

**Need Satisfaction Management Strategies:
Motivating Designers in Mainland China**

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Abstract

Creative industries emphasize human creativity and intellectual abilities. Studies found that most organizations in China's creative sector failed to establish appropriate motivation strategies that are conducive to creative performance. This study is a cross-disciplinary study, which investigated the organizations' management and designers' behaviour in China's creative industries with mixed methods to answer the research questions. The results lead to a deeper understanding of designers' needs for motivation and a tangible motivation model for business management to imply. A conceptual framework has been developed as the basis of this research. 41 in-depth interviews were conducted for collecting information about the current motivation methods in China's creative industries, and their effectiveness. These interviews also revealed the actual needs of designers through finding out their preferred motivators. 396 valid online questionnaires were received from managers and designers to further measure the perceived priorities of the motivators found in the in-depth interviews. The results indicated the current motivation methods focused on extrinsic motivators, while designers in China valued both extrinsic motivators like monetary rewards; and intrinsic motivators like recognition. It also revealed the current management strategies are less effective in motivating designers. It discovered that management strategies in China's creative industries are lack awareness about their designers' needs. This investigation leads to the discussion about the immature ecosystem of the creative industries in China and its influence on their development. This research is an original study, which identified the key motivators of designers in China and formed a model as advice to the management. enriched knowledge of the behaviour and management of designers in China. The management and policymakers in creative industries can also benefit from this understanding and gain a better insight into motivating creative employees through appropriate motivation strategies.

Introduction

Creative industries have benefited the economic development in China since the government began to establish it in 2006. Unlike in conventional industries, creative industries consider human intelligence and creativity as the core resources (DCMS, 2001). Designers' creative performance helps to generate new ideas and solutions, as well as grasp new opportunities, which can solve organization's complex problems and directly affect the success of the industries (Calabretta & Gemser, 2017; Wrigley et al., 2020). However, studies have revealed many challenges in this development journey (Zhang, 2015).

Keane (2009) claimed that Mainland China misunderstands the concept of creative industries and treats it as cultural industries, that involved less originality, but it improved the existing cultural product (Keane, 2009).

While studying the management of creative industries in China, Zhang (2015) found the significant phenomenon is that designers in China do not have the self-initiative to pursue creative achievement. The reason behind may be related to the inappropriate management approaches they are using to enhance the creative performance of their workers (Zhang, 2014). To effectively motivate their designers, companies need to understand the need for creative talents and revise their management strategies. However, while reviewing related studies from 2006 to 2020, a few empirical studies concerned with the motivation of designers in Mainland China. Most of the studies focus on describing the phenomenon, instead of empirical research, which are insufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of this topic.

For these reasons, this study was designed to investigate the strategies in motivating designers in China's creative industries. The investigation starts with identifying the current motivation methods organizations in China are using. Then, it further explores the motivators needs by designers, as well as the relative importance of such motivators. The results were described in a conceptual model, which could be a suggested appropriate management tool for motivating designers in China.

The issues described above lead to the research questions of this study:

RQ 1: How do organizations in China's creative industries motivate their designers?

RQ 2: What are the preferred motivators for designers in China's creative industries, and what is the relative importance of each motivator?

RQ 3: How do designers in China's creative industries perceive the effectiveness of current motivation methods?

Theoretical framework development

Need satisfaction in motivation studies

When motivation is considered as a psychological process between the environmental influences and performance, this process starts with the intention of need satisfaction. Pritchard and Ashwood (2008) assert that ‘we behave in ways that we expect will satisfy those needs. Needs are like magnets that create an internal force to satisfy them’ (Pritchard & Ashwood, 2008, p. 6). For instance, people act on their basic needs every day, such as eating to satisfy hunger. In other words, the actions and the effort people put in are determined by whether completing the action can satisfy their needs or not.

The determination of action taking is a complicated process and needs are rather individual and situational. In work-related research, scholars usually treat need as an individual difference variable. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested three basic psychological needs for intrinsic motivation in the Self-determination theory (SDT). They are *the sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness*. Herzberg (1987) developed two sets of factors: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are the primary cause of satisfaction and can bring happy feelings or good attitudes to employees. Motivators intrinsically come from within the task itself and include *recognition, achievement, the possibility of growth, advancement, responsibility, and the work itself*. Hygiene factors are the primary cause of unhappiness at work, and they can lead to negative employee attitudes. It includes *salary, supervision, company policy and administration, working conditions, factors in one’s personal life, status, job security, and interpersonal relationships with supervisors, subordinates, and peers* (Tietjen & Myers, 1998; Herzberg, 1987).

David McClelland (1987) identified three motivational needs in the workplace: *the need for achievement, the need for authority and power, and the need for affiliation*. Amabile and her colleagues (1994) developed a self-assessment scale to measure one’s perception of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for a task. It includes five intrinsic motivation elements and five extrinsic motivation

elements. The intrinsic elements are *self-determination, competence, task involvement, curiosity, and interest*. The extrinsic elements are *evaluation concerns, recognition concerns, competition concerns, focus on money and other tangible incentives, and focus on the dictates of others* (Amabile et al. 1994). These theories broke down the need satisfaction process into clear and operatable motivators.

Up-to-date management style needed for creativity.

