

**Curtin Graduate School of Business**

**The Motivation of Temporary Sales People in Selected IT / telecom  
Companies in Hong Kong**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of**

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## Declaration

“To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university”.

Signature: 

Date: 20 August 2012

## Abstract

This thesis narrates a story in the study of a phenomenon in the search of an explanation of the motivation of temporary sales people [promoter] in information technology and telecommunication companies in Hong Kong. The use of these non-permanent sales force in Hong Kong is becoming popular but there is a lack of guidelines for motivating them. Given the exploratory nature of the study and limited prior empirical research on the topic and organizational settings, a qualitative approach was adopted. Grounded research and modified grounded theory were used as a discovery tools to guide the overall study. Triangulation of data collection methods was used; and data were collected from both employers and employees from focus group and in-depth interviews. Constant comparative method was adopted in data analysis. Data were first compared to data and the resulting categories were compared to each other and to the extant motivational theories, rendering into a tentative conceptual framework. It was found that the promoters' resources comprised internal resourcefulness and connectedness, along with the preemptive situational factors of organization, were fueling the promoters' meaning-ascription and job-crafting motivation-process.

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## 1. Introduction - research situation

### 1.1 Background to the research

As the title suggests, this research is seeking to develop a holistic understanding about motivating temporary sales people. This research therefore is not studying any particular motivational application; and is not considering the situation of permanent staff, or staff in non-sales functions. The setting is within the selected information technology and telecommunication companies in Hong Kong and the focus is on the sales people under non-permanent employment.

Many Hong Kong people shop for computer products for example, laptop computer, printer, scanner and digital dictionary or use telecommunication services for example, fixed telephone line, international telephone call, internet and mobile phone network service. They will have come across some young and energetic sales people in their sneakers and in costume, usually a Tee-shirt carrying the company logo, or wearing a badge carrying the title 'promoter'. They may be working in the shop, at almost all train station exits, at small booths on street corners, and are like sentries standing on guard at every passage to large housing estates greeting people walking back home. Many of these promoters are only working part-time at weekends and they are the point of interest of this research.

There are likely to be differences between permanent and temporary staff, in terms of job nature, performance measurement system, career prospects, reward system, perceived task ability, expectation and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Like other staff of the company, or particularly other sales staff, the performance of temporary sales people varies and so does their willingness to expend their effort. The performance may further affect their perceptions of the above issues, which in turn will affect their satisfaction, self-efficacy and have further impact on motivation. Temporary sales people also need to be motivated. According to Wiley (1997) money and job security are clear motivators for employees yet we are still not sure whether this is applicable in the temporary setting. There have not been many studies on motivating temporary sales people.

The impact of employing non-permanent workers on organizational performance outcomes, skills and employment is highly complex (Tregaskis, 1997). In this research setting, it seems rather difficult to manage and motivate temporary sales people than permanent employees. The first reason to account for it perhaps is the insecure nature of a temporary job. Secondly, these young temporary sales people may not think that the promoter job will end up being their career. Although there are full-time openings from time to time yet these promoters may not have plans to change in the near future owing to their day-time study or they have not yet determined their careers. However, the findings from Allan and Sienko (1998) showed that contingent workers had higher motivational potential scores than did the permanent ones but the study did not target sales people. In the contrary, Hong Kong managers spend only little time on managing and motivating the promoters. It may be because the supervision requires the managers to work during the weekends, or perhaps what and how to motivate these temporary sales people have not been known very clearly.

## 1.2 Industrial background

The development of technology products has been very fast, particularly in the past two decades, signaled by the emergence of micro-computing technologies and the widespread use of the internet. Many technology products have become available and affordable to general consumers. The younger generation is generally targeted as they accept new technologies in good faith and faster. Students are an important segment and therefore back-to-school promotions are common. Coping with the product introduction cycle creates seasonal fluctuations in demand for sales people in matching seasonal promotional activities.

Technology companies grow fast - not just in own business revenue but overall in contributing to the economy and in the numbers of suppliers as well. For consumer technology products, they operate a low cost field-selling model but are compensated by rapid business growth. The cost of development remains high and also there is the risk of technologies obsolescence. Technical advantages are often very short and results include shortened product life cycles and shortened technology adoption life cycles (Moore, 1998). New products with better performance and technologies are always cheaper and render existing. Therefore stocks must move fast. This has created a highly competitive market with plenty of promotions frequently running for end

users. It adds the pressure to push products early and complicates the seasonal needs of sales people.

IT / telecom consumers exhibit complex buying behavior characterized by the high involvement in the buying process, deciding on brands perceived to have significant differences (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006). During afterhours and especially at weekends IT / telecom consumers have more affordable time and the promoters can help the buyers to pass through the learning process. Thus when promoters are on duty, these products sell better. To the seller, it means that there is a need to employ sales people working afterhours and during weekends, and if one does not then other rival competitors will do so to capture the market share.

The use of promoter is apparently the most prevalent trend in Hong Kong in recent years for various reasons. Many field sales organizations are employing part-time promoters due to seasonal resources requirements, to save cost and to counteract headcount issues. There are agencies focusing on referring technology products promoters. Traditionally these consumer technology products are sold in computer shopping malls and two big chain stores 'Fortress' and 'Broadway' in Hong Kong. There is no sign that the computer shopping malls are retreating. For chain stores, 'Fortress' and 'Broadway' are seen everywhere in every new shopping mall, with bigger and bigger shop sizes. Chinese national chain stores, for example 'GOME' chain store has also landed in the territory. Apparently the industry has increased the employment of temporary sales people to operate a wide variety of promotional activities.

### 1.3 Temporary sales people

Encarta World English Dictionary (2005) defines temporary as an adjective of [a] having limited duration; and [b] not needed for long; or as a noun to refer to worker hired for limited time: a paid worker in an office or other workplace hired for a limited time only. This stands as contrary to its antonym permanent which refers to an everlasting and unchanging status.

Columbia Encyclopedia (2005) quotes from a U.S. study from Belous (1989) and defines the temporary worker as an employee, hired through a private and

specialized employment agency, who generally works less than a year on one assignment, regardless of the number of hours worked per week.

Many studies (Allen & Sienko, 1998; Belous & Association, 1989; Wong, 2001; Wong & Hendry, 1997) refer to those workers who are not employed on a full-time permanent basis as contingent employment, that is, temporary, seasonal, leased and subcontracted workers. There are slight differences in employment terms and processes with these contingent workers. The respondents of this research are largely drawn from those, more appropriately, called permanent part-time workers. They are those sales people who are working in a road show at the lobby or foyer of the shopping mall, in chain stores, and at a small mobile booth on the street.

Temporary workers are also called 'contingency staffing' or 'temps' and their names tell that they are utilized to accommodate fluctuations in labor requirements. Most of the workers that this study is looking at are working at weekends only. There are many of them working as full-time but the working days must include the Saturday and Sunday. This study is more concerned on the part-time promoters.

Casual employment / Part-time employment / Hong Kong residents working in the mainland of China, Social Data Collected via the General Household Survey Special Topics Report - Report No.33 (Casual employment / Part-time employment / Hong Kong residents working in the mainland of China, Social Data Collected via the General Household Survey Special Topics Report - Report No.33, 2003) and Report No. 37 (Patterns of hours of work of employees / Part-time employment, Social Data Collected via the General Household Survey: Special Topics Report - Report No.37, 2004) published by the Census and Statistics Department of the HK SAR government delimits the enquiry of part-time employees with their main employment at the time of enumeration fulfilling the following criteria: [a] the number of usual days of work per week was less than 5; or [b] the number of usual hours of work per working day was less than 6; or [c] the number of usual hours of work per week was less than 30.

The Employment Ordinance is the main piece of legislation governing conditions of employment in Hong Kong. It covers a comprehensive range of employment protection and benefits including rest days, paid annual leave, sickness

allowance, severance payment and long service payment. Chapter 57 of the Ordinance stipulated that the employees had to be employed under a continuous contract to entitle protection. An employee who has been employed continuously by the same employer for 4 weeks or more, with at least 18 hours work in each week is regarded as being employed under a continuous contract.

However, a typical temporary sales person, for instance works for an IT vendor, works only on Saturday and Sunday and from twelve to nine. After deducting the one-hour mealtime they are not eligible to be covered by the 4-18 provision in the Ordinance. If this is carefully managed then temporary sales people do not get benefits from the corporation, and there is a cost saving to the firm as explained by Belous (1989).

According to the report from The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (Union Action May 2001, 2001), part-time workers have an average monthly income of HK\$4,000 or US\$513 equivalent; yet nearly half or 48% earn less than HK\$4,000 per month. According to the survey, 25% of all part-time workers fall outside the 4-18 rule in the Employment Ordinance.

In Western countries, the number of non-permanent workers has been on the rise since the mid-1980s (Pfeffer & Baron, 1988; Tregaskis, 1997). In the U.S., temporary services grew from 0.6% of the workforce in 1982 to 2.7% in 1998 and became a \$60 billion industry. In 1999, about 2.9 million people were working in temporary jobs (Henson, 1996).

In Hong Kong, according to the Census and Statistics Department (Casual employment / Part-time employment / Hong Kong residents working in the mainland of China, Social Data Collected via the General Household Survey Special Topics Report - Report No.33, 2003) the number of casual and part-time workers in the Hong Kong SAR is steadily increasing. It can be inferred that the number of part-time promoters is growing at least matching the overall trend. The survey also showed that there were 122,000 part-time workers, an increase of 5% over the previous year of 2000. It was reported that there were 25,007 employees or 13.9% of the total workforce engaged in the retails industry were part-time sales staff according to 2004 Manpower Survey Report - Retail Trade report (2004 Manpower Survey Report -

Retail Trade, 2004) from Retail Trade Training Board of the Vocational Training Council.

Taking the Hong Kong's hotel industry as an example, and regardless of the recovery and labor shortage, there are 10,000 casual and part-time workers working whose employers refuse to grant full, regular employment as per the report Union Action May 2001 (2001) from The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions. Although there is no obvious evidence found from any search, official statistics or reports on other industries yet it can be understood that the Hong Kong employers' values and attitudes are more or less similar towards part-time promoters.

#### 1.4 Motivation at a glance

Green (2000) has built a motivational system based on expectancy theory of motivation and he has a simple answer to what and how to motivate employees to do their best: getting what they believe they deserve, based on their performance. Bergmann and Scarpello (2001) explain motivation as any influence that triggers, directs or maintains behavior. Luthans (1995) defines motivation as a basic psychological process and it interacts with and acts in conjunction with other mediating processes and the environment to explain behavior. According to Mitchell (1997), motivation is the processes that account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal. Robbins (2003, p. 156) suggests the study of motivation lies in the field of psychology that seeks to measure, explain and change individual behavior. To summarize, motivation study is primarily the study of motives and the process of how these motives work.

This study of motivation is concerned with how hard temporary sales people try, assuming that the effort will be directed to lead to job-performance, and persist long enough to achieve their goal. Therefore, the respondents are studied to explore their acts with a reason or incentive to try harder, to understand their feelings of enthusiasm, interest, or commitment to do the job, or something that causes such a feeling.

The early theories in motivation can be traced back as far as the turn of the last century when the wage incentives was introduced by Taylor (1911). The early



need-motivation relationship was suggested by Murray (1938) in his study of personality. Then there came the content models theories of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene factors, and Alderfer's (1972) existence-relatedness-growth theory. These content models attempt to identify what motivates people at work and explain job satisfaction. The advantages of the content approach are that they are easy to understand and translate into practice. However, research evidence points out some definite limitations.

McClelland's (1961) need theory of achievement, power and affiliation proposes a learned need theory has received more support from research. The theory explains well the relationship between achievement and productivity.

Other developments on work motivational theories have come from process models, exist in psychology, which usually are complex cognitive processes. The most significant contributions to the study of the complex motivation process are expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), performance-satisfaction model (Porter & Lawler, 1968), equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965), attribution theory (Kelley, 1967) and locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and cognitive evaluation theory (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Process models are concerned with the cognitive antecedents that go into motivation or how an individual gets motivated; and concern on how the cognitive variables relate to one another in the complex process of work motivation.

There are also some criticisms of contemporary motivational theories and the details are discussed in the literature review chapter. Briefly, goal setting theory explains productivity but does not address absenteeism, turnover, or satisfaction. Reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953) has an impressive record for predicting quality and quantity of work, persistence of effort, absenteeism, tardiness, and accident rates but does not offer much insight into employee satisfaction or the decision to quit. Equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) deals with all four dependent variables and is strong when predicting absence and turnover behaviors but weak when predicting differences in employee productivity. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1967) focuses on performance variables and explains well employee productivity, absenteeism, and turnover but it assumes that employees have few constraints on their decision discretion and makes many of the same assumptions that the relational model makes about individual decision-making, thus restrict its applicability. Motivational theories

are complementary with one another. There are also some studies to tie these contemporary theories together to understand their interrelationships (Klein, 1989; Locke, 1991; Mitchell, 1997).

Therefore, when designing the study of motivation, it is a logical option to adopt an open-minded exploratory approach. One alternative is to study a single relationship; the other is to study a composition of casual effects; or look at the motivation from the holistic approach such as the study described in this thesis.

### 1.5 Research issues

A preliminary study, conducted before this main research, showed that according to the managers in managing the temporary sales people, they are faced with the problems of staff turnover, cost and unreliable performance. Employers take them as inborn constraints and limitations. There was apparently no plan to develop these temporary sales people or to develop a more structural motivational system by these managers. Current motivational approaches are largely monetary based but are not working well, as reflected in the varying performance of promoters. Some managers are attempting additionally other approaches but success is still not clear yet.

There does not appear to be any published study to date that has investigated motivation among temporary sales staff in Hong Kong. Prior motivational studies have focused mainly on permanent employees and professionals.

### 1.6 Research objectives

This research attempts to develop a thorough and well-grounded understanding of the motivation of temporary sales people in general consumer market of IT / telecom companies. The aim of the research is to search for the most appropriate motivational approaches for temporary sales people in IT / telecom companies in Hong Kong. This will entail two directives: [a] to carry out a preliminary study to understand the current policies and practices by interviewing owners/managers; and [b] to understand the employees' perceptions of and reactions to employers' major motivational activities by conducting focus group interview, in-depth interviews using critical incident approach with employees.

## 1.7 Significance of the study

Since Frederick Taylor's (1911) Scientific Management, motivational theories have developed for a century. Firstly, most current motivational theories were developed in the United States by Americans and about Americans (Adams, 1965; Adler, 2002). Secondly, very few works have been done to look at the differences of full-time and part-time staff for designing motivation programs. Thirdly, there is still a search for a comprehensive theory to explain motivation. Fourthly, most studies on sales people are for permanent staff and focus on the sales performance (DeCarlo, Teas, & McEiroy, 1997; Grant & Cravens, 1999; Kangis & Lago, 1997; Murphy & Sohi, 1995; Pitt, Berthon, & Robson, 2000) and there are still issues such as commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction, which have not been yet fully explored or adequately answered (Churchill Jr, Ford, Hartley, & Walker Jr, 1985; Simintiras, Lancaster, & Cadogan, 1994).

There are large amounts of research done on part-time workers in Western countries. Comparatively, limited research has been carried out on part-time employment in Hong Kong. Wong and Hendry (1997, 1999) revealed that Japanese multinational retailers in Hong Kong are using part-time workers. The historical development of contingent employment in Hong Kong has previously been examined by Chow (1998). Wong (2001) also explored whether contingent employment practices are a conscious management strategy and further unveiled that the use of contingent workers in Hong Kong is far more than the outcome from functional or pure market concerns as indicated in Atkinson's (1985) model of the flexible firm.

