

A Conceptual Model of Intrapreneurship, Sustainable Collaboration and Sustainable Human Capital Triggering Green Innovation Adoption in the Hotel Industry in Thailand

โมเดลจำลองภาวะผู้ประกอบการ ความร่วมมือและทุนมนุษย์ด้านความยั่งยืนในการกระตุ้นการสร้างนวัตกรรมสีเขียวในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมในประเทศไทย

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Abstract

This study proposes a conceptual model to investigate the role of intrapreneurship in green innovation adoption in the hotel industry in Thailand. Diversified definitions and determinants of adoption are reviewed and integrated in order to determine the possibility of understanding sustainability and innovation at an organizational level, especially in terms of sustainable collaboration and human capital. More importantly, it is proposed that intrapreneurship serves as an internal initiative of the firm to develop its capabilities to implement a sustainability strategy, thereby actualizing green innovation in the organization.

Keywords : intrapreneurship, sustainable collaboration, sustainable human capital, green innovation adoption

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์ศึกษาภาวะผู้ประกอบการนวัตกรรมสีเขียวขององค์กรในภาคอุตสาหกรรม โรงแรม โดยพิจารณาจากบริบทของนวัตกรรมและความยั่งยืนในด้านต่าง ๆ ขององค์กร เช่น ความร่วมมือด้านความยั่งยืนและความยั่งยืนในการบริหารทุนมุนุษย์และที่สำคัญที่สุดคือ ภาวะผู้ประกอบการภายในองค์กร เช่น ภาวะผู้ประกอบการในตัวพนักงานหรือลูกจ้างในองค์กรจะทำงานประสานความร่วมมือด้านความยั่งยืนกับลูกค้าหรือผู้ค้าร่วมและความยั่งยืนในการบริหารทุนมุนุษย์ โดยปัจจัยสำคัญต่าง ๆ ดังกล่าวมีอิทธิพลต่อความสามารถขององค์กรในการสร้างความยั่งยืนด้านนวัตกรรมสีเขียวให้เกิดขึ้นอย่างแท้จริง ในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมในประเทศไทย

คำสำคัญ : ภาวะผู้ประกอบการ ความร่วมมือด้านความยั่งยืน ความยั่งยืนด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ ความยั่งยืน ด้านนวัตกรรมสีเขียว

Introduction

Green Innovation Adoption

From a conventional perspective, innovation refers to any new idea, practice, or object that is available for adoption by any individual or group of people (Rogers, 1995). Innovation adoption, hence, is the decision to use innovative products or services that aim to improve processes, techniques, and systems that will take on various forms and appearances (Weng et al., 2015). The impact of innovation on society and the economy as a whole is huge. Thus, many countries and companies are actively investing in innovative activities. Along with this trend, the call for sustainable development through green innovation has become mainstream. Green innovation, which is also called environmental innovation or eco-innovation in the literature, is different from conventional innovation since these are new and modified processes, systems, practices, or products that accordingly contribute to environmental sustainability (Oltra & Saint Jean, 2009) and reduce environmental harm (De Marchi, 2012). In other words, green innovations are innovations that are crucial in promoting and maintaining sustainable development (Frondel et al., 2007; Dai et al., 2015; Marcon et al., 2017; Melander, 2017). For instance, enhancing a product's characteristics by modifying its design to make it more energy efficient, recyclable, and environmentally friendly (Amores-Salvadó et al., 2014) is what constitutes green innovation. Therefore, green innovation refers to technological innovation in environmental practices that upholds pollution prevention, waste reduction, and energy saving mechanisms (Chen, 2008; Kong et al., 2016) that can lead to a cleaner and safer world (Berrone et al., 2013).

In the service context, eco-innovations include practices within the service industry that help reduce consumption of utilities such as water and electricity resources (Chen & Chai, 2010). This green service innovation contributes to making a company's operations more environmentally friendly and sustainable (Moyano-Fuente et al., 2018). This is especially true in the hospitality industry, where consumption of these resources is so huge and important that finding ways to reduce their cost and use through green innovation would not only be beneficial to the company but to the environment as well. However, research on green innovation and economic performance is currently inconclusive, so the primary goal of this study is to investigate the impact of green innovation on the economic capacities of hotels (Weng et al., 2015).