The designers' performance highly relies on the creative value they added to their design (Giacomin, 2017). Studies claim that motivating designers is different from motivating generic workers. According to Amabile's explanation of creativity, children are most willing to perform creativity from their intrinsic motivation as they are curious and impulsive, but their creativity is always being stopped by the intervention of adults (Amabile, 1985). It is for this reason that Bilton and Puttnam (2007) claimed, 'if intrinsic motivation is the key to creativity, then external interventions will be at best irrelevant and worst damaging to the creative process' (p. 73). Creativity theories give special attention to intrinsic motivation (Bilton & Puttnam, 2007). Intrinsic motivation has abilities in encouraging 'exploration, persistence, flexibility, spontaneity, and creativity' (Dewett, 2007, p.197). Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000) assert that 'the intrinsic motivation is believed to be a primary driving force behind the creative process' (Sansone & Harackiewicz 2000, p.73).

Amabile and her colleagues (1994) have conducted a study on individuals and organizational creativity using the work preference inventory (WPI) to predict and measure the scale of creativity. The study results prove that higher intrinsic motivation results in higher creativity, while extrinsic motivation causes lower degrees of creativity (Amabile et al., 1994). The argument is that extrinsic motivation might steer workers away from finding the most creative solution for a task and lead them to focus only on gaining the targeted rewards (Stenmark, 2000). Amabile asserts that intrinsic motivation helps people discover problems they are interested in solving. With this interest, people are more willing to

stay involved and spend more effort investigating. This means creative solutions are more likely to be obtained (Runco, 1994; Amabile, 1996). The task involvement generated through intrinsic motivation can help people be more consistently creative than extrinsic motivation can (Amabile, 1985). This may be the reason why the rigid management style in conventional manufacturing industries is inapplicable to the management of design-related industries, especially, a highly standardized management style would not work for creative and design tasks (Bucolo et al., 2012; Zhang, 2015).

Effective motivators for designers

For motivation in the workplace, influential needs are considered motivators. In 1977, Izard stated that the intrinsic motivation for people exploring novel ideas comes from their interests (Moneta, 2004). Motivators like *sheer pleasure* and *enjoyment of the task* are said to be able to enhance creativity potential and motivate people to engage in the creative activity (Collins & Amabile, 1999). *Autonomy* has also been mentioned as one of the factors that foster creativity in the workplace. *Autonomy* is important because employees are usually required to follow instructions at work, but when they are empowered to a degree of freedom and ownership of their work, they can explore and expand their idea to a wider range of possibilities (Hennessy & Amabile, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 1987; Dewett, 2007). Although intrinsic motivation has dominated studies between creativity and motivation. Many studies continue to investigate the effect of various extrinsic aspects on creativity and work performance, especially in the organizational management field. Scholars argued that creative performance can still be motivated when extrinsic motivation is internalized to become intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Kanfer et al., 2012). For example, when a supervisor praises the work of a creative employee, that employee may internalize the praise into a sense of accomplishment, leading them to work harder (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). *Job promotions* are a typical extrinsic reward, but when employees get promoted, they may gain *a sense of accomplishment* that satisfies their *need for competence*. In other

words, the extrinsic reward is internalized and becomes self-determination, which motivates the employees to work harder in the coming tasks. Therefore, although many studies find that intrinsic motivators work better in motivating designers, both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation may be useful.

Motivating Chinese designers

Motivation is a popular topic in organization studies, and many scholars have developed motivation theories, which detail how different motivators affect motivation. However, the effects of these motivators may not be universal. Culture and the environment of the region could influence motivation. Designers in western countries may have different needs and perceived motivators than designers in eastern countries. Established motivation theories might not apply to situations in other regions. Some scholars tried to address this issue and compare the motivation of people from eastern and western countries, such as the United States and Mainland China (Burton et al, 2015; Fisher and Yuan, 1998). The results show that people could be motivated by different motivators under different social, cultural, and economic environments. For instance, *interest* and *appreciation* could have positive effect significantly on American employees than Chinese employees (Fisher and Yuan, 1998); *belongness* and *monetary rewards* work better among Chinese employees (Jackson & Bak, 1998). Therefore, the investigation of motivation in Mainland China specifically could provide fruitful insight into this field of research.

However, few studies were conducted on motivating designers in China's creative industries. This study intends to enrich the understanding in this area by investigating the motivations in China's creative industries, and by studying which motivators are perceived as effective by Chinese designers. The results explored the possible management method for creative industries development.

Conceptual Framework

This study integrated motivators from theories that are widely used in motivation research. The theories included Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1987), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1987), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), motivational needs theory (McClelland, 1985), and the work preference inventory (Amabile et al., 1994) (Appendix A)

By organizing and summing up these motivators, a conceptual framework is formulated for this study, which appears in Figure 1.

