shopping. His results found out that that male students teacher are more familiar and have more positive attitude than female student teacher. Teacher students, who have more monthly income and have more internet self-efficacy have positive attitude and intension to shop online. Participants, who have credit card, have more familiarity and less anxiety concerning internet shopping.

The study of tried to find out the factors influencing students' attitudes towards online shopping in karaikudi through a five-level Likert scale self-administered questionnaire, which was developed based on prior literature. The multiple regression analysis demonstrated the most significant determinants of consumers' attitudes towards online shopping. The results indicated that utilitarian orientation, convenience, price, and a wider selection influenced consumers' attitudes towards online shopping.

In my study found out that the consumer factor, comprised of privacy, security and trust, time saving, ease of use, convenience, enjoyment provided by shopping, company reputation and tactility, was most significant for who intended to purchase online and who did buy online. The study of tried to find out the characteristics of online shopping adopters among university students and went further to unearth the reasons behind non-adoption and adoption of online shopping. The findings of the study revealed that there was a high level of awareness of online shopping but very low use of the same. Findings also showed that online shoppers were mostly male, most of them were aged 30 yrs and below and most earned higher incomes. Some of the reasons cited for non adoption of online shopping were concerns about financial security and discomfort in sharing of personal information online. Some of the reasons cited for adoption of online shopping were the ease of buying products from anywhere in the world, and the ability to choose from a wide variety of products.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of five factors like internet literacy, gender, educational qualification, website usability and online product price on online shopping on a specific group of population i.e. the students. As such the objectives are:

- To understand if gender has any impact on online shopping among the students.
- To understand if educational qualification has any impact on online shopping among the students.

- To understand whether internet literacy has any impact on online purchase among the students.
- To understand if product price quoted online has any impact on online shopping among the students.
- To understand whether website usability has any impact on online shopping among the students.

Methodology

Data collection and sample description A survey was conducted with target population as the students of Alagappa University, karaikudi, sivaganga district. With a structured questionnaire. A total of 200 responses were collected. Convenience sampling, which is one of the non probability sampling methods, has been used in this research because of ease of accessibility of the sample. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and chi square test for independence has been conducted to compute the findings. Hypothesis of the study Since the study relates with finding the relationship of gender, educational qualification, internet literacy, online product price and website usability with online shopping/purchase., hence the hypothesis of the study can be taken as

- 1. Ho: Online shopping has no significant relationship with Gender.
- 2. Ho: Online shopping has no significant relationship with educational qualification.
- 3. Ho: Internet Familiarity/Literacy has no significant relationship on Online shopping
- 4. Ho: Online Product price has no significant relationship with online purchase.
- 5. Ho: Website usability has no significant relationship with online purchase.

Analysis and Findings

Demographic Profile of the respondents Demographic profile has been obtained from the responses and it was found that majority of the respondents are in the age group of 20-35 years of age, which is obvious since the target population are the students. Gender wise 64% of the respondents are male and the rest are female. Education levels of the respondents are 7% under graduate, 91% are graduate and 2 % are post graduate.

Attributes of Online shoppers Out of total 200 respondent students it was found that 90.5% of the respondents do shop online and the rest 9.5% do not shop online. Among those students who shop

online, majority i.e.66.29% shop online monthly followed by 21.54% shop online occasionally followed by weekly and thrice a week. Among the student respondents who do not shop online were asked the reason of not purchasing online.

Majority of the respondents i.e.26.31% said that they highlighted their non-purchase of product online due to inability to touch the products, followed by 21.05% are not familiar with online purchase, 15.78% refer to product quality. Other reasons cited were privacy and security, shipment fees and non-interaction with shop assistants. Among those who shop online, time saving and 24/7 accessibility has been cited as the major benefit of online shopping. About what is shopped online, majority of the students responded about purchasing books which is 31.5 %, this may be since the target population are students.

This is followed by 20.5 %, who purchase apparel followed respectively by purchasing electronics and e tickets. 5.3 Hypothesis testing To test whether there is any relationship between gender and online shopping among the target group, the hypothesis being Ho: Online shopping has no significant relationship with Gender.

Gender and online shopping

Familiar and shop online	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	110	44	154
No	17	29	46
TOTAL	127	73	200

The calculated value of chi square is 18.14 which is greater than the table value 3.841 at 1 df and 5% level of significance and thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, online shopping has significant relationship with gender. To test whether there is any relationship between education and online shopping among the target group, the hypothesis being Ho: Online shopping has no significant relationship with educational qualification.