Hotel Industry in Thailand

Thailand is a popular destination for tourists, attracting millions of visitors from around the globe every year. Since 2015, Thailand has seen a rising influx of visitor arrivals (Statista, 2020), and the majority of these visitors chose to stay in hotels. Recent studies indicate that consumers are becoming increasingly strident about businesses' responsibility to preserve and conserve the environment in which they operate. However, there is still a lack of studies about the environmental management practices that are adopted in hotels. Hence, this present study focuses on how efficiency in environmental practices through green innovation adoption has impacted the hotel industry in Thailand. The global COVID-19 crisis is still critical, and many countries have seen new outbreaks, which have hit the alternative accommodation industry as hard as the hotel industry (Krungsri.com). Yet, in order to effectively address the changing consumer needs, the hotel industry in Thailand needs to consider moving their businesses to be more sustainable through 1) greater adoption of modern technology, 2) operators' need to analyze the varied consumer needs in the market, and 3) operators' need to pay greater attention to health and hygiene standards (Krungsri Research, 2021).

The hotel industry is an examination of how to encourage the adoption of sustainable management practices in the larger tourism industry, as hotels serve as the main sector that creates environmental initiatives to improve their resource and energy-efficiency activities. From 2013–2019, among the various environmental issues in Thailand's hotel industry, managerial influence on environmental management was rarely addressed, and most of the research focused on the manufacturing industries (Hutchinson, 1996; Montabon et al., 2007; Eltayeb et al., 2010). Thus, this present study was conducted to address this issue.

Factors Triggering Green Innovation Adoption by Hotel Industry

Various factors have been found to affect the adoption of green innovation, and it is largely dependent upon which industry it is adopted in. In the hospitality and tourism industries, green innovation refers to the new and modified services and practices that are offered by industry stakeholders that promote sustainable consumption and production (Beise & Rennings, 2005). This is achieved through corporate social responsibility (CSR) and good financial performance (Miroshnychenko et al., 2007; Liou & Sharma, 2012; Singal, 2014; Aragon–Correa et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016). The potentials of intrapreneurship, sustainable collaboration, and sustainable human capital are investigated in this study to determine their impact on fostering green innovation adoption in the hotel industry because the new era of green innovative practices (e.g., recycling, reusing, eco–design, etc.) helps eliminate global environmental disasters while also saving energy and natural resources and controlling the negative effects of global warming on resource coherence. The hospitality and service industries, including the hotel industry, often struggle to understand how they can implement sustainability in a more meaningful way, as green innovation adoption is a relatively new form of corporate strategy. This present study, however, focuses on the contemporary hotel business and accordingly reviews innovation literature related to the industry as it poses greater sustainability awareness and has an imminent impact on its business performance and competitive advantage (Cheng et al., 2014).

Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship is defined as an entrepreneurial employee inside an organization, whether doing individual or teamwork, with the goal of helping the company achieve success (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Maes, 2003; Serinkan et al., 2013). The person in reference here should have the ability to be proactive, take risks, and be autonomous with a good sense of self-awareness and responsibility that helps spur the company's growth (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Maes, 2003; Serinkan et al., 2013). Thus, it is important for the firm to create the entrepreneurial mindset and infrastructure that are needed to support helpful transformation in the company within the innovation framework (Alpkhan et al., 2010). This points to intrapreneurship being delegated to provide an environment to support and sustain innovation over time.