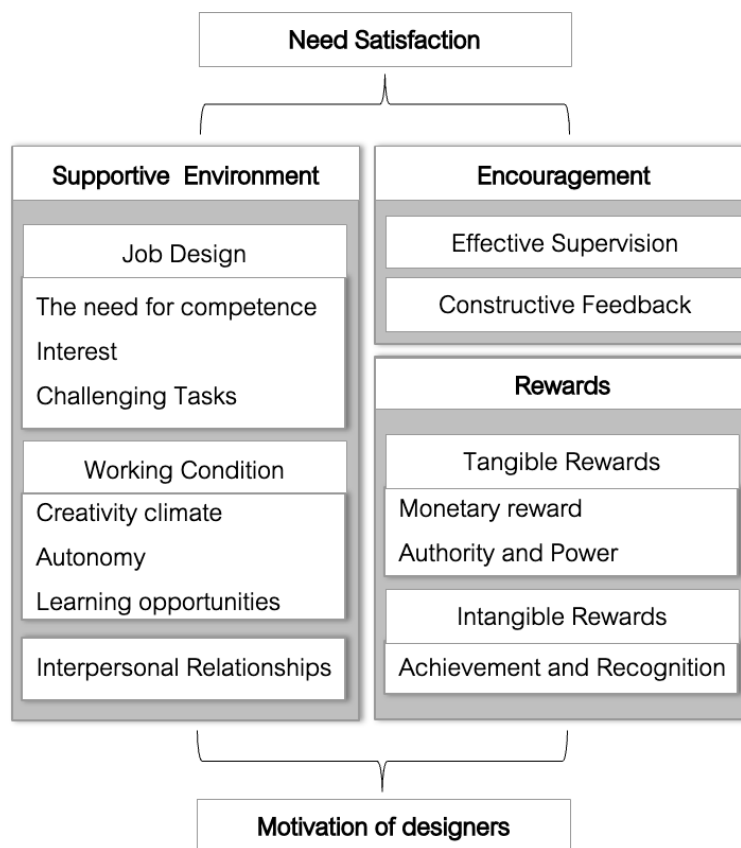


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of motivation study

The conceptual framework provides a comprehensive look at motivators based on the knowledge of previous studies, which helps to conduct data collection and analysis. It consists of three categories and seven types of motivators in total. The three categories are supportive environment,

encouragement, and rewards. *Supportive environment* refers to the working environment provided by the organization to their employees that would facilitate them to exercise that creativity in the workplace. *Encouragement* is an intangible award provided by the organization or management when the employees exercise their creativity in the task. *Reward* is a tangible award that is normally on a monetary basis provided by the organization to employees that demonstrated their creativity in the task.

Supportive environment.

A supportive environment includes three types of motivators: job design, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships.

1. Job design

Job design is one of the mainstream research areas in work motivation studies. Latham and Pinder (2005) state that the level of an employee's motivation depends on the pairing of job design with personal value.

The need for competence

In SDT, *the need for competence* means that people need to feel that they can master the task. Competence motivation, to a certain extent, involves learning. As Deci (1975) mentions, the feeling of satisfaction comes from completing a task that stretches one's capabilities. In work motivation, *the need for competence* is an intrinsic factor that is related to the fit between a manager's task arrangement and employee expectation. Employees can be motivated when the assigned tasks are optimal for their feeling of competence.

Interest and enjoyment

Scholars state that *interest and enjoyment* could also motivate creative people to explore novel ideas and exert their creativity potential (Amabile, 1983; Moneta, 2004; Collins & Amabile, 1999). *Interest* refers to an employee liking their current job and feeling happy when working. In 1977, Izard specifies *interest* as a fundamental motivator and the basis of intrinsic motivation because it can direct and amplify the motivation of human behaviour, especially toward exploratory and investigatory

behaviours (Izard, 1977). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explained that the reward brought from completing an interesting task is a kind of inner achievement called *enjoyment* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Managers must take this into account when distributing tasks.

Challenging tasks

People are usually willing to face *challenging or competitive tasks* when they have both the emotion (interest) and ability (the need for competence) (Amabile et al., 1994). Creative work is challenging in its nature. Designers often need to use their creativity by trying new solutions or taking risks to complete a task. This challenging nature supports the idea that designers would be better motivated when facing a certain degree of challenge. Therefore, managers could motivate workers by manipulating the job design with certain challenges.

2. *Working conditions*

The working conditions concept is about how organizations create an environment that could effectively motivate their designers.

Creativity climate

SDT and some creativity research indicate that working conditions and company policies could affect an employee's motivation and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). The kind of work environment that combines support and challenge could activate high levels of creativity and innovation in employees (McLean, 2005). Creativity support should be included in the policies, practices, and procedures of the whole organization's climate (Patterson et al., 2004).

Amabile (1988) identified several important components for creativity climates in the componential model, which includes encouraging dimensions and obstacle dimensions. Encouraging dimensions included *creativity encouragement, workgroup support, sufficient resources, challenging work, and freedom*. The obstacle dimensions are *workload pressure* and *organizational impediments* to creativity (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al. 1996). Creativity climates create a process of internalizing external influences on one's motivation. It shapes a person's psychological perception of a company's

expectation for creativity (Guo & Duan, 2008). If the company shows its support and encouragement to creativity, employees are more willing to exert effort to develop creative ideas (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

The need for autonomy

Psychologists suggest that a person's sense of control and intrinsic motivation increases when given choices (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). *The need for autonomy* means people need to have freedom of choice when doing their jobs or making decisions. People are more motivated when achieving a self-selected goal. People usually feel a lack of autonomy when they are in an inflexible condition (Deci & Ryan, 1985) or when they are forced to do things that they do not believe in (Chirkov et al., 2003). Some scholars consider *autonomy* to be an important job characteristic, but only for unpredictable or non-routine work (Latham & Pinder, 2005), such as creative work. A certain level of *autonomy* works well in motivating employees, especially designers (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).

Learning opportunities

One method of gaining achievement is through *learning* and pursuit of personal growth. Latham and Pinder (2005) state that a goal of learning gets people more engaged and focused on understanding the task requirement before planning to achieve it effectively. Organizational management usually includes strategies for providing employees with learning opportunities, such as in-house or external training support. In creative industries, most tasks are project-based, each project may provide the opportunity for designers to explore new ways of completing a task.