Temporary workers, particularly in Asia, are the 'missing persons' in organizational research (Rotchfold & Roberts, 1982). This research is looking at sales people who represent a farther smaller percentage of the "missing persons" population. In this research the temporary sales people vary in terms of how long they work at a particular location, the number of hours, their level of skills and the amount of control they have over their work. It is obvious that they are lacking an explicit or implicit open-ended employment contracts. Although there are slight differences in employment conditions most of them are remunerated under a similar scheme.

Managers complain about the problems of managing temporary sales people and account for them as the inborn attributes rather than exploring further how to better motivate and improve their performance. There is a need to expand the knowledge on the motivational framework to allow for a more informed management approach. This may help the formulation of the appropriate human resource strategies in order to maintain a highly motivated sales force, comprising the alternative and contingent or temporary employment sales people.

This research is not meant to explain the phenomenon with one single school of thought. The use of grounded theory in this research provides an alternative search for the understanding of the holistic view of motivation and the interrelationships between both new and existing theories. In another words, it is intended to see how different theories can be aggregated to explain the real world, in addition to the discovery of new concepts.

In a nutshell, little is known in this area and this research will expand the knowledge on motivation of temporary sales people in Hong Kong, particularly in the IT / telecom industry. This study will not be the last of this kind, hopefully. From the outset of the study, the aim was to contribute knowledge that would lead to more action research. An increased number of studies could make comparisons possible.

Finally, this study is part of the doctoral degree requisite for the researcher and it will also enhance the knowledge of the researcher to continue the contribution to the knowledge in the practice of management. The researcher hopes that this study is also of value in terms of the methodology and research design developed to explore the research questions.

## 1.8 Research design and method

The research design and method are briefly outlined in this section and are addressed in greater details in the methodology chapter.

## 1.8.1 The qualitative approach

### 1.8.1.1 The nature of the research - ontology

Ontology is the specification of a conceptualization (Gruber, 1993). In this study context, the aim is to conceptualize motivation. Specifying the approach to fulfill the aim is driving the ontology to be constructivist. Constructivism aims at the understanding and constructions that people initially hold, and thereafter the continuous revisions, that is, reconstructions, of these constructions, both of the enquirer and the participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2004; Watson, 1998). In this context, this research explores the social space of temporary sales staff. Data will be sought until a substantive theory of sales motivation can be tentatively provided. Thus, the nature of this research - in search of temporary sales people motivation, will drive a constructivist ontology.

### 1.8.1.2 The nature of the knowledge - epistemology

This research seeks understanding of motivation. To understand motivation is practically to pursue a particular episode in the “live-world” and “produce a theory which agrees with experience ...” (Giorigi, 1970, p. 134). It calls for the in-depth knowledge of subjects emphasizing on the inner view of social reality and therefore drives an interpretive epistemology.

### 1.8.1.3 The logic of the methods - methodology

The ontology and epistemology of this research drive the methodology to be qualitative. The main objective, thus, is to seek to understand the employees’ perceptions. Qualitative data analysis is an eclectic process where quite different approaches may be equally appropriate (Creswell, 1994). Similar to other modes of carrying out qualitative research, data sources are gathered mainly from interviews, including employer interviews, employee focus group interviews and employee in-depth interviews.

As a theoretical framework is to be built, it is proposed to follow the grounded research approaches from Whiteley (2000) and from Martin and Turner (1986). Grounded research originates from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which is an inductive, theory discovery methodology such that the researcher can develop a

theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data.

The overall approaches of this research are derived from Dey (1999). Data are used for cross-checking other data as well as for the generation of theory. The sampling plan is based on theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation, and triangulation of data collection is adopted to ensure the truth value or the confidence in the truth of the findings of data - credibility, that is, internal validity. Analysis is done by constant making of comparisons of data to data and data to theory in systematic coding procedures.

Following grounded research guidelines, the directions of subsequent search are to be guided by the previous ones. Therefore, to start with, a purposive preliminary study is planned to lead in the search.

#### 1.8.2 Research design

The overall research design is to facilitate the inductive approach of this qualitative research aiming to discover the motivation pertaining to the temporary sales people. That is, the theoretical framework will be emerged from the data only after collecting the field data and reflecting on it.

Prior to the designing the main study, a preliminary study will be carried out by interviewing managers. The objective of the interviews is to understand the current situations in the use and management or the current policies and practices of temporary sales people. It is purposively executed so as the data collected will shed light on directing the subsequent research design.

The managers to be selected for the preliminary study must clearly reflect the real situations and not delimit the scope of data source. Therefore, along the product distribution chain, the researcher will select three organizations each representing an important node of the supply chain so that it covers all kinds of employers. The managers to be invited are coming from a foreign manufacturer, a local distributor and a local retail chain store.

The sampling plan of the temporary sales people population will be guided by the emerging theory using theoretical sampling (Strauss, 1987). The search will be stopped when nothing new can be discovered. According to Dey (1999), the selection of the initial sample will basically draw upon the theoretical relevance concerns. The early samples are basically chosen because of their representational value. Subsequent sampling decisions are to be based on the preceding analysis and are revolved around comparison in terms of the concepts being investigated.

To start the employee interviews, a focus group interview of promoters will be carried out prior to the in-depth interviews. The data collected are analyzed to guide the subsequent search directions, for example to develop the probes for in-depth interviews, as well as to crosscheck data from other data collection processes as a mean of triangulation. The main data collection is done through in-depth interviews of temporary sales people. The interviews will be audio taped, transcribed and analyzed using personal computer software.

Critical incident interview approach will be adopted. Specific experiences of interviewees will be sought as examples (Weiss, 1994) to reflect their perceptions and behaviors. Interviewees will be asked to recall particular events that happened in their history and speak out their feelings towards the incidents.

### 1.8.3 Data analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to make sense of the data gathered, with particular but not exclusive reference to the research objectives. In order to increase the rigor of this qualitative research it is important to apply a consistent analytical approach across the interview data to facilitate the understanding and to enable comparisons where possible (D. Silverman, 1993; M. Silverman, Ricci, & Gunter, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Computer software QSR's N6 (2002) will be used to assist the basic data analysis process as well as data management.

The preliminary employer interviews will be analyzed immediately with the end result in mind - the aim to direct the future studies.

Similarly, the initial focus group study will be analyzed to provide guidance to develop the main investigation of employee in-depth interviews. Moreover, the data

from the focus group will be analyzed and compared with the subsequent data as a means of triangulation.

As data are to be analyzed immediately, there may be risks of researcher bias - inherent reflexivity of qualitative research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) but the advantage is that it enables the researcher to be able to progressively focus and gain theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978).

The employee in-depth interviews are analyzed by batch and the subsequent batch will be checked against all the categories of the previous data. The stop of further interview will be indicated when there are no new categories formed. Data from the employee in-depth interviews are compared to each other, to the employee focus group study, and also to the employer in-depth interviews. When a theory is emerged from the data comparison then the subsequent data are compared to this theory discovered. The emerged theory will then be compared to existing theories. This constant making of comparison is aiming at developing an understanding grounded from the data.

#### 1.9 Delimitation of this thesis

The more controversial issues regarding this study as being a qualitative research are highlighted. It is important to note that all these points are addressed in detail in the methodology chapter.

This research is aiming to explore the temporary sales people to see what motivates them and how they are motivated at work. As described earlier in this chapter this research is exploratory and the methodology is interpretative. Therefore we are not carrying out any test of hypotheses quantitatively or qualitatively.

Due to the fact that there is not enough known about the research situation, a qualitative approach is justified for the exploration. The sampling plan is not definite. However, theoretical sampling procedures are followed and triangulation of data collection method is employed to guarantee richness and some representativeness of the data being reached through in situ investigation.



While there are many industries hiring temporary sales people and there are also more than one type of temporary setting, for example the full-time promoter versus the part-time promoter, this research could well be one of the early studies that look into this situation that the explanation is grounded from actual experiences. To testify its applicability it may call for more research to be carried out.

#### 1.10 Outline of this thesis

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. Each chapter charts the progress of the research. Overall, it narrates a story in the study of a phenomenon in the search of an explanation of the research situation.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research topic and the overall research situation. The industrial background is described and the theoretical background reviewed. The research issues are visited and objectives proposed. The significance of the study is discussed and finally the research design and process drafted.

Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of relevant literature associated with the central issues of motivation as they apply to contingent or temporary sales people. It also acts as a source for more detailed definitions of key concepts.

In Chapter 3 the research approach and its reasoning from the philosophical [constructivism] to the practical the organizing principles and underlying rules are presented. The qualitative research method is justified and grounded research and modified grounded theory are discussed as a discovery tools to guide the overall journey of the study. Then the chapter presents strategies for establishing the rigor of the research. Finally the down on the earth actual research design and research processes are presented.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the data. First, it accounts for the employer interviews and describes the interview objectives, schedules, setting and findings. Secondly, it accounts for the employee focus group study, and the objectives, schedule, settings and findings are described. Thirdly, the findings from the employer interviews and focus group study are compared. Fourthly, it accounts for the employee in-depth interviews, and the objectives, schedule and setting are described.

Finally, the chapter continues by taking and comparing the findings from all the previous analyses. Thus, grounded from the data the categories and their meanings of various themes are formed. The meaning relationships are analyzed and a few explanations of the situation thus are discovered. Finally the research issues are revisited.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis and discusses the theoretical account or the conceptual framework from Chapter 4 and the implications. This further analysis and discussion are based on the earlier findings from data, with the literature review going into this study as well as literature directed by data. Lastly, it examines the limitations of the study, highlights the contributions made and presents the researcher's opinions on further possible research directions.

#### 1.11 Summary of the research situation

This chapter laid the foundations for this thesis. It introduced the research situation and provided the justification for the study. Following the theme of the research, the methodology was reviewed and an initial view of the research design was formed. Finally the limitations associated with this study were discussed and the structure of the thesis report was outlined.

## 2. Literature review

There is a paucity of literature on motivation of sales promoters and none so far in Hong Kong. However, recent, mainstream literature has been reviewed and is emerging as in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1: Recent mainstream literature on salespeople and motivation

Author & date	Title	Focus	Conclusion
Murphy, Dacin & Ford (2004)	Sales contest effectiveness: An examination of sales contest design preferences of field sales forces.	Surveyed 796 salespeople from 46 business units of 3 companies. The research examined the design preferences of salespeople regarding sales contests intended to motivate salespeople.	The study revealed preferences for outcome-based goals, for limiting the number of winners to 40 percent, for cash-based awards, and for high value rewards (3 weeks' pay).
Turner (2006)	Pay for performance: Contrary evidence and a predictive model.	From a review of prior studies on the use of rewards, the paper argued that performance based rewards detract from employee engagement and fail to meet employees' needs for autonomy.	The author developed a model that relates the negative effects of reward contingencies on 3 organizational outcomes: In-role performance, extra-role performance, and turnover.
Mallalieu & Nakamoto (2008)	Understanding the role of consumer motivation and salesperson behavior in inducing positive cognitive and emotional responses during a sales encounter.	The research examined the interaction between selling behaviors and consumer motivation. 2 experiments were conducted with 149 undergraduate students participating in a scenario-based format and 127 in a computer program.	It was found that consumer goals and salesperson behaviors interacted and led to specific hypothesized cognitive and emotional outcomes.  The authors recommended that salespeople avoid formula-based sales approaches and place more effort on understanding consumer motivation.
Kuvaas & Dysvik (2009)	Perceived investment in employee development, intrinsic motivation and work performance.	From 3 studies with a total of 826 respondents from 9 organizations, the research explored the impact on work effort and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) of investment in employee development, as mediated or moderated by intrinsic motivation.	It was found that investment in employee development indirectly increased work effort through increased intrinsic motivation, and that investment in employee development increased employee OCB if this increased intrinsic motivation to a sufficiently high level.

Author & date	Title	Focus	Conclusion
Onyemah (2009)	The effects of coaching on salespeople's attitudes and behaviors – a contingency approach.	From survey responses of 2,532 salespeople, regression analyses were conducted to examine impacts of the coaching on salespeople's attitudes and behaviors under various contingencies.	The findings suggested that formal education of, confidence in product, and ages of salespeople influenced the likelihood that coaching engendered affective commitment, improved satisfaction of job and supervisor, and lowered perceived role ambiguity.
Wegge et al. (2010)	Promoting work motivation in organizations – should employee involvement in organizational leadership (EIOL) become a new tool in the organizational psychologists' Kit?	The authors conducted a meta-analysis and conceptual review of the impact of EIOL on work motivation in organizations.	<p>The authors integrated prior empirical findings into a new model, featuring as antecedents three-forms of EIOL: organizational participation, shared leadership, and organizational democracy.</p> <p>The model also included a number of central mediators (goal commitment / motivation, emotions and moods, knowledge exchange, extra-role behavior / identification, and psychological empowerment) and some moderators (desire for participation / task uncertainty / trust), leading to improved individual, team and organizational performance and increased overall job satisfaction.</p>
Menguc, Auh & Kim (2011)	Salespeople's Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors with coworkers outside the sales unit.	Based on a survey of 222 salespeople from 38 organizations, the authors analyzed how and under what conditions salespeople's knowledge-sharing behaviors (KSBs) were motivated.	<p>It was found that stronger autonomy climates indirectly increased KSBs through increased self-efficacy and better coworker relationships.</p> <p>The study also found that KSBs benefited from coworker relationship quality under weak but not strong knowledge sharing norms.</p>
Milyavskaya & Koestner (2011)	Psychological needs, motivation, and well-being: A test of self-determination theory across multiple domains.	From a sample of 203 adults, the authors assessed whether the association of need satisfaction to well-being was consistent across important life domains. The proposition that autonomous motivation is a mediator on the path between need satisfaction and well-being was also tested. Self-determination theory was used as a reference point.	Autonomous motivation was found to act as a partial mediator on the path between need satisfaction and well-being.

Author & date	Title	Focus	Conclusion
Watanabe, Tareq & Kanazwa (2011)	When openness to experience and conscientiousness affect continuous learning: A mediating role of intrinsic motivation and a moderating role of occupation.	A survey was conducted with 166 system engineers from a large information systems company and with 171 car salespeople from an automaker in Japan. The researchers examined the impacts of two personality traits (openness to experience and conscientiousness) and person-situation interaction (intrinsic motivation) on continuous learning, and whether intrinsic motivation was a mediator.	For system engineers, personality traits (openness to experience and conscientiousness) affected continuous learning via intrinsic motivation as mediator; but for car salespeople the effects were direct. The authors argued that situation influences accounted for the non-significant mediation for the car salespeople.
Agnihotri, Rapp, Kothandaraman & Singh (2012)	An emotion-based model of salesperson ethical behaviors.	With a sample of 107 salespersons and 19 of their managers/supervisors from an Indian media conglomerate, the research assessed the influence of salespeople's higher order prosocial emotions (i.e. capacity for empathy and capacity for guilt) on ethical attitudes, and in turn on ethical behaviors. It also tested whether such person-situation interaction is moderated by role clarity.	The research found support for the positive influence of capacity for empathy and capacity for guilt on ethical attitudes, and found a positive relationship between salespeople's ethical attitudes and their ethical behaviors.  It was also found that role clarity, coupled with ethical attitudes, has positive influence on ethical behaviors.
Jeon & Choi (2012)	The relationship between employee satisfaction (ES) and customer satisfaction (CS)	Drawing on data from 227 pairs of customers and corresponding employees from a leading private education company in Korea. The research examined the directionality of the relationship between ES and CS, taking account of moderating variables.	The results indicated that ES leads to CS, but not vice versa.  It was also found that the dispositional variables of self efficacy and cooperative orientation moderated the impact of ES on CS.