Educational qualification and online shopping Familiar and shop online

Familiar and shop online	Educational Qualification			Total
	10 +2 years of schooling	Graduate	Post Graduate	
Yes	12	140	2	156
No	2	43	1	46
TOTAL	14	183	3	200

The calculated value of chi square is 0.755 is smaller than the table value 5.991 at 2df and 5% level of

significance and thus the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, online shopping has no significant relationship with educational qualification.

To test whether there is any relationship between Internet literacy and online shopping among the target group, the hypothesis being H_0 : Internet Literacy has no significant relationship on online shopping.

Internet Literacy and online shopping

Familiar and shop online	Internet Literacy		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	146	8	154
No	10	36	46
TOTAL	156	44	200

The calculated value of Chi Square is 110.17 which is greater than the table value 3.841 at 1df of 5% level of significance and thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, Internet Literacy has significant relationship on online shopping.

To test whether there is any relationship between online product price and online shopping among the target group, the hypothesis being H_0 : Online Product price has no significant relationship with online purchase.

Online product price and online shopping

Familiar and shop online	Price listed is higher compared to traditional purchase		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	33	121	154
No	18	28	46
TOTAL	51	149	200

The calculated value of chi square is 5.83 which is greater than the table value 3.841 for 1df at 5% level of significance and thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, Online Product price has significant relationship on online purchase. To test whether there is any relationship between website usability and online shopping among the target group, the hypothesis being H_0 : Website usability has no significant relationship with online purchase.

Website usability and online shopping

Familiar and shop online	Website usability should be simple		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	83	71	154
No	31	15	46
TOTAL	114	86	200

The calculated value of chi square is 2.62 is smaller than the table value 3.841 at 1df and 5 level of significance and thus the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, Website usability has no significant relationship with online purchase.

Discussions and Implications

- ✓ Since majority of the respondents shop online, thus this fact can be beneficial for the corporate sector looking for promoting their brands and doing business over the internet. Majority of respondents shop online but still the respondents think the reason of not shopping online is due to inability to touch and see the product physically while shopping. It has been found that internet literacy has significant relationship on online purchase, thus proper care should be taken to promote internet literacy so as to promote online shopping.
- ✓ From the study it was found that online product price listing has significant impact on online purchase. Thus if online shopping is to be promoted then online price listing should be less compared to traditional market price listing. The online retailers need to provide more competitive price and variety of product to attract customers and encourage them to make purchase decision. It has also been found that website usability has no significant impact on online shopping, which means that ease of use of website has no impact on whosoever is internet literate and who shop online.
- ✓ Another finding was that there is no significant relationship between online shopping and educational qualification which means that qualification has no impact on online shopping whereas online shopping has significant relationship with gender. Hence e shopping companies should be distinct in addressing the needs of both male as well as female shoppers while promoting their brands or selling their product in online environment.
- ✓ The study observed that online shopping is in satisfactory level among the students of Alagappa University. Taking this as an example, if the e shopping companies try to concentrate on above recommendations then it will surely be able to increase the no of online shoppers as well as the frequency of online shopping among the students who are the majority online purchaser.

Limitations of the study:

As with most researches, this study has also some limitations. The sample size of the study, which consists of only 200 students, cannot be generalized and applied for general public. Again opinions are dynamic; hence, the results of the study based on the opinions are likely to differ. The above

mentioned study is carried out only in one particular university and the data of similar universities were not available for comparison, hence observations and results may not be applicable for any other universities. Again the result also depends upon the integrity of respondents in giving true and fair opinion and their level of knowledge in the subject under study. Both sample error and non sampling error may exist in the study and also biasness among the responses cannot be ignored.

Conclusion:

The study Conclude that , as online shopping depend on World Wide Web which has a global reach, hence a multi cultural, cross cultural research need to be undertaken to correctly understand the online shopping attitude. Empirical research could also be carried out to find out similarities and differences of online shoppers of different countries and compare between the perception, attitude and purchase behavior of the shoppers. Future researches can also be carried out to find out comparison on online shopping attitude among students based on difference of subject stream like professional or non professional courses, arts, science and commerce etc.

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