3.1.3 Interpersonal relationships

Scholars described interpersonal relationships as the need for affiliation (McClelland, 1987) and the need for relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). The need for relatedness refers to an individual's desire to connect with others (Gelfand et al., 2007). This connection must be a mature reliance and a respectful relationship (Baard et al., 2004). When employees have good relationships with their leader or teammates, the feeling of affiliation enhances their engagement and motivation at work. Zhang (2015) states emotional support and spiritual encouragement offered by a company can allow designers to

internalize organizational belief, innovation goals, and the perception of creative roles. It reduced one's feeling of external control and enhances one's belongingness, eventually increasing their intrinsic motivation. With harmonious interpersonal relationships, designers should be more motivated and engaged in their work.

Encouragement

Encouragement heavily relies on communication between management and employees, and it usually happens during the production process.

1. Effective supervision

Effective supervision refers to two leadership roles that can directly enhance or hinder employee motivation. The first role is that of helping one's employees achieve goals that match the company's goals. The second is the use of supervising styles that encourage motivation. Clear goals can reduce blind behaviour and create better outcome evaluations when managing designers (Zhang, 2015). Managers should provide clear guidelines that enhance an employee's feelings of self-determination, instead of adding more controls to the creative procedure.

2. Constructive feedback

Ashford and Black (1996) claim that *feedback-seeking* brings better performance. People have three basic drives in seeking feedback: to get help in achieving a goal, to attain recognition for enhancing self-ego, and to protect one's image (Ashford & Black, 1996). When feedback is encouraging and informative, employees can be positively motivated (Collins & Amabile, 1999; Amabile, 2012). The types of feedback can be positive feedback that demonstrates appreciation and gives employees a sense of accomplishment, or negative feedback that is constructive and satisfy a worker's need for learning and personal growth.

Rewards

Rewards are the typical returns people get from being employed. It can be explicitly broken down into two categories: tangible rewards and intangible rewards.

1. *Tangible rewards*

Tangible rewards are the rewards used in generic motivation strategies. It includes *monetary rewards* and *the gaining of authority and power*. Several theories categorize these tangible rewards as extrinsic rewards and claim they might undermine motivation and creativity (Amabile, 1985; Collins & Amabile, 1999).

Monetary rewards

The most common tangible incentive is a *monetary reward*, which includes salaries, bonuses, prizes, and welfare benefits. According to Herzberg, salary is only the basic factor that keeps employees with a company (Herzberg, 1987). Money can be a constraint that draws the attention of designers away from designing a creative work toward meeting the expected target. However, the actual effects on motivating creativity may vary in different individuals. Corney and Richards' cross-cultural study from 2005 indicates that values, needs, and behaviour all vary among countries. Extrinsic rewards like money are more attractive to Chinese students (Corney & Richards, 2005). Therefore, the influence of monetary rewards on China's designers may be different from the existing assumption.

The need for authority and power

The motivational needs theory includes *the need for authority and power* as tangible rewards. It refers to reputation, status, and influential power over others. People are satisfied while attaining leadership roles (McClelland, 1987). Promotions provide many physical and psychological satisfaction that can motivate an employee to pursue more authority and power. This tangible reward can also be internalized to satisfy certain intrinsic needs.

2. *Intangible rewards*

Intangible rewards refer to the psychological satisfaction that employees gain from completing particular tasks.

The need for achievement

The need of achievement refers to the desire for success (McClelland, 1987). People who are motivated and satisfied with achievement are more willing to work hard, face uncertainty, and try to find novel solutions for problems (Sagie et al., 1996). The drive for achievement is a common motivator in organizational management.

Recognition

Recognition is a key aspect of achievement. It refers to the psychological satisfaction that comes from external factors, but it can easily be internalized to the increase of self-confidence and the feeling of competence. Recognition works closely with supervision and feedback as part of the encouragement process, as well as a reward for the outcome.

In conclusion, if these motivators are appropriately managed, they could create momentum that leads to behaviour change. This conceptual framework guides research design and helps to find out what motivators play the key role in the creativity of Chinese designers.

Methods

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. This study collected two sets of interviews from 41 interviewees and 396 survey participants from designers who are demanded creative performance in China's creative industries. Nine local, private Chinese enterprises from seven creative professions are participated, which included film production, animation, game design, innovative technology design, post-production, interactive design, and creative marketing.

This study was divided into Study 1, 2, and 3 (Figure 2). Study 1 used the semi-structured interview as the primary data collection method to gain an understanding of the current motivation methods used by managers. Study 2 also used the semi-structured interview method to identify the preferred

motivation methods by designers and how designers perceived the effectiveness of these motivation methods.

Study 3 was quantitative and used questionnaire surveys to identify the current motivation methods used by organizations in the creative industries, and the preference of motivators by designers. The participants were provided with a list of motivators collected from Study 1 and Study 2. They were required to select those motivators that had been used in their organizations and prioritize the provided motivators according to their perceived importance. The results provided the idea of the important motivators perceived by designers in China’s creative industries, as well as requirements of creative ability, demographic data, and current motivation methods. The instruments of this study are referenced from the Work preference inventory (WPI) (Amabile, 1994), basic psychological needs satisfaction and frustration scale (BPNSFP) (Chen et al., 2015), and intrinsic motivation inventory (Ryan, 1982).