## 2.1 Introduction to literature review

“As with any topic of scientific inquiry, ‘motivation’ requires theory and conceptual thinking” (Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2003, p. 45). This chapter presents reviews and summaries of work motivational theories and whenever applicable illustrates the application of theory to motivating temporary sales people, promoters.

Employee performance is frequently described as a joint function of ability and motivation, and the primary task of a manager is to motivate employees to perform to the best of their ability (Moorhead & Griffin, 1998). “Motivating employees has become more challenging” as: [a] “numerous forms of corporate restructuring and downsizing” have changed the jobs that people perform; and [b] “direct supervision is incompatible with the values of today’s educated workforce” and “businesses have not discovered other ways to motivate employees”; and [c] “employee needs are changing” and the “workforce diversity and globalization have added to this complexity because diverse employees typically have diverse values” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2004, p. 140).

“Motivation is a problem and organizations keep looking for a solution” (Robbins, 2003, p. 154). It has also been characterized as “the number one problem facing business today” (Watson, 1994, p. 4) and as one of the most pivotal concerns of modern organizational research (Baron, 1991). It has been claimed that the maximization of individuals’ motivation to achieve organization’s objectives can only be obtained through a thorough understanding of theories of motivation (Reid, 2002).

In this chapter, the key motivational theories are reviewed with the aim of providing a comprehensive picture of employee motivation, particularly in terms of the contingent sales force. This chapter will critically review twelve motivational theories: Maslow’s (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs; Alderfer’s (1969, 1972) ERG theory; Herzberg’s (Herzberg, 1966, 1968) two-factor or motivator-hygiene theory; McClelland’s (1955, 1961) needs for achievement, affiliation and power; Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory; Porter-Lawler’s (Porter & Lawler, 1968) performance-satisfaction model of motivation; Adams’ (1963) equity theory; Locke’s (1968) goal-setting theory; Kelley’s (1967) attribution theory; Deci’s (1971)

cognitive evaluation theory; behaviorism, including Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory; and job design, including Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristics model. In addition, some integrative motivation models will be reviewed. Whenever appropriate, each key theory is summarized, relevant research findings are evaluated and potential applications are illustrated. Towards the end of this chapter, research and theorizing regarding the application of motivational theories to the specific contexts of temporary sales people and Chinese societies will be critically reviewed.

## 2.2 Foundations of modern work motivation

At the turn of the twentieth century, Frederick Winslow Taylor [1856-1915] became known as the man with a stopwatch in his hand. Nowadays he is known as "the man who changed work forever" (Farnham, 1997) through initiating the scientific management movement. Taylor advanced management by advocating the use of wages incentives to motivate employees and detailed work studies to find "the one best way" to improve productivity.

The change from "rule-of-thumb" (Taylor, 1911, p. 13) management to scientific management involves the study of work as science, and assumed that economic return was the main motivator for a rational workman, and Taylor remarked that:

*The principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employé (Taylor, 1911, p. 9).*

Taylor suggested using a "piece-work price" system (Taylor, 1911, p. 34), paying "higher wages" than the competition (Taylor, 1911, p. 11) and giving a "special incentive" (Taylor, 1911, p. 33) of between thirty to one hundred percent of the workman's ordinary wages "whenever the workman succeeds in doing his task right, and within the time limit specified" (Taylor, 1911, p. 39). However, Taylor acknowledged that the use of incentives was only one aspect of scientific management, and did not particularly distinguish it from other approaches. He encapsulated that point as follows:

*Broadly speaking, then, the best type of management in ordinary use may be defined as management in which the workmen give their best initiative and in return receive some special incentive from their employers. This type of management will be referred to as the management of 'initiative and incentive' in contradistinction to scientific management, or task management, with which it is to be compared (Taylor, 1911, pp. 34-35).*

Taylor (1911) designed time study to measure the time taken for a worker to complete a task. A disciple of Taylor, Frank Bunker Gilbreth [1868-1924] originated motion study (Gilbreth & Kent, 1911) and he defined it as “the science of eliminating wastefulness resulting from using unnecessary, ill-directed, and inefficient motions” (Gilbreth, 1914, p. 8). Together, time and motion study became famous as a means of improving productivity and reducing unit cost. According to Taylor, these are “merely the elements or details of the mechanism of management” (Taylor, 1911, p. 133). Taylor emphasized instead that “close, intimate, personal cooperation between the management and the [work]men is of the essence of modern scientific or task management” (Taylor, 1911, p. 26). In closing his book, Taylor remarked that:

*This means increase in prosperity and diminution in poverty, not only for their men but for the whole community immediately around them ... As one of the elements incident to this great gain in output, each workman has been systematically trained to his highest state of efficiency, and has been taught to do a higher class of work than he was able to do under the old types of management; and at the same time he has acquired a friendly mental attitude toward his employers and his whole working conditions, whereas before a considerable part of his time was spent in criticism, suspicious watchfulness, and sometimes in open warfare. This direct gain to all of those working under the system is without doubt the most important single element in the whole problem (Taylor, 1911, p. 144).*

Moreover, in order to closely monitor the worker's every movement so that it would be impossible to go slow without detection, Taylor also suggested the adoption of the principle of radical division of labor of Adam Smith (1776), as cited in Reid (2002). This began the stratification of the working class into layers of supervisory, administrative and technical workers.



After Taylor, “managers continued to look for ways to improve productivity” (Dalton, Hoyle, & Watts, 2006, p. 8). Chester Irving Barnard [1886-1961] attempted to connect scientific management and human relations. Barnard (1938, p. 45) asserted that the “social factors are always present in coöperation, ... because of the effect of social experience upon individuals and their motives”. Barnard (1938, p. 296) believed “that a due proportion or balance between them [the expansion of coöperation and the development of the individual] is a necessary condition of human welfare”. He brought out the idea that “the function of executives is to serve as channels of communication” (Barnard, 1938, p. 215) and argued that “organizations must adapt their processes ... of persuading individuals” (Barnard, 1938, p. 153). That is, upon finding “the one best way”, the managers [executives] should then communicate to the employees why this is the best way.

While recognizing that the scientific management movement might have contributed to economic progress, attention and critics were called to “The Seamy Side of Progress”, the name of the first chapter in George Elton Mayo’s [1880-1949] book, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization*. In that chapter, Mayo remarked:

*The achievements of physical science, of chemistry, of medicine, in the last century have been very great; but the very dimension of these achievements has thrown society out of balance. And, until such time as sociology and psychology can, out of lowly and pedestrian skills, develop the beginning of understanding, until then we shall continue to find technical advance provocative of social chaos and anarchy (Mayo, 1945, p. 30).*

In the Hawthorne Works, when conducting ‘scientific’ experiments into various job factors, the connection between intrinsic and social factors and productivity was uncovered, accidentally through a combination of experimental design and serendipity. The experiments were known as the Hawthorne studies and were reported in the “Management and the Worker, the official account of the whole range of experiments” by “F. J. Roethlisberger of Harvard University and William J. Dickson of the Western Electric Company” (Mayo, 1945, p. 60).

The experiments, which comprised seven key studies, were conducted from 1924 to 1932 at the Western Electric Company Hawthorne Works. The first three of them were designed as experiments into the “relation of quality and quantity of illumination to efficiency in industry” (Roethlisberger, Dickson, Wright, & company, 1949). The results did not indicate any relationship between illumination and productivity, so more tests were conducted and it was found that there were other “various factors affecting the performance” (Roethlisberger et al., 1949, p. 19). The focus of the other studies was primarily on “the relation between conditions of work and the incidence of fatigue and monotony among employees” (Roethlisberger et al., 1949, p. 1). The latter studies included two key experiments in the “Relay Assembly Test Room” and “Mica Splitting Test Room”, observations in the “Bank Wiring Observation Room”, and a plant wide interview of 21,126 employees (Roethlisberger et al., 1949, p. 204). Roethlisberger et al. (1949) reported a great amount of detail about the studies but Mayo’s succinct summary was influential:

*The Western Electric experiment was primarily directed not to the external condition but to the inner organization. By strengthening the “temperamental” inner equilibrium of the workers, the Company enabled them to achieve a mental “steady state” which offered a high resistance to a variety of external conditions (Mayo, 1933, p. 75).*

The Hawthorne studies have been quoted in many textbooks but “the Hawthorne effect is poorly understood and imprecisely defined” (Adair, 1984). According to Mayo (1933, 1945), the Hawthorne findings revealed that there was no causal relation between working conditions and productivity. This interpretation differs somewhat from other interpretations. For example in Reece and Brandt (2005, p. 16), the Hawthorne studies were interpreted this way: “All the attention focused on workers who participated in the research made them feel more important”. McQuarrie (2005) reviewed fourteen Canadian textbooks of management and organizational behavior and found that, regarding their interpretation of the Hawthorne studies, “every textbook surveyed had at least one example of omission, error, inaccuracy, or vague wording”. Olson, Verley, Santos and Salas (2004) also reviewed the contents about the Hawthorne studies in twenty-one industrial organization and organizational behavior textbooks and remarked that “Hawthorne

research” had formed “beliefs about the complex causes of work performance” but “the breadth of the Hawthorne Studies makes them [textbook authors] a difficult topic to review and summarize in introductory textbooks”.

The interpretation that “the general improvement in the output of the operators [in the Relay Assembly Test Room and Mica Splitting Test Room], which rose independently of the specific changes in conditions of work made during the study”, and which was attributed to “the operators’ altered total responses to their new [social] working environment” (Roethlisberger et al., 1949, p. 189) was labeled the Hawthorne effect later. Review from Olson, Verley, Santos and Salas (2004) showed that thirteen out of twenty-one textbooks “included an explicit definition of the Hawthorne Effect”; nine definitions “implicating participants’ knowledge of being observed or of being in an experiment”, and six “implicating participants’ favorable or novel treatment, and/or special attention paid to subjects”. Parsons (1974, p. 930) commented: “Generalizing from the particular situation at Hawthorne, I would define the Hawthorne effect as the confounding that occurs if experimenters fail to realize how the consequences of subjects’ performance affect what subjects do”. Nowadays, the Hawthorne effect tends to be interpreted more broadly as “the idea that the human element is more important to productivity than technical or physical aspects of the job” (Dalton et al., 2006, p. 9). Perhaps even, “the real Hawthorne effect was the potential change in industrial relationships made possible by the insights of scientific management of the sort proposed by Elton Mayo” (Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001). Mayo (1945, p. 74) himself stated that while the interview program of the Hawthorne studies was “originally designed to study the comfort of workers in their work as a mass of individuals, it has come to clear specification of the relation of working groups to management as one of the fundamental problems of large-scale industry”. Mayo did not coin the term Hawthorne effect, instead he said:

*The most significant change that the Western Electric Company introduced into its “test room” bore only a casual relation to the experimental changes. What the Company actually did for the group was to reconstruct entirely its whole industrial situation ... The consequence was that there was a period during which the individual workers and the group had to re-adapt*

*themselves to a new industrial milieu, a milieu in which their own self-determination and their social well-being ranked first and the work was incidental (Mayo, 1933, p. 75).*

The existence of Hawthorne effect itself has also been challenged. “There have also been criticisms leveled against the methodology of the studies themselves and the interpretations of the study data” (McQuarrie, 2005). According to Rice (1982), the “Hawthorne effect was never actually demonstrated by the original study”. Carey (1967) examined the arguments of the Hawthorne studies and found that the evidence “did not support any of the conclusions derived by the Hawthorne investigators”. Jones (1992) also examined “the empirical evidence for the existence of Hawthorne effects using the original data from the Hawthorne Relay Assembly Test Room” and concluded that “these data show slender or no evidence of a Hawthorne effect”. Franke and Kaul (1978) conducted statistical analysis to re-examine the Hawthorne evidence. The principal finding was that the experimental control variables, together with other external factors such as impending economic adversity and raw materials problems, could explain almost all the recorded variation in output, thus condemning the Hawthorne research for its concern with human relations and humanitarianism. Jones (1992) also applied quantitative methods to re-examine the Hawthorne evidence. The results revealed that the external factors and the worker interactions were of joint importance in affecting output and Jones (1992) concluded: “The human relations approach to industrial sociology is not controverted by the original Hawthorne data from which it began”.

The Hawthorne studies started off, following the scientific management, by regarding productivity as a function of task-oriented organizational factors, but “because of the discovery of the potency of social influences on worker productivity, the Hawthorne studies are often credited with providing the foundation for the field of human relations” (Hatch, 1997, pp. 241-242), concerned with the factors that affect human behavior at work. “Whatever else Taylor did, at least he gave impetus to the development of management thinking and the later development of organizational behavior” (Mullins, 2005, p. 72). “Whatever the interpretation of the results of the Hawthorne experiments, they did generate new ideas concerning the importance of work groups and leadership, communications, output restrictions,

motivation and job design ... The Hawthorne experiments undoubtedly marked a significant step forward in providing a further insight into human behavior at work and the development of management thinking” (Mullins, 2005, pp. 80-81).

In the 1940s, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations studied the “new social techniques developed in [coal-mining] industry” (Trist & Bamforth, 1951, p. 3) and discovered that the efficient use of coal-getting method was influenced by the social relationships of workers and superiors. It was concluded that “the persistence of socially ineffective structures ... is likely to be a major factor in preventing a rise of morale, in discouraging recruitment, and in increasing labour turnover” (Trist & Bamforth, 1951, p. 37). The socio-technical systems approach adopted by the Tavistock researchers has swayed research further away from scientific management.

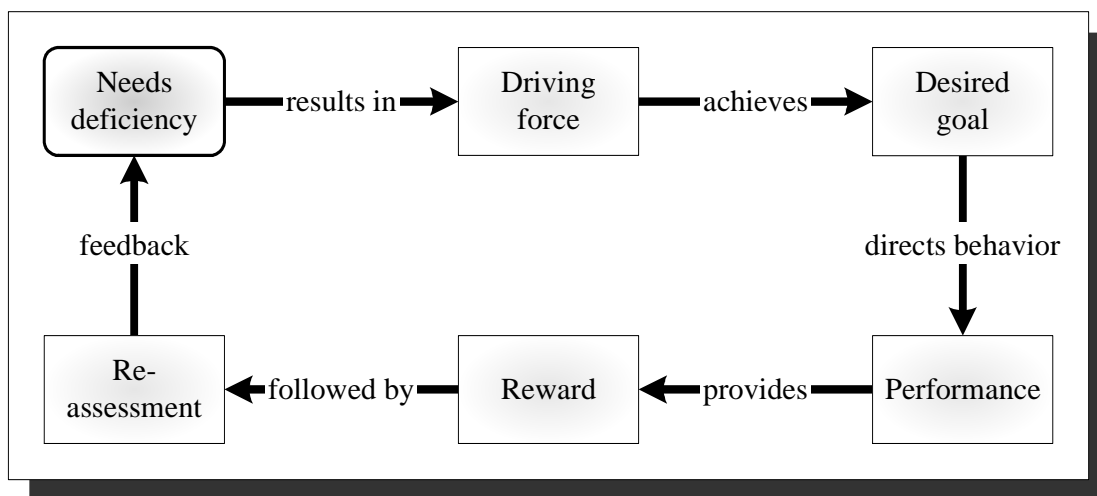
The evolution of management theory has reflected changes in the surrounding economical and social environment. Changes in the economy and society worldwide resulted, in the advanced Western economies, in workforces that no longer accepted being treated like cogs of the machine, and consequently brought out the importance for managers of workers’ motivation and satisfaction.