Sustainable Collaboration

Sustainable collaboration is defined as the interdependence and networking among business partners and stakeholders towards the shared goal of finding sustainable solutions to environmental problems that aptly comply with environmental regulations and laws (Carter & Rogers, 2008). In the hospitality industry, many larger tourism companies and

hotels are taking formal steps to restructure their management by enforcing sustainable environmental operations that include reduction of water and energy consumption, implementation of proper waste disposal and treatment systems, among other necessary resources to gain a competitive advantage. As the hotel industry changes to this sustainable collaboration, it is anticipated to have a greater impact on the habits and practices of their guests, employees, and suppliers (Sintunawa, 2002). It encourages everyone to jointly eliminate materials that are hindering the greening activities of the hotels and, consequently, practice sustainable consumption (Gray & Stites, 2013; Aboelmaged, 2018b).

The Role of Sustainable Human Capital in Green Innovation Adoption

Sustainable human capital is represented by five items that relate to employees' sustainable productivity: environmental protection, environmental competence, teamwork, cooperation, and managerial support (Chen & Chang, 2013). In other words, sustainable human capital demonstrates the critical capability of an individual in relation to his environmental orientation related to his actions, attitudes, skills, experience, commitments, and knowledge (Huang & Kung, 2011). As Triguero et al. (2013); Scarpellini et al. (2017) explain, the tangible and intangible assets, skills, and knowledge of environmentally trained managers and employees may enhance eco-innovative entrepreneurship and green product design, and they can also be proactive in generating new ideas and developing them into green solutions (Chen et al., 2006).

Proposition

This present study proposes two main broad research questions, which are derived from the review of literature related to the variables under investigation:

1. Do intrapreneurship, sustainable collaboration, and sustainable human capital matter in green innovation adoption?
2. What is the role of intrapreneurship in promoting sustainable collaboration and developing sustainable human capital?

This present study contributes to existing literature in terms of first, exploring the green innovation outcome of intrapreneurship in hotel organizations, which has not been sufficiently investigated thus far. Through the entrepreneurship orientation, hotel employees' intrapreneurship tendencies are investigated in relation to their green innovation practices. Second, prior studies have not mainly investigated the effects of green innovation through sustainable collaboration, which influences the broader habits and practices of their guests,

employees, and suppliers. This present study intends to investigate sustainable collaboration by looking into the habits of the employees, guests, and suppliers. Third, based on the theory of SHC, this present study explores the mediating effect of SHC towards green innovation, which is an important yet unexplored path in the hotel industry in Thailand.

Literature Review

The Challenge of Intrapreneurship

One way to understand intrapreneurship is to review its multidimensional structure (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999; Dess et al., 2003), which is characterized by four factors such as: 1) new business venturing; 2) product/service innovativeness; 3) process/technology innovativeness; and 4) self-renewal. The four factors have been found to match each other as well as the future expectations of the organizations' performance (Antoncic & Antoncic, 2011). Consequently, it was noted to have an association with autonomy (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

Sharma & Chrisman (1999) argued that intrapreneurship can be achieved through corporate entrepreneurship with the use of either individual or group efforts. Theories on intrapreneurship tend to relate it to corporate entrepreneurship or corporate venturing, but with the emphasis on its four characteristics. In this present study, however, intrapreneurship is treated as the renewal or innovation that is applied to business processes through new products or pioneering services that improve the company's operational activities (Miles & Covin, 2002). Thus, the main aim of intrapreneurship is to drive green innovation through sustainable collaboration and the investment of human capital that facilitates the promotion and instigation of green business activities in organizations. Therefore, this study proposes the following proposition:

Proposition 1 : Intrapreneurship has a positive influence on green innovation adoption.

Intrapreneurship and Sustainable Collaboration

In general, intrapreneurship is considered in order to encourage a firm's development of a new way to find business solutions and create an opportunity for the firm to expand. Intrapreneurship initiates overall operational practice through new innovative processes that encourage employees to proactively take innovative actions to address issues and concerns inside the organization (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001). Others, however, consider this risk-taking. Thus, in order for sustainable development to prosper in large organizations, collaboration

must be concentrated along with company policy and people accordingly so that they can successfully work together (Crowley, 2000; Feinberg & Gupta, 2004; Clark et al., 2006; Florin et al., 2007; Kegler & Swan, 2011). In this scenario, the following proposition is proposed:

Proposition 2 : Intrapreneurship has a positive influence on sustainable collaboration.