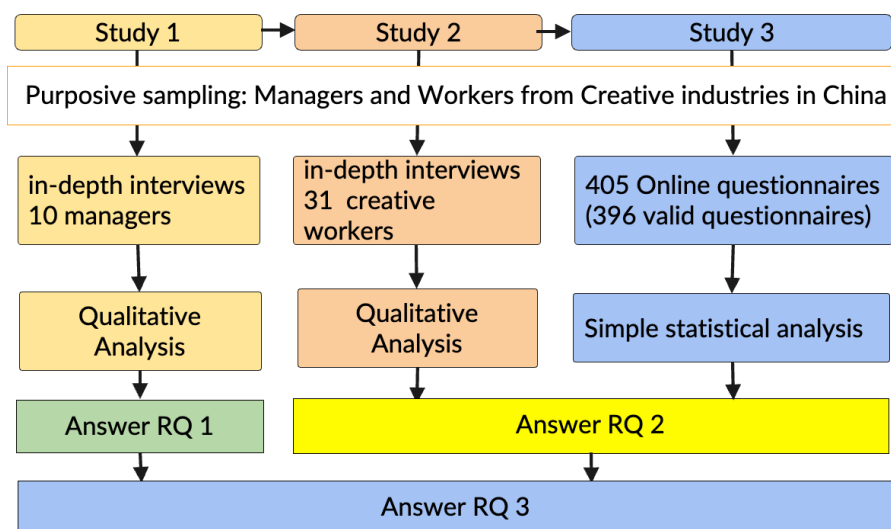


Figure 2. Research design

The data collected went through thematic analysis and statistical analysis processes. Several efforts have been made to ensure the credibility of qualitative research in these studies. First, the research protocol was prepared before starting the data collection. The protocol clearly stated the study objective, methods, and confidentiality issues to prevent any inappropriate effect on the participants.

Second, investigator triangulation was implemented, colleagues were invited as the analyst triangulation in the investigation process to help in interpreting and reviewing data.

Findings

Finding 1: The motivation method currently applied in China's creative industries

Majority of the motivation methods that companies are using focus on tangible rewards. The most common one was *monetary rewards*, which included salary, bonus, and commissions. These companies considered it the most effective motivation method. Managers also provided their motivation methods in addition to company motivation strategies. These methods included providing *learning opportunities, recognition, and encouragement, challenging tasks, a certain degree of autonomy, good relationships between colleagues, competence, a happy working atmosphere, and interest and enjoyment*. Most of the managers agreed that their workers were motivated because of their interest in their jobs. They believe that the most effective motivations methods were *development opportunity, monetary rewards, recognition and encouragement, and a happy working atmosphere*.

Finding 2: Motivators identified by Chinese designers

Sixteen motivators (Table 1) were identified from the information collected in the interviews with Chinese designers. Of these sixteen motivators, the majority of designers believed *recognition* could motivate them to work harder. Many designers claimed that *monetary rewards* could motivate them. Half of them said they could be motivated if the jobs or tasks had *learning opportunities*. Less than half of them said their main motivator was *interest* in their jobs. Some of them said they feel motivated when they receive *encouraging feedback* from others. More than one-third of the designers said good *interpersonal relationships, welfare, autonomy, and challenging tasks* played a vital role in their motivation at work.

Table 1. Sixteen identified motivators

| Motivators | Frequency |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Recognition | 30 |
| Monetary rewards | 25 |
| Learning opportunities | 16 |
| Interest | 15 |
| Encouragement/fair feedback | 14 |
| Interpersonal relationships | 13 |
| Autonomy | 12 |
| Challenging tasks | 12 |
| Welfare | 12 |
| Curiosity | 10 |
| Enjoyment | 10 |
| Advancement | 6 |
| Role Model | 5 |
| The need for competence | 5 |
| Supervision | 4 |
| Encouragement of creativity | 3 |

Finding 3: The priority of perceived effective motivator

As part of the triangulation process, the designers were asked to single out the perceived most important motivators. Eight types of motivators were mentioned, which included *monetary rewards*, *recognition*, *personal growth*, *interpersonal relationships*, *interest*, and *autonomy*. Unsurprisingly, all these motivators came from the sixteen types of motivators discussed in the previous finding. Among these eight types of motivators, three of them are mentioned the most. They are *monetary rewards*,

recognition, and learning opportunities for personal growth, which are also the top three in the sixteen motivators list above.

Table 3. Prioritized motivators

| Priority | Motivators | Description |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Monetary Reward | Reasonable salary and bonus |
| 2 | Interest | Interest in your job |
| 3 | Learning opportunity | Have learning or improvement opportunities at work |
| 4 | Recognition | Gaining recognition at work |
| 5 | Autonomy | Autonomy at work (e.g., control of projects, freedom of design) |
| 6 | Interpersonal relationships | Harmonious interpersonal relationships |
| 7 | Encouragement/ fair feedback | Fair feedback from your leader |
| 8 | Challenging tasks | Challenging tasks |
| 9 | Welfare | Welfare (e.g., gatherings, annual party, teatime, birthday presents) |

Finding 4: Doubt of effectiveness of current motivation strategy

When trying to reveal the effectiveness of the current motivation methods in China’s creative industries, the results showed that managers and workers have similar choices on important motivators. The top three motivators they perceived as the most effective are essentially the same: monetary rewards, recognition, and learning opportunities. However, many participants claimed that those motivators could not effectively motivate them. What follows are some of the dissatisfaction's workers discussed.

Monetary rewards: Most designers said the salaries they have now are lower than their expectations. Even if some organizations offer bonuses, the judging standard of the bonus policy is not clearly stated.

It could not create the motivation effect if the designers do not understand how they can get the bonus.