### 2.3 A definition of work motivation

This research focuses on job motivation at work. The basic concepts underlying motivation are summarized in Figure 2-2. The model describes a basic process of motivation. This begins with human needs deficiencies, desires or expectations, which result in the driving force or motives for finding ways to satisfy the needs or to achieve the goals. The study of what motivates people is delineated by the content theories that explain motivation in terms of needs. Maslow’s (1943; 1954), Alderfer’s (1969, 1972) and Herzberg’s (1966, 1968) theories concern innate needs, and McClelland’s (1955, 1961) concerns acquired needs. The study of how motivation occurs is categorized mainly under the process theories that explain motivation in terms of human perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about attaining rewards in order to satisfy needs. Particularly, the expectancy theories of Vroom (1964), and Porter and Lawler (1968) focus mainly on the strength of the tendency to act; the equity theory of Adams (1963, 1965) focuses on the perception of fairness of the reward and its role in the selection of an act; and the goal-setting theory of Locke

(1968) focuses on the effects of goals, including feedback on goal attainment, on how behavior is directed. There are also other perspectives, such as the reinforcement theory of Skinner (1953), which Vroom (1964) focuses on how the effect of the following consequences and schedule on which they were delivered, and on how prior stimuli gain control over behavior-consequence relationships.

Figure 2-2: A motivational process model, adapted from Hellriggel, Slocum and Woodman (2004)



The word ‘motivation’ is derived from the Latin ‘moveo moti motum’, which means to move, arouse, affect, or influence (Online English to Latin Dictionary, 2005). To motivate a person means to move, arouse, affect, or influence a person to act or to behave.

Columbia Encyclopedia (2005) defines motivation as a field in psychology, and as the intention of achieving a goal, leading to goal-directed behavior. In Encarta World English Dictionary (2005), motivation is defined [a] as the act of giving somebody a reason or incentive to do something; and [b] as a feeling of enthusiasm, interest, or commitment that makes somebody want to do something, or something that causes such a feeling; and [c] as a reason for doing something or behaving in a particular way; and [d] in psychology, the biological, emotional, cognitive, or social forces that activate and direct behavior. Motivation is a complex issue and is at once characterized by each of the elements above and yet the concept is more than the sum of individual elements.

Some authors have put emphasis on understanding motivation as a psychological process. Kreitner (1992) describes motivation as the process that gives behavior purpose and direction. Mitchell (1997) notes that motivation is the process that accounts for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal. Luthans (1998, p. 161) defines motivation as a "process that starts with a physiological or psychological deficiency or need that activates a behavior or drive that is aimed at a goal or incentive".

Some other contemporary authors have defined motivation in terms of directing individual behavior. Pinder (1998) describes work motivation as the set of internal and external forces that initiate work-related behavior, and determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration. Daft (2005, p. 588) refers motivation to "the forces either within or external to a person that arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action".

Motivation has been understood as a predisposition to behave in a purposive manner to achieve specific, unmet needs (Buford, Bedeian, & Lindner, 1995); as an internal drive to satisfy an unsatisfied need (Higgins, 1994); and as the will to achieve (Bedeian, 1993).

While recognizing its complex nature, motivation is characterized by an inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals. In this context, the study of motivation in this research involves seeking to explain the temporary sales people's actions for attaining their goals.

#### 2.4 A typology of motivational theories

"Content theories emphasize the needs that motivate people" (Daft, 2005, p. 590), place emphasis on what motivates, and seek to identify and account for the specific influences that motivate people. That is, in general, content theories regard motivation as the result of internal drives that compel an individual to act or move toward the satisfaction of individual needs. They study the source of goals and examine what motivates a person through the concepts of needs and motivators.

The prevalent content theories are Maslow's (1943; 1954) hierarchy of needs, Alderfer's (1969, 1972) ERG theory, Herzberg's (1966, 1968) two-factor theory and McClelland's (1955, 1961) needs theory of achievement, affiliation and power needs.

“Process theories explain how workers select behavioral actions to met their needs and determine whether their choices were successful” (Daft, 2005, p. 596). They view motivational factors as a complex set of variables that, when taken together, enable motivation. They study the conscious human decision making process and examine how behaviors are selected, energized, directed, initiated and maintained in the specifically willed and self-directed human cognitive processes.

Process theories include Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Porter and Lawler's (1968) performance-satisfaction theory, Adams' (1963) equity theory, and Locke's (1968) goal-setting theory.

Coming from a different perspective is the behavioral approach, represented in this review by Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory. It focuses on the manipulation of stimuli to achieve specific behavioral responses and rewarding required responses, in this way, controlling behavior. There are also other distinguished approaches such as the Kelley's (1967) attribution theory, Deci's (1971) cognitive evaluation theory, and job design, including Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristics model.

## 2.5 Content perspectives

Content theories of motivation study needs. “Needs generate the energy required for survival” (Weiner, 1992, p. 64). “The physiological deficits, or needs instigate the organism to undertake behaviors that result in the offsetting of those needs” (Hull, 1943), as cited in Weiner (1992, p. 64). Two broad types of needs are identified: physical primary needs, which are innate, and secondary needs, which are psychological and learned. Human needs are a powerful source of explanation of human behavior and social interaction. This section revisits and reviews major content theories of motivation, attempting to explain why people have different needs at different times. Figure 2-3 summarizes the four key needs based motivational theories, namely Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs, Alferder's (1969, 1972)



ERG theory, Herzberg's (1966, 1968) motivator-hygiene theory and McClelland's (1955, 1961) learned needs theory.

Figure 2-3: Need-based [content] motivational theories, adapted and modified from McShane and Travaglione (2003)

<b>Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs</b>	<b>Alderfer's ERG Theory</b>	<b>Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory</b>	<b>McClelland's Learned Needs Theory</b>
Self-actualization	Growth	Motivators	Need for Achievement
Esteem	Relatedness		Need for Power
Belongingness & Love		Existence	Need for Affiliation
Safety	Hygiene Factors		
Physiological			

### 2.5.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

In his seminal work, Abraham Harold Maslow [1908-1970] summarized the famous hierarchy of needs theory:

*There are at least five sets of goals, which we may call basic needs. These are briefly physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. In addition, we are motivated by the desire to achieve or maintain the various conditions upon which these basic satisfactions rest and by certain more intellectual desires ... These basic goals are related to each other, being arranged in a hierarchy of prepotency (Maslow, 1943, p. 392).*

Maslow (1943, 1954) classifies all human needs into five categories and says that only unsatisfied needs motivate. According to the theory, the lowest level of the

hierarchy of needs is the “physiological needs” referring to the concepts of “homeostasis” - “the body’s automatic efforts to maintain a constant, normal state of the blood stream” and “appetite” - the “preferential choice among foods” (Maslow, 1954, p. 15). Physiological needs refers to the basic need for survival such as getting a salary that covers basic living expenses, together with such conditions such as rest breaks, pleasant work conditions, and cafeteria facilities. The second level is the “safety needs” such as “security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos; need for structure, order, law, and limits; strength in the protector; and so on” (Maslow, 1954, p. 18). The third level is the “belongingness and love needs” (Maslow, 1954, p. 20) that reflects our need for love, acceptance and belonging exemplified through having compatible workgroup members, receiving employee-centered supervision, engaging in recreation and social activities, having personal and professional friends. The fourth level is the “esteem needs”. These are, first, the self-esteem needs such as the “desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence, confidence in the face of the world, and independence and freedom”; and second, the social-esteem needs such as the “desire for reputation or prestige, status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation” (Maslow, 1954). The highest level is the “self-actualization need” and refers to the “desire for self-fulfillment, namely, the tendency for them to become actualized in what they are potentially (Maslow, 1954, p. 22).

According to Maslow (1943, 1954), needs follow a sequential hierarchy. He claims that as the person satisfies a lower level need, the next higher need in the hierarchy becomes the primary motivator, and this is later known as the “satisfaction-progression - a process whereby people become increasingly motivated to fulfill a higher level of need as a lower level of need is gratified” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2004, p. 141). Maslow describes the hierarchical relations of these five needs:

*At once other [and ‘higher’] needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new [and still ‘higher’] needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency (Maslow, 1943, p. 27).*

According to Wiley (1997), the main strengths of Maslow's theory are the identification of individual needs for the purpose of motivating behavior, and the idea that by appealing to an employee's unfulfilled needs, managers may influence performance.

Figure 2-4: Sales people's job characteristics in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, adapted from Berl, Williamson and Powell (1984)

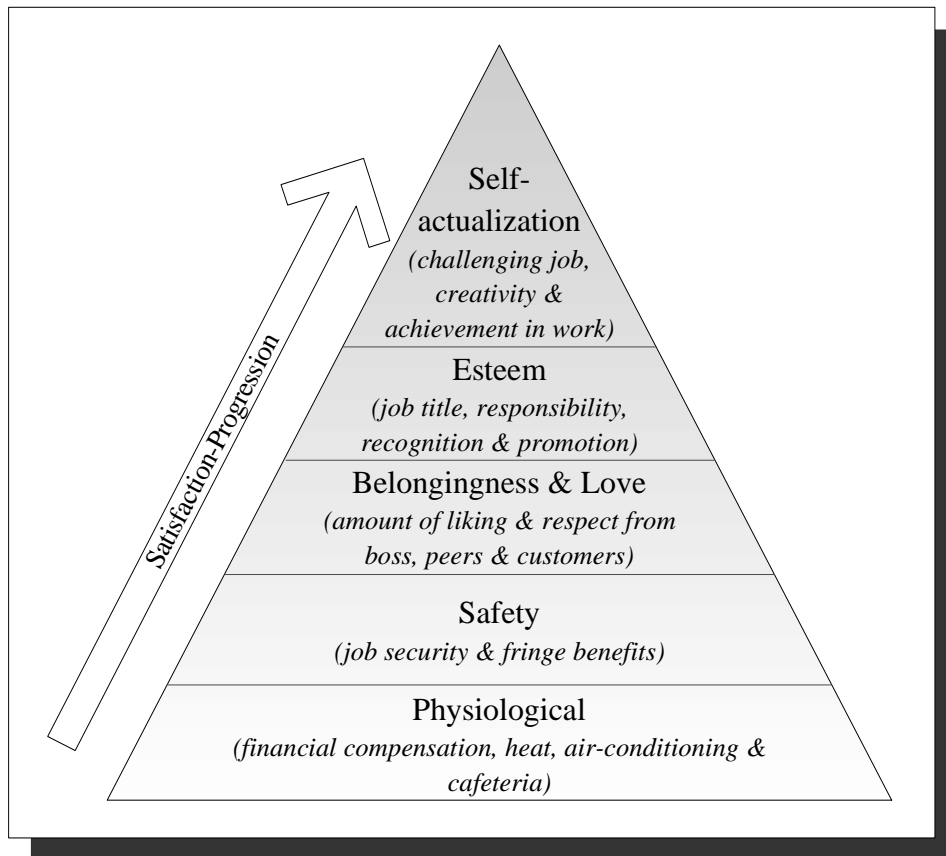


Figure 2-4 depicts Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the corresponding job characteristics of sales people likely to meet these needs. Maslow's was the first widely known and adopted theory of motivation arguably because it is simple to understand and easy to translate into practice. However, research has not been able to establish the validity of the needs hierarchy. In an extensive review of the research findings associated with Maslow's hierarchy, Wahba and Bridwell (1976) concluded that Maslow's model presents the students of work motivation with a paradox: The theory is widely accepted, but there is little research evidence to support it.

There are major issues. First, there is no clear evidence indicating that human needs can be classified into five distinct categories (Porter et al., 2003). Secondly, the hierarchical structure of needs lacks empirical support. Thirdly, there is little evidence to suggest that people are motivated to satisfy exclusively one need at a time, except in situations where needs conflict, but it is arguable that each individual has her or his own hierarchy of motives (Beck, 2000).

In a longitudinal study, the data on 187 managers in 2 organizations were collected for correlational analysis, Lawler III and Suttle (1972) found little evidence to support the view set forth by Maslow and others that human needs are arranged in a multilevel hierarchy. Rowan (1998, 1999) criticizes the notion that Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a one-way linear trend from lower to higher levels. Berl, Williamson and Powell (1984) tested the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory with the sales forces of fourteen companies. It was found that the needs were not arrayed in a hierarchical manner. Lindner (1998) found that the range of motivation factors of the employees was mixed rather than conforming to the hierarchy. In a study of the geriatric patients, Majercsik (2005) found that the hierarchy of needs turned upside down.

The hierarchy of needs was adopted in international marketing to study worldwide consumers assuming that they have similar needs and wants in order to understand the standardization of marketing strategies (Raymond, Mittelstaedt, & Hopkins, 2003). However, the needs and their hierarchy were challenged across cultures and there was little empirical support for the universality of the theory. In some situations, Maslow's hierarchy also has difficulty in explaining cases such as the starving artist who neglects physiological needs in pursuit of aesthetic or spiritual needs. According to Rowan (1999), the main source of weakness of Maslow's approach is that individual needs are assumed to be innate, so that the influence of social interaction and culture are seriously downgraded.

Nevertheless, Maslow's hierarchy remains a classic explanation of motivation and behavior (Champoux, 2006), and if Maslow's theory is accepted and applied it in its full form, the basic rule for the manager would be to motivate the temporary sales people to move up the needs hierarchy. The creation of the basic motivational force can start with an attractive financial compensation. As it is difficult to closely

supervise these sales people working outbound, the compensation can consist of a larger portion from the sales commission rather than the hourly pay in order to encourage self-initiation of diligent selling. The second level of motivational force is to offer job security, for instance when temporary sales peoples consistently perform then they may be invited to sign a short-term contract to secure a basic minimum level of employment. Perhaps also, medical insurance coverage and paid sick leave could be included as company benefits. Progressing to the third level, well-performing sales people may be awarded something like high achievers' club membership and may be invited for an award presentation gathering. At the fourth level, these high achievers may also be assigned a senior title with responsibility to train new sales people, and perhaps given opportunities to meet with management regularly to express their opinions on how to improve the business. Finally the highest level of motivational force might offer advancement to senior level posts with opportunities to develop company strategies for the facing of challenges and the development of dynamic capability.

#### 2.5.2 Alderfer's ERG theory

The ERG theory (Alderfer, 1969, 1972) is an extension of the Maslow content theory of work motivation (Luthans, 1998), and attempts to overcome the problem of Maslow's (1943; 1954) needs hierarchy of relating 'need satisfaction' to 'strength of desires' (Alderfer, 1969) in empirical tests. Alderfer (1969) identified the same human needs of Maslow, but reclassified them into existence or survival needs, relatedness or social needs, and personal growth needs - the ERG theory.