Intrapreneurship and Sustainable Human Capital

Several recent studies argue that human resources want to comprehensively communicate to people's minds the company's sustainability efforts and the frameworks that relate to the company's sustainability plan and sustainability practices. Modern organizations with sustainability development goal policies have already attested that the overall success of sustainability strategies is mainly caused by people's behavior within the organization and their emotions and actions towards innovation (Sukalova & Ceniga, 2020). In other words, human capital management is one of the organizational strategies that is strongly influenced by the organization's work environment and employee behavior and the significant shift in innovation (Tseng et al., 2018), which then leads to green innovation adoption. Therefore, we propose the proposition below:

Proposition 3 : Intrapreneurship affects sustainable human capital.

Sustainable Collaboration and Green Innovation Adoption

Sustainable collaboration is derived from relational theory and views inter-organizational linkages between firms as a key source of competitive advantage (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Although partnerships can involve both internal and external organizations, such as industry supply chains, alliances between private firms and the government, or a group of companies in the same business lines, partnership cooperation will improve collaboration in implementing and promoting a company's sustainability strategy (Zhu et al., 2008). This collaboration will earn the company better prospects in sustainable development as suppliers' and customers' environmental practices help achieve better outcomes (Bonn, 2016) and help create the firm's value through practices that correspondingly instigate positive influences on the green innovation of the firm. This study, therefore, perceives green innovation adoption through the following proposition:

Proposition 4 : Sustainable collaboration positively influences green innovation adoption.

Sustainable Human Capital and Green Innovation Adoption

There has been a research gap identified in past studies with regards to the relationship of sustainable human capital to green innovation. As is usually a part of company practices, employees who have environmental consciousness and who work harder to help attain company goals are accordingly rewarded with some benefits from the company (Triquero et al., 2013; Scarpellini et al., 2017). In this case, companies that find these pro-active employees with high awareness of sustainable processes are drawn out with new ideas to solve problems within the organization (Chen et al., 2006). Recently, most enterprises in Thailand have increased their innovation efforts in order to be pioneers of green innovation adoption among intangible assets (Triquero et al., 2013; Scarpellini et al., 2017), such as the Centara Hotel & Resorts Group, which followed and enacted a sustainability development growth policy (Centara Group, 2020). Therefore, sustainable human capital is one way of creating the firm's value through partnership measures, which positively influence green innovation adoption. Thus, with this statement, the following proposition was developed:

Proposition 5 : Sustainable human capital positively influences green innovation adoption.

Research Methodology

To develop the conceptual framework of this present study, secondary data and previous studies were reviewed and carefully gathered in order to establish a solid theoretical foundation. To attain the research objectives, this present study starts by ensuring that the hotel industry in Thailand has properly transitioned from its resource-driven activities to more sustainable and innovative growth through sustainable human capital and sustainable collaboration. Therefore, a well-designed questionnaire was distributed among the hotels' employees in Thailand in order to investigate their participation in these sustainable initiatives.

Conceptual Framework

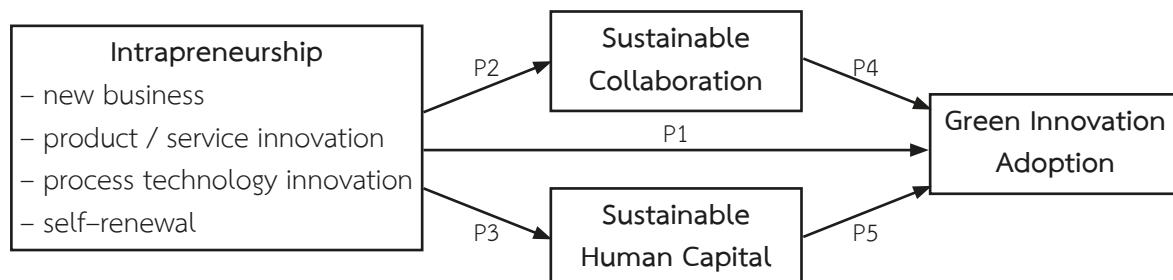


Figure 1 : Proposed Conceptual Framework

Source : Adopted from Antoncic & Hisrich (2001); Saudi et al. (2019)