Learning opportunities: Designers said they would be motivated by learning knowledge they want to learn. However, the learning opportunities offered by companies do not match their expectations.

Interest and enjoyment: Interest is the main reason designers said they chose to work in the creative industries. However, due to high-intensity workloads, nearly all the participants said they do not enjoy their jobs. Intense workloads overtimes may even destroy one's interest in the work.

Autonomy: Most managers said their employees were welcome and free to speak their minds. However, employees said they are under quite a lot of control, including control over creative ideas and time management.

Discussion / implications

The Most Needed Motivator Contradicted with established Theories

Many motivation studies have repeatedly found that people demonstrate a higher quality of creative performance and creative use of skills with intrinsic motivation while extrinsic rewards provide an external constraint to creative work, which limits exploration behaviour. (Stenmark, 2000; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000; Casakin & Kreitler, 2010; Runco, 1994; Amabile, 1996). However, the results of this study are surprising that typical extrinsic motivation factor has become essential in Chinese creative industries. It is a contradiction to the major theories of this field. So, the question becomes, 'Why is there a significant difference between China and the established theories?'

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory (1987) (Fig. 3), hygiene factors and motivators coexist in every job. *Hygiene factors* avoid job dissatisfaction and demotivation but do not have any positive

motivational effect (Herzberg, 1987). Each hygiene factor has a threshold; once the hygiene factor is satisfied and has reached its threshold, the satisfaction level of the employee remains unchanged. *Motivators* refer to factors that can enhance employee motivation. If the employee satisfaction level of certain hygiene factors is low, performance could be negatively influenced, even if there are motivators present. This is because the negative effect of hygiene factors overshadows the positive effect of motivators.

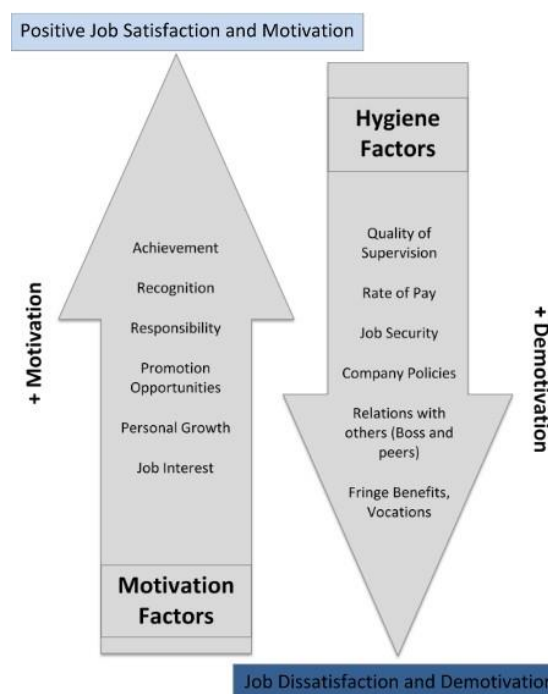


Figure. 3. Herzberg's two-factor theory

In this case, Chinese designers took *monetary reward* as the most needed motivator, which is not a key factor in the established motivation theory for creative workers. It indicated that they were still struggling under the threshold of pursuing hygiene factors. The reason is that China's economy has grown exceedingly fast in the past thirty years, living standards, and living costs (including property costs) have risen at an unexpected rate. Salaries, however, have not caught up. Most of the participants claimed the key aim for going to work was earning a living. This aim is obvious for older workers who have their own families and children. However, younger workers who do not have family burdens may

also choose learning as the most important motivator. But in fact, these younger workers also believe that learning and growth are tools that help them earn more money.

If current *monetary rewards* do not satisfy workers' needs and do not reach their threshold, workers will be demotivated. An increase in *monetary rewards* would decrease workers' dissatisfaction and prevent demotivation, which results in an increase in creative performance that seems to be contributed from this extrinsic motivation. However, money does not truly motivate these workers, and it would not help build the momentum for continuous motivation. Long-lasting motivation momentum can be formed only when workers are intrinsically motivated.

Lack of Knowledge and Experience in Managing Designers

The reason creative organizations in China rely on generic extrinsic motivation methods can be traced to the development of China's creative industries. Since the economic reform in 1979, China has viewed manufacturing industries as the mainstay of economic development. It was not until cultural and creative industries were first proposed in 2006 that the Chinese government started to allocate resources away from conventional manufacturing industries toward developing creative industries.

In response to new government policies, existing companies began to shift some of their business focus away from OEM¹ toward ODM² or OBM³. At the same time, these companies retained their original OEM businesses to sustain their revenue, as the newly developed creative industries were still ambiguous. The management uses the conventional motivation methods that they have always used for manufacturing workers to creative work, while so, managing designers required different strategies. Organizations have not fully realized the characteristics of creative industries and designers. They need more time to gain understanding and change their motivation strategies.

¹ Original Equipment Manufacturer

² Original Design Manufacturer

³ Original Brand Manufacturer

Managers in these companies did not show that they had a clear understanding of motivating designers. Fortunately, they did indicate that they use some motivation methods that are coincidentally in line with the motivation theory suggested by designers. These motivators included intrinsic motivation, such as encouragement, harmonious relationships, and extrinsic motivation that could be easily internalized, such as recognition, learning opportunities, and challenging tasks. These motivators also more or less meet the expected needs of designers. The reason for this coincidence is that most of the managers and team leaders began their careers as designers before being promoted to management. They share a similar understanding with designers about the need for motivation. These motivation methods happened to compensate for the deficiency of company motivation strategies.