Figure 2-5: Alderfer's ERG model, adapted from Alderfer (1969)

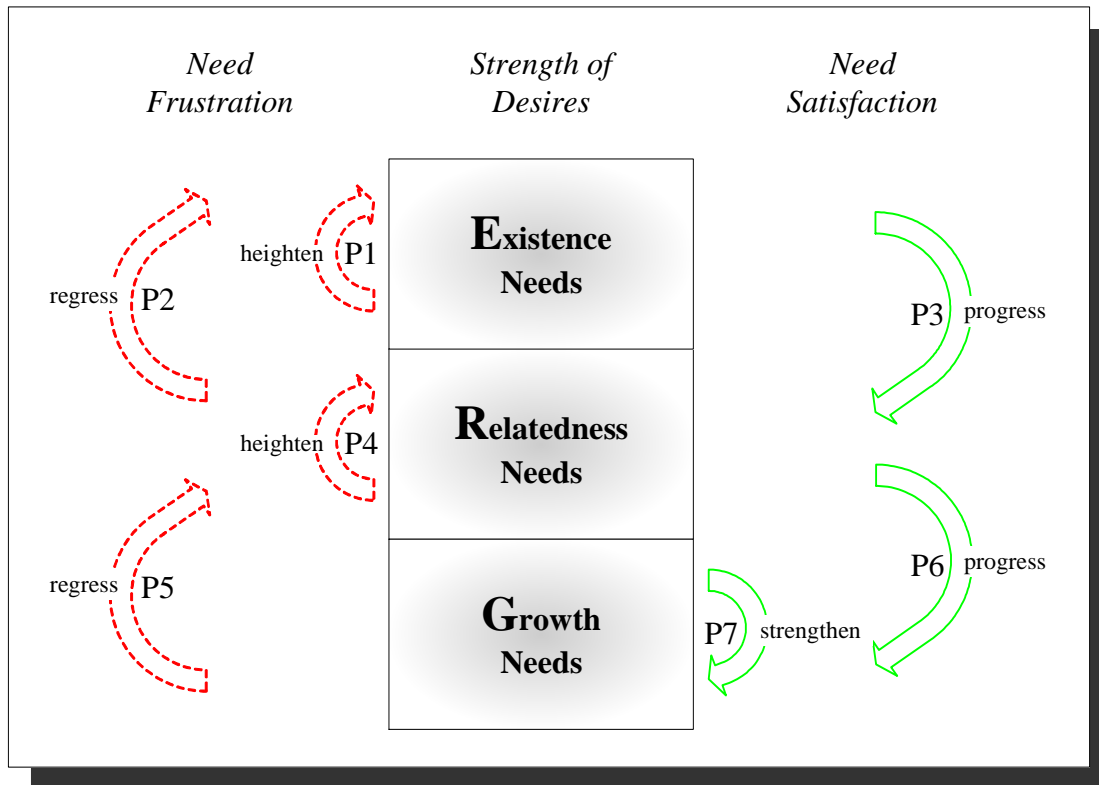


Figure 2-5 depicts Alderfer's (1969, p. 148) ERG theory. The major propositions in the ERG theory are: “[P1] The less existence needs are satisfied, the more they will be desired; and [P2] The less relatedness needs are satisfied, the more existence needs will be desired; and [P3] The more existence needs are satisfied, the more relatedness needs will be desired; and [P4] The less relatedness needs are satisfied, the more they will be desired; and [P5] The less growth needs are satisfied, the more relatedness needs will be desired; and [P6] The more relatedness needs are satisfied, the more growth needs will be desired; and [P7] The more growth needs are satisfied, the more they will be desired”.

In ERG theory of motivation, the ranking of the three categories of core needs of the ERG theory is neither universal nor predictable, and the needs, in general, follow the satisfaction-progression process whereby existence needs motivate at a more fundamental level than relatedness needs, which in turn if satisfied will progress to the growth needs. On the other hand, the ERG model is also conditioned by the frustration-regression principle that recognizes the desire of needs may regress to

lower level needs if higher level needs remains unfulfilled, then the lower level needs are reactivated and become the primary drivers of behavior. Alderfer (1969, 1972) maintains that even though a need may be met, this does not mean that it will cease to be a motivating factor of the individual's behavior. Thus, the growth needs can continuously be strengthened to provide motivational force. Moreover, the ERG model proposes that more than one need may be operative in a given individual at any point in time.

Unlike Maslow, ERG theory contends that people of different cultural backgrounds rank the need categories differently (Haire, Ghiselli, & Porter, 1963) and is "more consistent with our knowledge of individual differences among people" (Robbins, 2003, p. 162). Thus, the needs themselves cannot be generalized to all individuals as they differ from person to person as a function of culture, education, family background, and age.

On the whole, ERG theory appears to represent a more plausible version of needs hierarchy theory than Maslow's. It has received better research support than Maslow, "mainly because human needs cluster more neatly around the three categories proposed by Alderfer than the five categories in Maslow's hierarchy" (McShane & Von Glinow, 2004, p. 142). A few studies have shown support for the ERG theory (Borg & Braun, 1996; Schneider & Alderfer, 1973), but there is also evidence that it does not work in some organizations (Borg & Braun, 1996).

Alderfer's ERG model is still being applied in research. Stam and Molleman (1999) applied the ERG model to study the needs of young IT professionals, it was found that the growth and development needs of young IT professionals were very high and the results indicated that firms will be more successful in recruiting and retaining young IT professionals if they are able to fulfill their growth and social needs. This exemplifies the typical application of the ERG model.

To apply the ERG model to motivate the young temporary sales people, managers may use a combination of the rewards to cater for all the three needs, but more emphasis can be put on the growth and social belonging needs. For example, to cater for the growth needs, the managers can set up a progression system such that the young sales people can be promoted to also shoulder the responsibility to coach

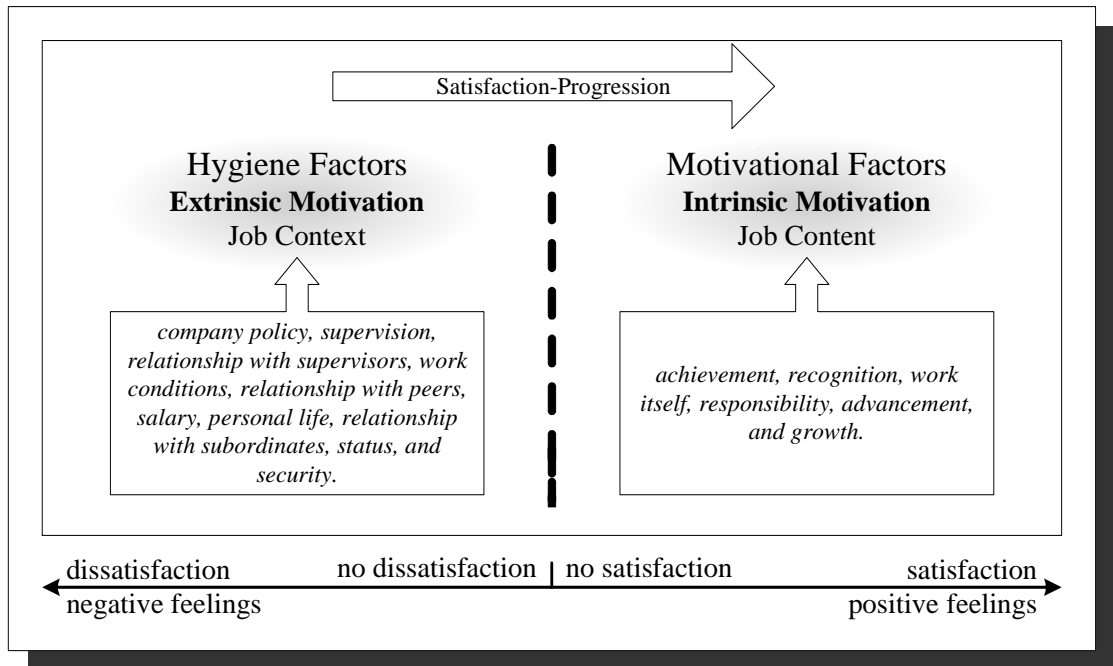
new hires and to perform some direct supervision of them. To cater for the social needs, promoted sales people can also help to organize formal business meetings such as training and briefing sessions and informal social gathering such as barbecues. Managers must also be careful not to undermine the existence needs because when all else fails to motivate, this is where to provide the basic motivation. Therefore the basic salary and commission scheme must be kept competitive, not only in relation to the similar positions in the marketplace but also to the alternative part-time jobs that these temporary sales people could find. In some cases, managers can also consider offering a higher-than-market pay schemes to attract the best quality and most aggressive sales people, and could carefully manage to arrange better earnings per hour worked.

### 2.5.3 Herzberg's two-factor [motivation-hygiene] theory

Frederick Irving Herzberg [1923-2000] and his associates Bernard Mausner and Barbara Synderman interviewed two hundred and three accountants and engineers and asked them to think of a time in the past when they felt especially good or bad about their present job or any previous job, and to provide reasons, and a description of the sequence of events giving rise to that positive or negative feeling (Herzberg et al., 1959). This method became later known as the critical incident method. The responses were interpreted and sixteen factors were identified related to either job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. Five factors related to job satisfaction tended to be intrinsic in nature and were labeled as motivators or growth factors and they are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Hygiene factors are those that are job context related and whose presence has no perceived effect, but whose absence motivates as people become dissatisfied and act to get them back. Eleven factors related to job dissatisfaction tended to be extrinsic, and were named as hygiene or maintenance factors. These were company policy, supervision, relationship with supervisors, work conditions, relationship with peers, salary, personal life, relationship with subordinates, status, and security. According to the theory, motivators are job content related and their presence motivates, but their absence does not cause any particular dissatisfaction and just fails to motivate. Herzberg's (Herzberg, 1966, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959) two-factor theory is illustrated in Figure 2-6.



Figure 2-6: Herzberg's two-factor theory



There is some similarity between Herzberg's and Maslow's models. They both suggest that needs have to be satisfied, in order for the employee to be motivated. However, Herzberg (Herzberg, 1966, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959) argues that only the higher levels, that is, the self-actualization and esteem needs of the Maslow's hierarchy, act as a motivator. The remaining needs can only cause dissatisfaction if not addressed. Herzberg (1987) made the retrospective commentary on his motivation-hygiene theory:

*It suggests that environmental factors [hygienes] can at best create no dissatisfaction on the job, and their absence creates dissatisfaction. In contrast, what makes people happy on the job and motivates them are the job content factors [motivators] (Herzberg, 1987, pp. 119-120).*

Some research articles (Brockman, 1971; Whitset & Winslow, 1967) strongly support Herzberg's position, while others (House & Wigdor, 1967; Vroom, 1964) seriously question the research methodology underlying the theory (Porter et al., 2003).

Herzberg's theory is still in use in research today. In partnership with PricewaterhouseCoopers Global Human Resource Solutions, a survey was undertaken in the metropolitan Tokyo area that examined motivation of Japanese workers using the two-factor Herzberg model, which appeared to be supported (Brislin, MacNab, Worthley, Kabigting Jr, & Zukis, 2005).

The theory has not only been used in human relations management research but also in other fields to understand satisfaction. The idea of satisfaction as a function of the hygiene or the motivator attributes were adopted in Crompton's (2003) study in the travel industry to explain the visitor satisfaction with an event. The result is consistent with Herzberg's suggestion that satisfaction only results from the interaction with the motivator attributes.

Using two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) as a framework for analyzing empirical about student satisfaction in college setting, it was found that the path coefficient [causal connection] from student partial college experience to satisfaction was consistent with the two-factor theory (DeShields Jr, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005).

Dunn (2001) adopted Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of project team members in a matrix organizational structure. It was found that a pattern of control over the Herzberg factors for project team members exists in a matrix organization, with project managers tending to control motivators and functional managers tending to control hygiene factors.

Herzberg's two-factor theory has also received disconfirmation. A study was carried out to test the two-factor theory on Thai construction engineers and foremen following Herzberg's interviewing procedure and the results were compared to Herzberg's factors. It was found that achievement contributed to satisfaction for engineers but contributed to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction for foremen. It was concluded that that Herzberg's theory is not entirely applicable in the Thai construction setting (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003).

Moreover, Tamosaitis and Schwenker (2002) found that different age groups focused on different factors as motivational factors and hygiene factors. Shipley and

Kiely (1986) found that environmental job context variables could also be motivators and intrinsic variables such as the work itself could also be hygiene factors.

Gardner (1977) criticized Herzberg's critical incident interview questions on the grounds that the data obtained from the respondents would be very likely retrospective and selective. The claim that it may be natural for people to take credit for satisfaction and to blame dissatisfaction on external factors (Vroom, 1967), as cited in House & Wigdor (1967, p. 369) also led to a controversy about the intrinsic versus and the environmental, or the job content versus job context, dichotomy of the theory. The criticism was that hygiene factors were mostly environmental factors that people blame for dissatisfaction and motivation factors were mostly personal factors that people take credit for satisfaction. It is possible that self-service attributional biases were invoked during the interviews.

Another criticism is about the possible bias in interpreting data during the process of coding. It might be inevitable for researchers to use some of their own interpretations while they sorted out the data into categories. The researchers' own interpretations of the data could lead to contamination of the dimensions so derived (House & Wigdor, 1967). One major argument is that some factors, for example, salary, are reported by some respondents as satisfying and by some as dissatisfying but Herzberg classified salary as one of the hygiene factors.

Nevertheless, Herzberg's (1966, 1968) theory has been broadly read and despite its weaknesses, its enduring values are that it recognizes that true motivation may come from within a person and the notion that unsatisfied situations may or may not cause dissatisfaction.

If motivation is to be addressed in accord with Herzberg's (1966, 1968) theory, job dissatisfaction has to be removed and job satisfaction has to be enhanced. To remove dissatisfaction among temporary sales people, it is suggested to regularly review the pay and the pay scheme as they seem to be the most salient dissatisfaction factors for students taking up a part-time job to earn their living while going through college. It is also suggested to address two other likely dissatisfaction factors, namely the issues of supervision and the relationship with the supervisor. Some high performers can be promoted to become a supervisor of a small district with

additional responsibility to provide direct supervision by visiting the other temporary sales people during non rush hours and perhaps switching the sales reporting responsibility from the sales people to the supervisors. This could not only address the dissatisfaction factors of the sales people being supervised but also enrich the job of the experienced and persistent high performers, thus heightening the satisfaction of the high performers. It is also suggested to run sales contests and organize social gathering events to entertain the entire sales force and also to recognize the performers and present them with incentives and prizes. In the events, the sales people enhance the relationships with the company and colleagues while the incentives and prizes presentation recognize the achievements. The key is that both hygiene and motivational factors are considered.

#### 2.5.4 McClelland's needs theory of achievement, affiliation and power

McClelland's (1955, 1961, 1962, 1965a, 1965b, 1970, 1975, 1984, 1987) needs theory contends that individuals acquire certain needs from the culture of a society by learning from the events that they experience. David Clarence McClelland [1917-1998] used the Thematic Apperception Test [TAT] as a tool to measure the individual needs of different people. The respondent is presented with a series of ambiguous pictures and is asked to develop a spontaneous story for each picture, assuming that people will project his or her own needs into the story. The information is then interpreted to form the individual's score for each of the needs mainly of achievement, affiliation, and power.