Even though recent trends show that green innovation adoption is now becoming mainstream, especially in the hotel industry, there is still much confusion as to the driving forces that make sustainability strategies successful. In this present study, the contentions of Antoncic & Hisrich (2001), Antoncic & Antoncic (2011), and Saudi et al. (2019) were taken into consideration, who stated that intrapreneurship within a corporation will help increase its entrepreneurial orientation and corporate entrepreneurship, which apparently has a significant impact on the organization's future performance. This statement highlights how the success of green innovation adoption in firms is achieved through sustainable collaboration (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Zhu et al., 2008) and sustainable human capital (Huang & Kung, 2011; Macerinskiene & Survilaite, 2011; Pawliczek et al., 2015; Lakner et al., 2019), as shown in Figure 1.

The researcher expects that a positive association exists between intrapreneurship and the mediating variables of sustainable collaboration (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Zhu et al., 2008) and sustainable human capital (Pawliczek et al., 2015; Lakner et al., 2019). Previous research has demonstrated that firm commitment and trust in new ideas have an impact on the firm's ability to initiate a sustainability transition (Chen, 2008; Kong et al., 2016; Huang & Li, 2017). In terms of human capital management, the company's HR department should be able to reduce the perceived risks, control employees' resistance to change, and create sustainability knowledge for employees through the encouragement of a sustainability mindset (Chen & Chang, 2013; Scarpellini et al., 2017).

Discussion and Conclusions

It is important for the hotel industry in Thailand to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between intrapreneurship and sustainability since it drives the industry's adoption of green innovation. This understanding helps improve the industry's efficiencies in its operations since hotels function in a different scenario from other industries. This present study proposes that making sustainability the core value of a business will accordingly increase the firm's value. A survey on sustainable collaboration and sustainable human capital in small-to-large-sized hotels in Thailand was conducted in order to investigate these phenomena. The focus is to particularly put individuals in organizational units in order for them to initiate intrapreneurship activities through product or service innovation, process technology innovation, and self-renewal, which then help attain the firm's goal of sustainable development. The data collected tracked resource challenges in

hotels that relate to minimizing resource waste, creating environmentally friendly product designs, considering time efficiencies in operations, and transforming products through recycling procedures, which are expected to influence sustainability management practices in the future.

Currently, the focus of most hotels is on their technical competencies in order to operate successfully on their international assignments. However, the concept of sustainability collaboration and sustainability human capital cross-cultural management has received scant attention. Apart from Green Business in Thailand in the 2013 Bangkok Conference that focused on green innovation, the researcher expects that the significance of sustainability collaboration and sustainability human capital in pursuing green innovation adoption may help organizations to achieve sustainable development and, in so doing, create a culture of sustainable change.

Furthermore, literature on intrapreneurship encourages employees to adopt sustainability knowledge and be open to change in order to improve existing environmental conditions. In addition, some authors have suggested that the integrated model of employee behavior, which supports top management decisions on collaboration and efficient use of human capital, surely aids in initiating sustainable change in the organization. Finally, the expected result of this present research has important significance for the sustainability development of hotels in Thailand through product and service innovation as well as process innovation. The conclusion of most previous studies tends to encourage process innovation, product innovation, and innovative capacity (as employee-driven innovation at work).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

As with other research, this study also encountered certain limitations. First, as the tourism industry in Thailand ranks high in the world, sustainable development in hotels shows the greatest negative influence on the environment due to their unsustainable physical structures and services. Second, sustainable human capital (SHC) practices in hotel operations may take time to affect the firm's green innovation, which largely depends on the sustainability strategy implemented in the organization. Third, there are some limitations on technological innovations in the hospitality industry, such as networking infrastructure, new technology and information systems, business alliances, capital and knowledge sharing, and employee capability, among others.

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