This problem brings doubt about which development stage China's creative industries are in. Many organizations in creative industries may still adopt the same management approaches for manufacturing instead of creative work. It is because they have no understanding and intention to change their motivation strategies for motivating designers.

The ecosystem of China's Creative Industries Demotivate Designers

The immature ecosystem of China's creative industries could be the main thing that obstructed company execution of motivation methods and affected designers' satisfaction. This ecosystem (Figure 4) involved three parties: clients or customers, companies in creative industries, and designers. Although globalization has made information easier to access, the general population's appreciation for innovation and creativity is still lagging in China. Clients concentrate on the short-term return, and they do not realize enough how creative work could bring long-term value to their company. This long-term value could be the company's reputation, which could attract new customers or a creative user experience that could change users' habits and open a brand-new market opportunity.

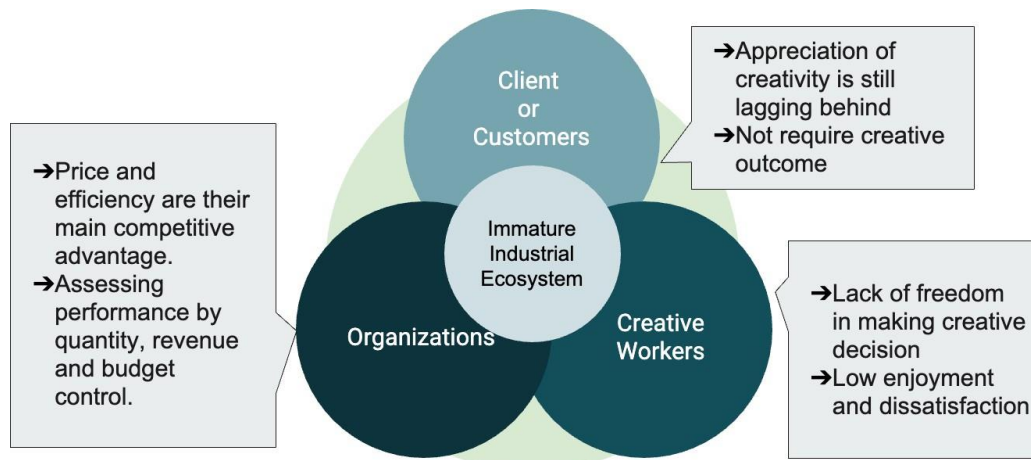


Figure 4. The industrial ecosystem in China's creative industries

Since clients and customers do not stress creativity when evaluating a product, most companies still use conventional marketing strategies. They use price and production efficiency as their main competitive advantages. Therefore, the standard for assessing designer performance is usually based on revenue targets, budget control, or work efficiency, instead of work effectiveness in producing creative value.

Moreover, creativity theories suggest that creativity requires adequate time for exploration and risk-taking. The fierce market competition within China's creative industries does not allow sufficient time and resources for designers to take risks and have better creative performance. Under the industry ecosystem in China, the environment cannot promote the performance of creativity, and it obstructs many possible motivators that encourage creativity, such as autonomy. Designers are demotivated as they can only work according to company and client requirements. Therefore, most of their enjoyment level is very low.

The current ecosystem of China's creative industries (the market, company management, clients, and end-users) is immature. From a macro perspective, this immaturity was caused by China's political atmosphere and cultural values. The core values of this political theory are to transform China into a modern socialist country with 'material wealth, democracy, civilization and harmony' (Chen, 2008). These core values have been reiterated continuously throughout the years of China's development.

The values stipulate that material wealth should be achieved before pursuing democracy, civilization, or harmony. They created an economic-oriented atmosphere in the market (Chen, 2008).

Chinese people have cultural values that influence the ecosystems of creative industries. In Hofstede's cultural value study, Chinese people received high scores on collectivism and power distance. *Collectivism* refers to a sense of belonging to a group in which people support each other and care about the group's opinions (Hofstede, 2001). The success of the group is more important than the individual's contributions. *Power distance* refers to the extent to which people accept an unfair power distribution in society (Hofstede, 2001). A high score in this dimension indicates that Chinese people accept and obey power from the higher level. Both collectivism and high-power distance have philosophies that are incompatible with creativity, which requires individual thinking and a willingness to challenge assumptions.

This political atmosphere, with its deeply imprinted cultural values, has created the current ecosystem of China's creative industries. However, along with the country's development, several phenomena can be foreseen to have a great impact on the ecosystem of creative industries. Once China's development reaches a point in which people have enough material wealth, people may shift their focus to pursuing entertainment. They may therefore require more creative products that can provide them with new experiences. Moreover, the new generation in China, who has grown up in an environment of highly developed global communications, can easily access information from all over the world. They have a higher demand for creative products than the older generations do. Organizations must consider enhancing their creativity to satisfy these needs and to expand into the global market.

Suggested Tools for Motivating Designers in China's Creative Industries

The analytical study results of this study indicated that organizations in China’s creative industries do not seem to have comprehensive and systematic management strategies to motivate their designers. To provide certain solid advice to the organizations in China’s creative industries, a conceptual model (Figure. 5) is formulated based on the results. It provides a clear picture of the motivators that designers perceive as important in China and the findings of this study.