In his book - *The Achieving Society*, McClelland (1961) proposed that humans are motivated by three major needs: the need for achievement [nACH], the need for affiliation [nAFF], and the need for power [nPOW]. The theory is based on the belief that most people are motivated toward a certain pattern of behavior by one or a combination of the three major needs (McClelland, 1984, 1987).

nACH refers to inner urge to excel or to do things better and to achieve self-set standards (McClelland, 1984, 1987). It is behavior directed toward competition with a standard of excellence. According to the theory, this need is shaped in part rather early in life by culture and in part by varying techniques of parenting. In relation to work motivation, the characteristics of high achievers are

theorized as being: [1] a strong desire to assume personal responsibility for performing a task or finding a solution to the problem; and [2] a tendency to set moderately difficult goals and take calculated risks; and [3] a strong desire for performance feedback especially in quantitative form.

nAFF refers to the need to form and maintain meaningful relationships with others (McClelland, 1984, 1987). It is the desire to establish and maintain friendly and warm relations with other individuals. Characteristics of individuals with a high need for affiliation are: [1] a strong desire for approval and reassurance from others; and [2] a tendency to conform to the wishes and norms of others when pressured by people whose friendships they value; and [3] a sincere interest in the feelings of others. According to the theory, people with a high nAFF are attracted to tasks involving groups and people with this need would tend to be the peacemakers, team members, and the social coordinators. These people enjoy the challenge of group work and they want to be accepted by the group so therefore they tend to listen, compromise, and enable a group to move forward.

nPOW refers to the desire to influence or control over others (McClelland, 1984, 1987). This need is explained as the need to control others, to be responsible for them, and to influence their behavior. Characteristics of individuals with a high nPOW are: [1] a desire to influence and direct somebody else; and [2] a desire to exercise control over others; and [3] a concern for maintaining leader-follower relations. People with a high nPOW tend to win arguments, persuade others, and seek power positions. McClelland (1987) suggests that the first face of power to be the need to control and dominate others and the other face to be the social or institutional need to persuade and inspire people to help them achieve, attain goals but not dominate them.

Support for the theory comes from the large bodies of empirical research, mainly done by McClelland and his associates ( McClelland, 1955, 1961, 1965a, 1965b, 1970, 1975; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; McClelland & Winter, 1969; Miron & McClelland, 1979).

However, there have been a number of criticisms of McClelland's work summarized by Porter, Bigley and Steers (2003): [1] the primary research instrument

used TAT has questionable predictive validity; and [2] the claim that the needs, especially nACH, can be learned by adults conflicts with a large body of literature stating that motives are normally acquired in childhood and that they are difficult to alter in adulthood; and [3] it is questionable whether acquired needs are acquired permanently.

Despite these criticisms, the concept of learned or acquired needs has clear applicability to organizational and work settings (Porter et al., 2003). Employees with high nACH, when given challenging jobs, will perform (David Clarence McClelland, 1961). Employees with high nAFF have better attendance records than those with low nAFF (Birch & Veroff, 1966). Employees with a high nAFF perform better in situations where personal support and approval are tied to performance (Chung, 1977; French, 1958). Employees with high nPOW tend to be superior performers, to be in supervisor positions, to have above-average attendance records, and to be rated by others as having good leadership abilities (Steers & Braunstein, 1976).

McClelland's (1962) assertion that the nACH is a learned need has long been a matter of uncertainty. This assertion has been tested using structural equation modeling to assess the causal influence of the nACH and other McClelland's needs on the performance intentions of managers and frontline employees (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2003). The empirical results support the learned need assertion and the findings highlight the disadvantages to companies that disregard the achievement motivation of lower-level employees. In another study on the effects of an entrepreneurship program, Hansemark (1998) found that the participants had developed a higher level of nACH, which coincided with previous research (Alschuler, 1969, 1973; McClelland & Winter, 1969; Miron & McClelland, 1979) that achievement motivation could be developed.

McClelland's theory has been applied to the study of job satisfaction. Harrell and Stahl (1984) studied seventy-seven professionals of a large international CPA firm and it was found that individuals with relatively high power and achievement needs appeared more apt to experience high job satisfaction and to be motivated to develop into superior work performers. This result suggests that McClelland's theory can be employed to provide a conceptual understanding of how intrinsic differences

between individuals can influence some persons to experience relatively high job satisfaction in a work environment in which their contemporaries experience relatively low job satisfaction.

McClelland's theory has also been widely accepted as a means of analyzing motivational needs. Rutter, Smith and Hall (2002) found that students enrolled in family and consumer sciences were motivated more by the need for achievement than by the need for affiliation and more by the need for affiliation than by the need for power. Langan-Fox (1995) investigated the psychological attributes and motivations of founder women, including an exploration of McClelland's need for achievement to study the founder women's entrepreneurial achievement.

To apply McClelland's needs theory to motivate temporary sales people, it is suggested that the achievement, affiliation and power needs have to be addressed. It is suggested to create a set of concurrent direct supervisory positions for the senior sales people to cater for the power need; to set up a high achievers' club to cater for the achievement needs; and to set up a social club for the affiliation needs. To start with, performance goals are set and sales contests are arranged monthly, quarterly or for special seasons. High performers might be recognized as the 'star of the period' with incentives such as buffet or karaoke shop coupons for them to spend with their families or friends. They might also be awarded merit points equivalent to dollar values that they can accumulate to buy the gifts they like most from the shop they are working. To address the power needs, selected persistent performers could be assigned as members of the organizing committee of the social club, funded by the company to organize social activities for other temporary sales people. Committee members would have to use time after working hours to do all the planning and implementation but would be paid a fixed amount as an allowance to compensate the transportation and other costs. Some top performers could be appointed as term team leaders to supervise a small district. Conditions might be set for remaining in the team leaders' position, such as fulfilling certain sales targets, otherwise they would be replaced by others. They would need to provide direct supervision during business hours and some coaching and some reporting using non-business hours. These non-business hour duties could be paid at a fixed rate. These conditions would also encourage the team leaders to fulfill their needs for affiliation and power. The

fundamental principle suggested here would be to offer activities to address all three needs advocated in McClelland's theory. Lastly, according to the theory, it might be advantageous to give hiring preference to individuals with the aptitude and profile identified for the high achievers.

## 2.6 Process perspectives

Process theories ask how motivation occurs. Process theories "explain how employees select behaviors through which to meet their needs and how they determine whether their choices were successful" (Daft, 2005, p. 596). The explanations are in terms of human perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and expectations about the attainability of the goals and the valuation of the needs for working.

### 2.6.1 Vroom's expectancy theory

The expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) states that motivation to behave or perform results from conscious choices among alternatives to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. It suggests that motivation is a multiplicative function of three constructs: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Victor Harold Vroom's Expectancy theory has become a standard in motivation, as reflected by its incorporation as a general framework for a wide variety of research (Brockner, 1992; Kilduff, 1990), as cited in Ambrose and Kulik, (1999). It has its roots in cognitive psychology and in the concepts of choice behavior and utility from classical economic theory (Luthans, 1998).

According to Scheibe (1970), a person's behavior is a result of individual values reflected as wants and beliefs. The expectancy theory holds that people are goal-oriented beings (Tan, 2000) engaged in a rational process to direct their efforts (McShane & Von Glinow, 2004) in response to their beliefs and values. It applies an expected value model to an organizational setting and is often used to predict one's job satisfaction, one's occupational choice, the likelihood of staying in a job, and the effort one might expend at work (Behling & Starke, 1973).

The two key variables in the theory, expectancy and instrumentality, are probabilities. Expectancy links effort to performance and refers to the perceived strength of a person's belief, that is, the probability, about whether or not a particular



job performance is attainable. Instrumentality links performance to outcome and as a probability belief linking the performance to certain desired outcomes. Valence refers to the emotional orientations people hold with respect to outcomes and ranges from negative to positive. It is the utility of the reward to the individual, or the attractiveness, or the anticipated satisfaction or dissatisfaction that an individual feels toward the reward.

Figure 2-7: Expectancy theory - three constructs and the variables affecting them, adapted from Vroom (1964) and Scholl (2002)

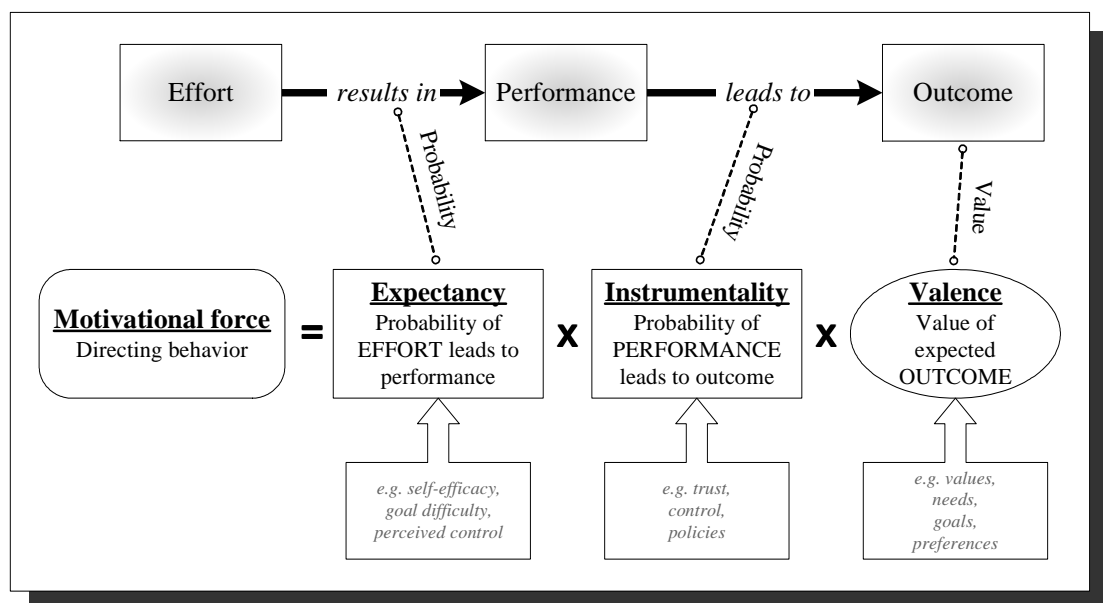


Figure 2-7 is adapted from Vroom (1964) and Scholl (2002), and illustrates the model of expectancy theory and the variables affecting the three constructs: expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Perceptions or beliefs such as self-efficacy, goal difficulty, and perceived control over performance heighten expectancy; and trust in the leader, control over the reward, and formalized policies increase instrumentality. The valence is based on the value that the individual personally places on the rewards with respect to how it meets the individual's needs and goals. Finally, the motivational force that directs behavior is theorized to be the multiplicative function of the three constructs expectancy, instrumentality and valence.

Since its introduction in 1964, expectancy theory has generated substantial research interest. According to Porter, Bigley and Steers (2003), two difficulties are encountered when testing the model (Harrell & Stahl, 1986; Miner, 1980): [1] there is limited agreement about the meaning of effort; and [2] the theory does not specify which outcomes are relevant to a particular individual in a particular situation. Porter, Bigley and Steers (2003) further criticize expectancy theory on the grounds that individuals are not always conscious of their own motives, expectancies and perceptual processes, contrary to the assumption made by expectancy theory; and because it tends to ignore habitual behavior and subconscious motivation. According to Robbins (1998), there are other critics, for example, Heneman III and Schwab (1972), Mitchell (1974) and Reinharth and Wahba (1975), yet most of the evidence is supportive of the theory, for example, Porter and Lawler (1968), Parker and Dyer (1976) and Arnold (1981).

Van Eerde and Thierry (1996) performed a meta-analysis to analyze the correlations of seventy-seven studies from 1964 to 1990 on Vroom's (1964) expectancy model. The results reinforce the position articulated by Mitchell (1974) that expectancy theory is a within-person decision-making model. Tan (2000) also claims to have found evidence of the construct validity of the expectancy theory of work motivation.

Expectancy theory has evidence to support it and it predicts motivation in situations in which effort-performance and performance-reward linkages are clearly perceived by the individual (House, Shapiro, & Wahba 1974). McShane and Von Glinow (2004) say that the theory has provided clearer guidelines to alter the employee's effort-performance expectancies, performance-outcome expectancies and outcome valences. Specifically, expectancy theory applications are given in Matteson and Ivancevich (1999): [1] regarding the expectancy concept: select high quality employees, provide adequate training, provide necessary resource support, and identify desired performance; and [2] regarding the instrumentality concept: clarify the reward system, clarify performance-reward possibilities, and ensure rewards are contingent upon performance; and [3] regarding the valence concept: match available rewards identified from individual needs and preferences for outcomes, and construct additional rewards as possible and feasible.

To apply expectancy theory, managers must first seek to increase the temporary sales people's expectancies that their effort will lead to performance and the instrumentality that their performance will lead to rewards. It is suggested to organize sessions for: [a] case experiences and success sharing; and [b] announcement of clear measurement and reward systems; and [c] presenting rewards that are valued. Sharing sessions are to be conducted by achievers to share, not only the skills proven to be successful, but also how they expend their effort to achieve performance. Announcement of the measurement and reward systems serves to communicate the message that performance will be rewarded, while the presentation of the rewards demonstrates and reinforces the linkage. Furthermore, the presentation of the rewards and the rewards themselves must be administered to ensure that they are valued rewards that are of positive valence to the sales people. It is suggested to set up a merit points system where the sales people's merits can be accumulated so that the sales people can redeem from a widely variety of choices such as, for example, electronic gadgets from the chain stores where some temporary sales people are working.

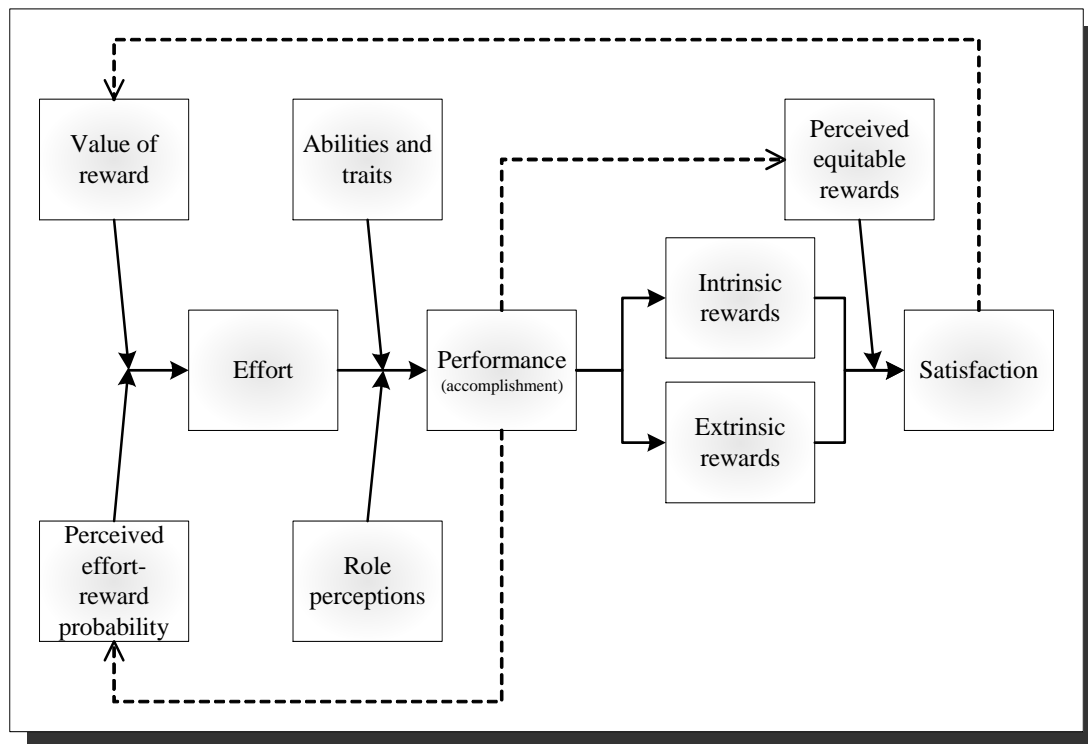
#### 2.6.2 Porter-Lawler's performance-satisfaction model of motivation

The Porter-Lawler model of motivation, as depicted in Figure 2-8 (Lawler, 1973; Porter & Lawler, 1968), is developed largely from expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), and attempts to integrate a great number of factors. It is a multivariate model that explains the complex relationships that exist among motivation, performance and satisfaction. Particularly, the model does not assume that satisfaction or performance mean motivation. Porter and Lawler (1968) pointed out that effort does not necessarily result in performance, but is also influenced by the employees' abilities and traits and by role perceptions. The theory posits that performance depends on satisfaction, and that satisfaction is determined by the extent of the actual rewards received and by the individual's perception of reward equity.