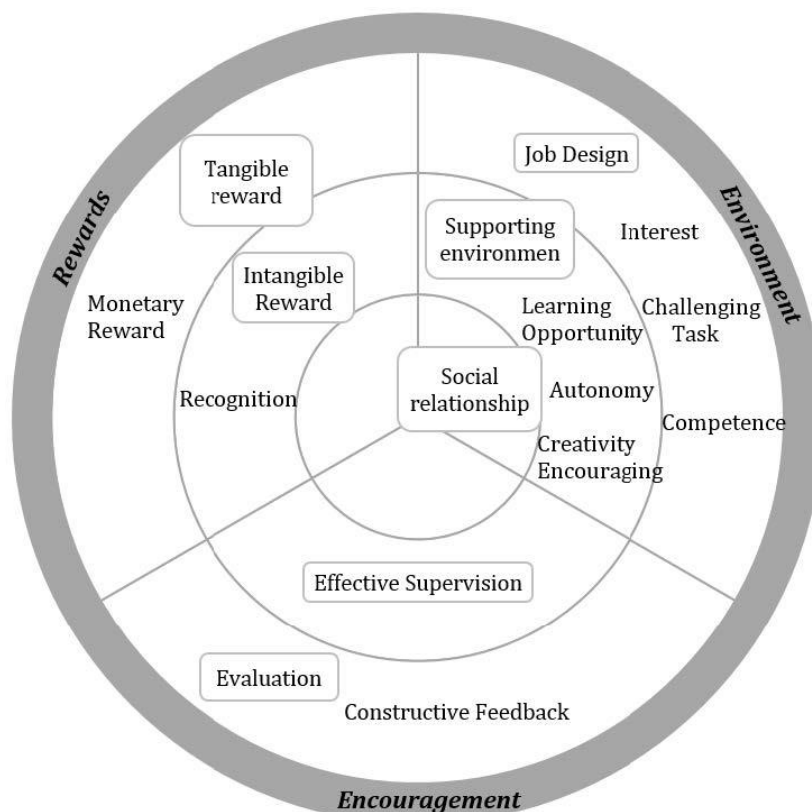


Figure 5. Conceptual model of motivators for designers in China’s creative industries

In this conceptual model, motivators are categorized into three dimensions which represent the three necessary steps in motivating designers. The dimensions are *supporting environment*, *encouragement*, and *reward*. In each dimension, motivators are organized in the order of priority found in this study. The motivators close to the peripheral are higher prioritized by designers in China’s creative industries, while those close to the centre are relatively less important motivators.

Supportive Environment

Managers should consider the interests of their employees and try to assign them tasks that they find interesting and challenging enough without making them lose any feelings of competence. For instance,

companies could allow self-initiated projects as an incentive for employees to achieve better project outcomes. Also, companies should try to establish working environments that allow designers to have learning opportunities, adequate freedom, and encouragement to maximize their motivation. Chinese designers want to have freedom in voicing their opinions, more power in controlling the design process, and lenient or flexible rules on working hours.

Encouragement

Encouragement can be manipulated throughout the whole design process of creative work. It can be considered as an activator of designers' motivation toward a task. Designers claimed that they are more willing to receive critiques, rather than praise alone, as long as the critiques are constructive. Organizations should give some instruction to their managers on how to use constructive feedback to drive their designers to perform better. From the perspective of designers, supervision is a low priority because it adds control to their work instead of offering encouragement and opportunity. Therefore, organizations may need to consider changing the supervision role of managers and provide enough resources to help designers achieve their goals.

Rewards

Monetary rewards and *recognition* are the first and second priorities perceived by both managers and designers who participated in this study. Since the importance of monetary rewards is related to the country's economy and the ecosystem in China's creative industries, it is difficult to change in a short period. The changes may happen when the economics of China develop to a level that employees no longer struggle for their basic needs. For now, organizations in China's creative industries should try to incorporate opportunities for employees to gain recognition, as recognition brings confidence, feelings of accomplishment, and a sense of achievement to designers.

With the results of this study, a conceptual model represents the current condition of motivation in China's creative industries. It could be a guidance tool for future study in this research area.

Conclusions

This study is one of the few empirical studies in this research field. It contributes to the knowledge in the study of motivation in China's creative industries. A conceptual model was created for companies to reference when motivating their workers and maximizing their creative performance. The results showed that extrinsic motivators, like *monetary rewards*, are the dominant motivator, while designers also included many intrinsic motivators in their list of needs. However, the organizations have not considered these intrinsic motivators in their management strategies. The reason is related to the rapid economic growth, the cost of living is increasing dramatically, and designers are struggling to satisfy their basic physiological needs. However, these creative organizations in China ought to understand that only satisfying these hygiene factors will not have a long-lasting effect on motivation. They should consider using motivators that could create a long-term motivation effect and promote employees' creative performance. Once the country is further developed and industry development reaches a certain level that creative work and creative performance are valued, the whole ecosystem may change. Designers may no longer be driven by basic physiological needs, and their preference for motivators may concentrate on intrinsic methods. Organizations should start to explore the needs of their designers and build up a more effective management strategy.

Limitation and Future Research

This study serves as an exploration of this research area, but the data collected can only reflect the situation during this period, and some conjectures about the future changes. Extended research could be conducted to enrich the knowledge of this field. Since the findings of this study indicated that designers could change their motivation preferences once the economy and the creative industries develop to a more mature stage, it would be very interesting to find out the answer to this possibility,

as well as the direction of these changes. Longitudinal research on preferred motivation in China's creative industries is highly recommended.

In conclusion, this research serves the purpose of conducting an original study by exploring the motivation in China's creative industries. It helps both researchers and organizations gain a greater understanding of the current condition and problems in the industries. It has also suggested some possible solutions for motivating designers.

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