According to the model, the initial effort that directs behavior towards performance is created by the value of the reward for the individual, and by the individual's perception of the likelihood that effort will lead to reward. An individual may be ineffective in performing if he or she has little ability and has inaccurate role perceptions. Performances are paid off by extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Examples

of extrinsic rewards are good working conditions and status. Intrinsic rewards, which according to the theory are more effective than extrinsic rewards, include a sense of accomplishment and actualization. Performance, in turn, forms the perception of effort to reward probability and leads to a judgment about whether rewards are equitable. Perceptions regarding whether the rewards are equitable affect the level of satisfaction. The level of rewards received also produces attitudes about satisfaction. Satisfaction in turn reinforces the value of rewards. To summarize, “effort leads to performance, and good performance may lead to high job satisfaction” (Beck, 2000, p. 409).

Figure 2-8: Porter-Lawler’s performance-satisfaction model of motivation, adapted from Porter and Lawler (1968), as cited in Porter, Bigley & Steers, (2003)



The Porter-Lawler’s model suggests that managers should carefully assess their reward structures and that through careful planning and clear definition of role requirements, the effort performance-reward-satisfaction system should be integrated into an entire system of management.

Despite that satisfaction does not necessarily imply motivation, the Porter-Lawler model has made a significant contribution improved understanding of work motivation and has some research support, for example, from Blau (1993), Podsakoff and Williams (1986), Locke and Latham (1990), and Peach and Wren (1992). Although it is more applications oriented than the Vroom's (1964) model, it is still quite complex and has proved to be a difficult way to bridge the gap to actual management practice (Luthans, 1998).

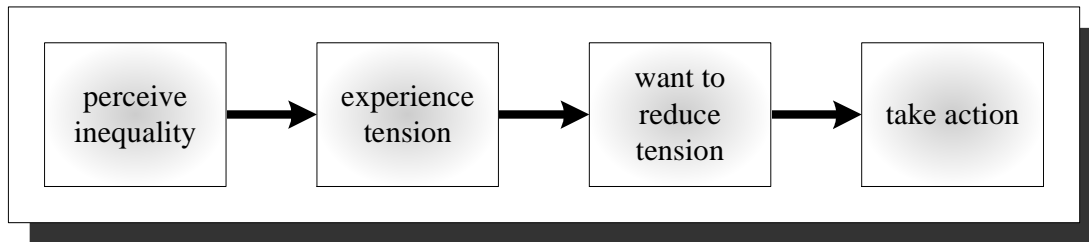
The previous section illustrates the application of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and the suggestions there are also applicable to the Porter-Lawler model. However, the two significant differences between the models suggest two additional considerations. First, it is suggested to consider the 'abilities and traits' factor by profiling the existing high performers for criteria to include during the recruitment process. For existing employees, training programs can be arranged to bring them to the desired performance level. Secondly, the managers have to communicate clearly, to ensure that the 'role perception' factor of the employees is favorable for performance, that is, the managers need to make sure that the employees perceive clearly what it is that they are expected to exert effort in, in order to accomplish their role.

### 2.6.3 Adams' equity theory

John Stacey Adams was a workplace and behavioral psychologist, and was the first to propose the equity theory of work motivation (Adams, 1963, 1965). The theory states that employees strive for equity between themselves and other employees. Adams (1963) argued that equity is a major factor influencing job performance and that satisfaction is a product of the degree of equity or inequity that employee perceive in the working environment.

Figure 2-9 summarizes Adams' (1963, 1965) equity theory: tension is created when an individual experiences and perceives inequity, and then he or she takes actions to reduce the tension.

Figure 2-9: Inequity as a motivational process



Equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) is a social comparison theory, which assumes that employees are consistently comparing themselves against other people and that they respond to inequity in order to maintain a fair balance between inputs and outputs. Adams calls the efforts put into the job the inputs, and calls the outcomes of the achieving the job the outputs.

Luthans (1998) explains that inequity occurs when a person perceives that the ratio of his or her outcomes to inputs and the ratio of a relevant other's outcomes to inputs are unequal. Motivation is predicted to be highest if the output-input ratio is similar to that of other referents. Overpaid or underpaid inequity results in low motivation due to guilt or the use of coping strategies. The employee may try to get raises for the other employees in the case of being overpaid, or may seek extra rewards for himself or herself in the case of being underpaid.

According to Matteson and Ivancevich (1999), equity theory suggests a number of alternative ways that employees can use to restore a sense of equity: [a] Change inputs; and [b] Change outputs; and [c] Change attitudes [rationalization]; and [d] Change the referent person; and [e] Change the inputs or outputs of the referent person; and [f] Leave the situation.

Figure 2-10: Schematic representation of Adams' equity theory, adapted from Luthans (1998)

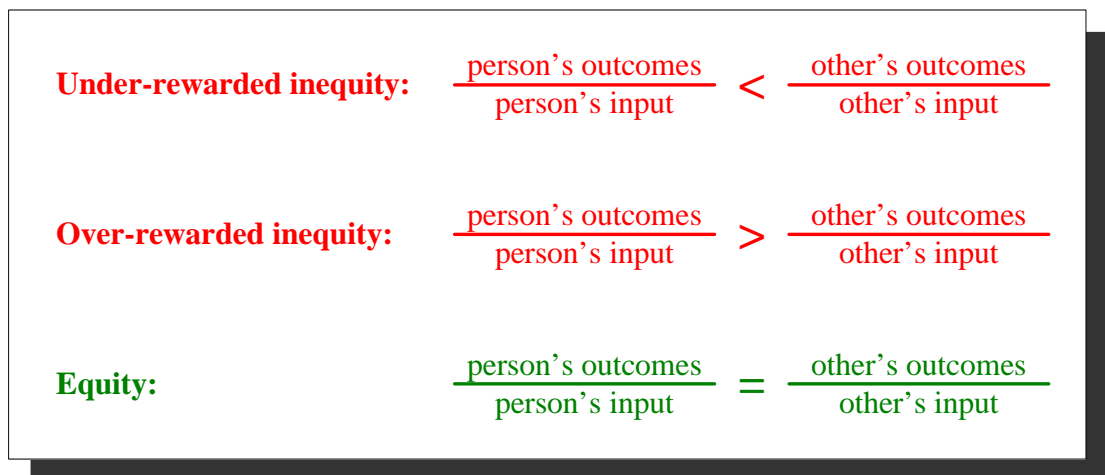


Figure 2-10 shows the schematic representation of Adams' equity theory. There is one equity state where the employee feels that his/her outcome-input ratio is at parity with others; and there are two inequity states where the employee feels that he or she is either under-rewarded or over-rewarded.

Laboratory research and several reviews support both the notion that under-rewarded inequity leads to lower performance (Greenberg, 1982; Mowday, 1991), and that over-rewarded inequity does not produce increased performance (Greenberg, 1982; Locke & Henne, 1986). Naturalistic studies also support the theory but there is also evidence that individual differences play an important role in a person's perceptions of and responses to equity and inequity (Greenberg & Ornstein, 1983). In the 1990s, the literature applying equity theory to work motivation was sparse, but there were discussions of its application to a variety of areas such as intimate and marital relationships, provision of public goods, and consumer behavior (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).

The application of equity theory to motivation is straightforward. Overall, the responsibility lies with the managers to avoid under-rewarded or over-rewarded situations, and to present the information about rewards [outcomes] and efforts [inputs] thoroughly and with social sensitivity. It is suggested that the management can acquire salary survey reports, check them against their salary scheme, and adjust

the latter as appropriate. The reports can be summarized and together with the pay policy can be briefed to the employees. Additionally, the briefing session can be facilitated to allow the employees to feedback their thoughts and ideas about the pay scheme.

#### 2.6.4 Locke's goal-setting theory

Goal-setting theory (Locke, 1968) states that “the perceived value of outcomes leads to emotions and desires” and that “an employee sets goals that direct his or her behavior in order to satisfy the emotions and desires” (Gerber, Nel, & Van Dyk, 1998, pp. 274-275). A goal reflects one's purpose and refers to quantity, quality, or rate of performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). McShane and Von Glinow (2004) explain that goals are the immediate or ultimate objectives that employees are trying to accomplish from their work effort, and goal-setting is the process of motivating employees by establishing performance objectives that stretch the intensity and persistence of effort; and by clarifying the role perceptions so that the effort is channeled toward behaviors to improve work performance.

This review starts by looking at the setting of performance objectives, and considering the following variables: relative difficulty of the goals, goal specificity, timeliness of goals and feedback on progress towards goals, participation in and acceptance of goal-setting, and lastly the issue of self-efficacy.

Regarding relative difficulty, according to Locke's (1968) experiments, difficult goals lead to a higher level of performance than easy goals. Furthermore, moderately difficult goals also lead to better performance than 'do your best' goals (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Specific goals produce higher performance than vague goals (Beck, 2000, p. 406). People with specific quantitative goals such as specific performance outputs, standards, and deadlines for completion of tasks will perform better than people with no set goal or only a vague goal.

The theory (Locke, 1968) suggests that in goal-setting, both long-term end goals and short-term progress goals are important. Short-term goals, set at realistic levels, are regarded as instrumental to the attainment of end goals (Locke, Cartledge,



& Knerr, 1970). However, if goals are set unrealistically, both short-term goal failure and the lack of progress toward the end goal will contribute to adverse emotional experience. Moreover, short-term goals also provide occasions and opportunities for regular feedback. Particularly, goal-setting is especially effective when timely feedback is provided that permits the employee to track progress relative to the goal (Earley, Northcraft, Lee, & Lituchy, 1990) so that employees may confirm or change the direction. Outcome feedback tells a person that change is needed, but process feedback tells the person how to change.

Participation in goal-setting and acceptance of the goals have been found to be effective strategies for enhancing goal commitment by Locke (1996) but Zetik and Stuhlmacher (2002) found no effect for participation in setting goals although the overall results were consistent with goal-setting theory that the higher the goal the higher the outcome.

Another factor to consider is the impact of self-efficacy as an antecedent of the goal-setting process. Self-efficacy is a person's "judgment of personal capability" to perform an activity and the effect this judgment has on the future conduct of the activity (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy has been found to influence both the difficulty of the goal accepted and goal commitment (Locke, 1996). Brown and Latham (2000) found that self-efficacy correlated positively with subsequent performance.

Following Locke's (1968) seminal paper, there was an explosion of research on goal-setting, identifying the relationship of goal attributes to level of performance, the impact of moderators such as feedback, goal acceptance and supportiveness, and individual differences in responses to goal-setting (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). Mitchell and Daniel (2002, p. 231) concluded "goal-setting theory is quite easily the single most dominant theory in the field of motivation, with over a thousand articles and reviews published on the topic in a little over thirty years".

Figure 2-11: Locke's goal-setting theory, adapted from Luthans (1998)

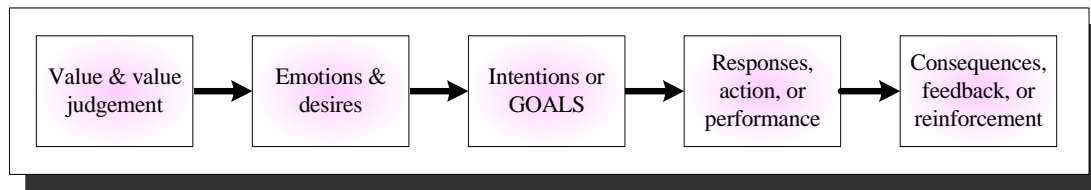


Figure 2-11 summarizes the goal-setting theory into five sequential stages: [a] Values and value judgments; and [b] Emotions and desires; and [c] Intentions or goals; and [d] Responses, action, or performance; and [e] Consequences, feedback, or reinforcement.

Locke (1968) points out that goal-setting theory is more appropriately viewed as a motivational technique. Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (2000, p. 169) clearly describe the steps of a goal-setting program in an organization are to: [a] “diagnose if the organization, the people, and technology used are ready for goal-setting”; and [b] “prepare employees to set goals through communications, increased participation, and coaching”; and [c] “emphasize the attributes of goals to everyone”; and [d] “conduct intermediate reviews to amend established goals”; and [e] “conduct a final review to check set goals, amendments, and accomplished goals”; and [f] “feed back the results from goal-setting in terms of improved motivation and skills”.

Some companies apply goal-setting through management by objectives [MBO], the notion that management activity should be directed towards the accomplishment of pre-established goals, introduced by Drucker (1954), and later popularized as a management system by Odiorne (1965). McShane and Von Glinow (2004) explain that MBO is a participative goal-setting process in which organizational objectives are cascaded down to work units and individual employees. According to Luthans (1998), MBO has evolved to overall organizational systems generally follows the series of cyclical and systematic steps: [a] set overall objectives and action plans; and [b] develop the organization; and [c] set individual objectives and action plans; and [d] conduct periodic appraisals and provide feedback on progress and make adjustments; and [e] conduct final appraisal of results.

For line managers to apply goal-setting theory, it is suggested that they first set up a regular planning and review mechanism involving the temporary sales people. The overall planning and review session is recommended to be once a quarter and another quick review session quarterly for managers to review the short-term goal and provide feedback. The planning session can be led by managers to follow the blueprint: [a] develop a desire to achieve the goal; and [b] write out the goal; and [c] identify the resources needed to solve the obstacles; and [d] deadline the goal; and [e] prioritize the activities; and finally [f] commit to the plan. According to the theory from Locke and Latham (1990) individuals can accomplish more than one goal at a time assuming that they have the cognitive and physical capabilities to do so and the goals do not conflict. It is suggested that the planning session can start from a high level perspective but cascade down to the setting of multiple secondary and tertiary goals. The same session can also be used to review the last plan and for managers to provide feedback on both the results and the process to achieving them. Moreover, the meeting session will be a golden opportunity for managers to praise and recognize high performers. Lastly, it is suggested to record the plan and the sales results in an internet enabled computer system so that temporary sales people, working remotely, can access for their progress and managers can give quick and timely feedback.

## 2.7 Other perspectives

### 2.7.1 Kelley's attribution theory

Attributions refer to the causes individuals generate to make sense of their world. Attribution theory emerged from Heider's (1958) postulation of a set of rules of inference by which a person might attribute responsibility to a target person for an action. Heider (1958) posited that the balance of personal forces [internal attributions] and environmental factors [external attributions] that operate on the target person determines the attribution of responsibility. Kelley (1967) advanced the theory by adding hypotheses about the factors that affect the formation of attributions: consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus. Consistency refers to the degree to which the target person performs that same behavior toward an object on different occasions. Distinctiveness refers to the degree to which the target person performs different behaviors with different objects. Consensus refers to the degree to which

other actors perform the same behavior with the same object. Heider (1958) proposed a psychological theory of attribution and Kelley (Kelley, 1967, 1973) advanced it, Weiner and colleagues (Jones, 1972a, 1972b; Weiner, 1986) developed it to a theoretical framework that has become a major research paradigm of social psychology.

Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1980). The theory assumes that people are like amateur scientists, trying to understand other people's behavior by piecing together information until they have arrived at a reasonable explanation or causal attribution. Thus, attributions are also significantly driven by emotional and motivational drives.

According to the theory (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1980), attribution is a three-step process through which we perceive others as causal agents: Perception of the action; and judgment of intention; and attribution of disposition. One way to change the motivation is to change the beliefs - the attributions, such that one could teach unmotivated, underachieving, and depressed people that by exerting more effort life-events can be controlled.

Heider (1958) said that attribution is the process of drawing inferences. According to the theory, people make two types of attribution: [a] internal attribution, the inference that one is acting particularly because of one's attitude, character or personality; and [b] external attribution, the inference that one is behaving a certain way because of something about the situation one is in. Thus, an external attribution claims that some outside thing motivated the event; and an internal attribution assigns causality to factors within the person.

Weiner (1974) focused his attribution theory on achievement. He (Weiner, 1980) states that causal attributions determine affective reactions to success and failure. He identified ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck as the most important factors affecting attributions for achievement. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The locus of control dimension is classified to internal versus external locus of control. The stability dimension captures whether causes change over time or not. For instance, ability can

be classified as a stable, internal cause, and effort classified as unstable and internal. Controllability contrasts causes one can control, such as skill/efficacy, from causes one cannot control, such as aptitude, mood, others' actions, and luck. Weiner's theory has been widely applied in education, law, clinical psychology, and the mental health domain, and shows a strong relationship between self-concept and achievement.

Attribution theory explains that achievers have learned that they are able to succeed, that hard work increases the chances of success, that learning about themselves facilitates success, and that succeeding is enjoyable and worthwhile (Weiner, 1980). Weiner (1980) used attribution theory to explain the difference in motivation between high achievers and unmotivated persons. A high achiever will approach rather than avoid tasks, persist when the work gets hard, select challenges of moderate difficulty, and work with a lot of energy. On the contrary, an unmotivated person will avoid tiring though success-related tasks, quit when having difficulty, choose either easy or very hard tasks, and work with little drive or enthusiasm.

As sales people also attribute successes, managers can motivate them easily and in simple ways. For example, managers can praise the temporary sales people by simply saying this casually, 'good business, high achievers!' to greet them during the encounter. The sales people, being addressed as high achievers and if they are of real performers, then have to rationalize the outcome to their attribution. Rationalizing and believing what was heard, the sales people will have changed their beliefs such that they believe that they are high achievers who can yield good business returns. Moreover, managers, during the regular performance evaluation session, can say something like this, 'You seem to know the products and the selling skills very well! You really work hard in selling. You're trying more, keep at it!' Now, the sales people believe that they are good at the selling job and that they are motivated to be good. Lastly, attribution theory can be applied in recruiting and training of the sales force. Applying attribution theory to motivate employees may not necessarily be costly but the managers must understand how the employees are motivated and must learn to make optimistic yet credible assertions about employees' potential and competence.

### 2.7.2 Deci's cognitive evaluation theory

Cognitive evaluation theory (Deci, 1971; Deci & Ryan, 1980, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) postulates that there are two motivational states: an extrinsic drive to perform; and an intrinsic drive to perform. Intrinsic rewards refer to pleasure, that is, happiness and joy, associated with feeling competent in a job, the feelings of control over job, or with the ability to learn at a job. Extrinsic rewards refer to pay, status, fringe benefits and cash bonus.

According to the theory, employees' intrinsic motivation links with the perceived competence in activities and their control with the environment. It hypothesizes that employees attribute the cause of their own behavior to internal needs and perform behaviors for intrinsic rewards and satisfaction - an internal locus of causality. If employees feel competent in an activity, can choose freely to participate, and feel positive affects from participation, the level of intrinsic motivation will increase and the employee's pursuit in the activity will be greater. However, when employees feel pressured or coerced to do something, intrinsic motivation is decreased. Moreover, employees' perceived competence, or self-efficacy, also relates to intrinsic motivation. When looking at activity, employees evaluate it in terms of how well it meets the needs to feel competent and in control. When employees evaluate their performance to be successful, an increase in feelings of competence takes place resulting in an increase in intrinsic motivation; however, when the performance is evaluated to be unsuccessful, a decrease in feelings of competence is experienced which leads in turn to a decrease in intrinsic motivation. Thus, the sense of competence and autonomy obtained through work accomplishment are the major determinants of job satisfaction.

The introduction of extrinsic rewards for work which has previously been intrinsically rewarding may decrease motivation (Deci, 1975). If employees attribute their behavior to the situational factors, the shift from internal causes to external causes results in a decrease in intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Some studies have shown that contingently applied extrinsic rewards decrease intrinsic motivation created by an interesting task (Wiersma, 1992). Unexpected rewards may have no detrimental effects spent by the person (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).

According to Ambrose and Kulik (1999), cognitive evaluation theory provides a very strong theoretical definition of motivation, but previous research has operationalized cognitive evaluation theory predictions in different ways, sometimes emphasizing time spent on a task and sometimes emphasizing task performance or reported interest in the task.

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is important because it suggests that temporary sales people may be motivated for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons. To practice, managers can promote perceived competence, for example, the manager can recognize first the temporary sales peoples' successes before commenting on their weaknesses. This building of competency will help fuel the employees' efforts to excel in the selling. Secondly, the manger can provide a perception of choice, for example, in scheduling the roster duty the manager can provide choices of sites or products for the temporary sales peoples to choose from. This feeling of control will likely help increase the level of intrinsic motivation the temporary sales peoples will feel regarding pursuit of the sales activity. Thirdly, the manager can communicate the intrinsic rewards, either in a one-to-one, for example reporting or appraisal session or one-to-group, for example briefing and sharing session, instead of offering merely extrinsic rewards. The intrinsic rewards may include the feelings of happiness for helping the customers to make decision on acquiring the best products.

### 2.7.3 Behaviorism, including Skinner's reinforcement theory

John Broadus Watson [1878-1958] defined behaviorism as:

*"... a natural science that takes the whole field of human adjustments as its own ... It is the business of behavioristic psychology ... to predict and control human activity"* (Watson, 1925, p. 11).

Watson (1925) studied observable behavior, rejecting introspection and theories of the unconscious mind, originated the 'behaviorism' school of psychology, in which behavior is described in terms of physiological responses of the organism to external stimuli. His work influenced Burrhus Frederic Skinner [1904-1990] in his groundbreaking studies of operant conditioning. Skinner (1938) was the first to make

the important distinction between operant and respondent behavior (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975). The operant behavior is learned and operates on the environment to produce a consequence while the respondent behavior refers to the unlearned or reflexive behavior (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975). Skinner (1938) maintained that learning occurred as a result of the organism operating on its environment, and coined the term operant conditioning.

Operant conditioning, also called instrumental learning, or operant learning, was first extensively studied by Edward Lee Thorndike [1874-1949] through experiments involving observation of the behavior of animals. A typical experimental situation involved hungry cats trying to escape from puzzle boxes. When first constrained in the boxes, the cats took a long time to escape. With experience, ineffective responses occurred less frequently and successful responses occurred more frequently, enabling the cats to escape in less time over successive trials. Thorndike (1898) suggested that certain stimuli and responses become connected or dissociated from each other according to his law of effect: [a] when particular stimulus-response sequences are followed by pleasure, those responses tend to be ‘stamped in’; responses followed by pain tend to be ‘stamped out’; and [b] the immediate consequence of a mental connection can work back upon it to strengthen it. This evaluation led Thorndike to reason that all beings learn and learning involves the formation of connections, and connections were strengthened according to his Law of Effect. Since then, the Law of Effect remained influential and has “formed the basic for reinforcement theory” (Staddon, 2001, p. 10). Reinforcement theory posits that behavior that has pleasant consequences will probably be repeated (Smit & De J Cronje, 1992).

Reinforcement is the key element in Skinner’s stimuli-response theory. Built upon Thorndike’s ideas, Skinner’s (1953) reinforcement theory constructs a more detailed theory of operant conditioning. Skinner (1953, p. 65) “borrowed from Pavlov’s [Russian physiologist] analysis of the conditioned reflex ... called all events which strengthened behavior ‘reinforcement’ and all the resulting changes ‘conditioning’ ”. Originally, “the operation of reinforcement is defined as the presentation of a certain kind of stimulus in a temporal relation with either a stimulus or a response” (Skinner, 1938, p. 62).



Ferster and Skinner (1957) examined the effects of differing schedules of reinforcement on the behavior. Interval reinforcement refers to “reinforce behavior at regular intervals” and an organism “will adjust with a nearly constant rate of responding, determined by the frequency of reinforcement ... If two agencies supply the same service, we are more likely to call the one which answers more often” (Skinner, 1953, p. 100). Ratio reinforcement refers to “reinforcement at a ‘fixed ratio’ - the ratio of reinforced to unreinforced responses ... It is essentially the basis of professional pay and of selling on commission. In industry it is known as piecework pay. It is a system of reinforcement which naturally recommends itself to employers because the cost of the labor required to produce a given result can be calculated in advance” (Skinner, 1953, p. 102). Beck (2000) explained further that reinforcement could be attained through scheduling rewards at fixed intervals, variable intervals, fixed ratios and variable ratios. Fixed interval scheduling rewards employees at specific time intervals and includes salary and annual bonuses; variable interval scheduling rewards and praises employees at random times for displaying the preferred behavior; fixed ratio scheduling rewards employees after a fixed number of performances; and variable ratio scheduling influences the maintenance of desired behavior the most by varying the number of performances required for each reinforcement.

According to Bandura (1986) and Locke (1977), reinforcers, the consequences of behavior, affect subsequent action as the individual: [a] anticipates that the reinforcer will follow future actions; and [b] desires or values the reinforcer; and [c] understands what actions need to be taken to get it; and [d] believes that he or she can take the requisite actions. According to Skinner (1953, p. 73), “some reinforcements consist of presenting stimuli, of adding something to the situation”, and are called “positive reinforcers” while “others consist of removing something from the situation” and are called “negative reinforcers”. In both cases the effect of reinforcement is the same - the probability of response is increased. Positive reinforcement is therefore the administration of a pleasant and rewarding consequence following a desired behavior. Negative reinforcement is the removal of an unpleasant consequence following a desired behavior (Daft, 2005, pp. 601-602).

There are two additional types of reinforcement tools or techniques by which reinforcement theory may be used to modify human behavior (Daft, 2005, pp. 601-602). Punishment is the imposition of unpleasant outcomes on an employee. Extinction is the withdrawal of a positive reward.

“Many of Skinner’s concepts and principles have been empirically validated both in the laboratory and in field settings” (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975, p. 26). Reinforcement has undoubtedly important influences on behavior yet it ignores individual needs, feelings, attitudes, expectations, goals, inequity and other cognitive variables that are known to impact on behavior (Robbins, 1998). Reinforcement can be used in conjunction with other motivation techniques but the rules should be to reinforce appropriate behavior to change behavior (Luthans, 1998).

Ambrose and Kulik (1999) reviewed studies published from 1990 to 1997 in mainstream organizational journals on reinforcement and punishment effects and reports two research accomplishments: [a] the renewed interest in punishment as an influence on employee behavior; and [b] the movement of reinforcement theory research away from simple tasks in laboratory settings to field settings and began to explore international applications. Ambrose and Kulik (1999) further commented that the compensation research had largely proceeded independently of the organizational literature on reinforcement theory and it had only begun to explore the effects of non-monetary reinforcements, for example feedback and praise in organizational settings.

In motivation, Skinner explained the drive in terms of deprivation and reinforcement schedules. In practice, it may be simple yet effective to use positive reinforcement to heighten the motivation of temporary sales people, for example, the managers can measure the performance and whenever the performance standards are met, for instance in the case of meeting a monthly sales target, a mobile phone short message can be scribbled out to congratulate the sales people.

Daft (2005, p. 604) concluded from Sarri and Latham (1982) and Pritchard, Hollenback and DeLeo (1980) that “the most powerful schedule is the variable ratio schedule, because employee behavior will persist for a long time due to the administration of reinforcement only after a long interval”. This may be implemented

by introducing a random check for sales status and rewarded with a gift if pro-rata sales targets have been reached at the time of report. Daft (2005, p. 604) also said that “partial reinforcement schedules are more effective for maintaining behavior over extended time periods”. To implement motivation of temporary sales people, a compensation package consists of basic wage and a commission scheme may be introduced to the sales force. The variable interval schedule may be implemented by conducting the monthly performance appraisals and giving awards at random times to those meeting pro-rata sales quota. Alternatively, managers may occasionally praise verbally to the sales people for a job well done and it does a lot to make him or her feel appreciated. Other reinforcement schedules can also be implemented, for example, for every five compliments a sales people receives from clients he or she may receive a small gift from the company. Finally, as these fixed interval or ratio schedules extinguish rapidly, they need to be modified from time to time.

The principles of reinforcement are already in practice by human resources professionals and they are implemented as policies and procedures including remuneration, performance management, and disciplinary procedures. Moreover, in rewarding and punishing the appropriate behavior, reinforcement theory can be very useful in establishing a culture-driven organization. Temporary sales people are also one important work force of the company and worth the management attention comparable to the core worker. Therefore it is worthwhile to develop policies and procedures for this specialty work force. For managers, and regardless of whether temporary sales people are hired directly or through an agency, it is suggested that simple but clearly written policies and procedures are passed to the sales people. From the document and during the orientation, the rewarding and disciplinary schemes are to be communicated. As positive reinforcement motivates, so particularly when rewards are given, they should be made known to everyone. Similarly, when disciplinary actions are executed, they should be also be communicated and with the reasons referenced to the policies and procedures.

#### 2.7.4 Job design, including Hackman and Oldham’s job characteristics model

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2004, p. 184), “job design refers to the process of assigning tasks to a job, including the interdependency of those tasks with other jobs. A job is a set of tasks performed by one person”. According to

Luthans (1998, p. 197), “job design has emerged as an important application area for work motivation”. All suggest that using job design results a clear job description, a motivated workforce and successful completion of tasks.

Arguably, the concept of job design can be traced back to one of the early and strongest advocates Frederick Taylor (1911) during the period of scientific management movement. Later, along with the human relations movement, the adding of “motivational effect of job characteristics” has become “the central focus of many job design changes” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2004, p. 186). “There are many theories of job design in the management literature, all developed to explain the relationships between certain job characteristics and the affective and behavioral responses of employees” (Kiggundu, 1981, p. 499). This section takes the perspective that the theory and practice of job design entails taking into account the psychological and social factors of work processes.

Some approaches to job design may be viewed as founded on Maslow’s (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs and others, particularly job enrichment, on Herzberg’s (1966, 1968) two-factor theory. According to Herzberg (1987, p. 120), “The 1970s was the decade of job enrichment, sometimes called job design or redesign by opponents of the motivation-hygiene theory”. However, neither Maslow’s (1943; 1954) nor Herzberg’s (1966, 1968) theories found much research support until subsequent testing of the Hackman & Oldham (1975) job characteristics model. Indeed, job enrichment, characterized by Hackman & Oldham’s (1975, 1976, 1980) job characteristics model, “has dominated the job design literature” (Luthans, 1998, p. 197). Cheser (1998, p. 197) also share this view: “One of the most widely recognized theoretical constructs in the study of worker motivation is the Job Characteristics Model [JCM] (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980), which, since the early stages of its development ( Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976), has become the primary approach in numerous job design efforts”.

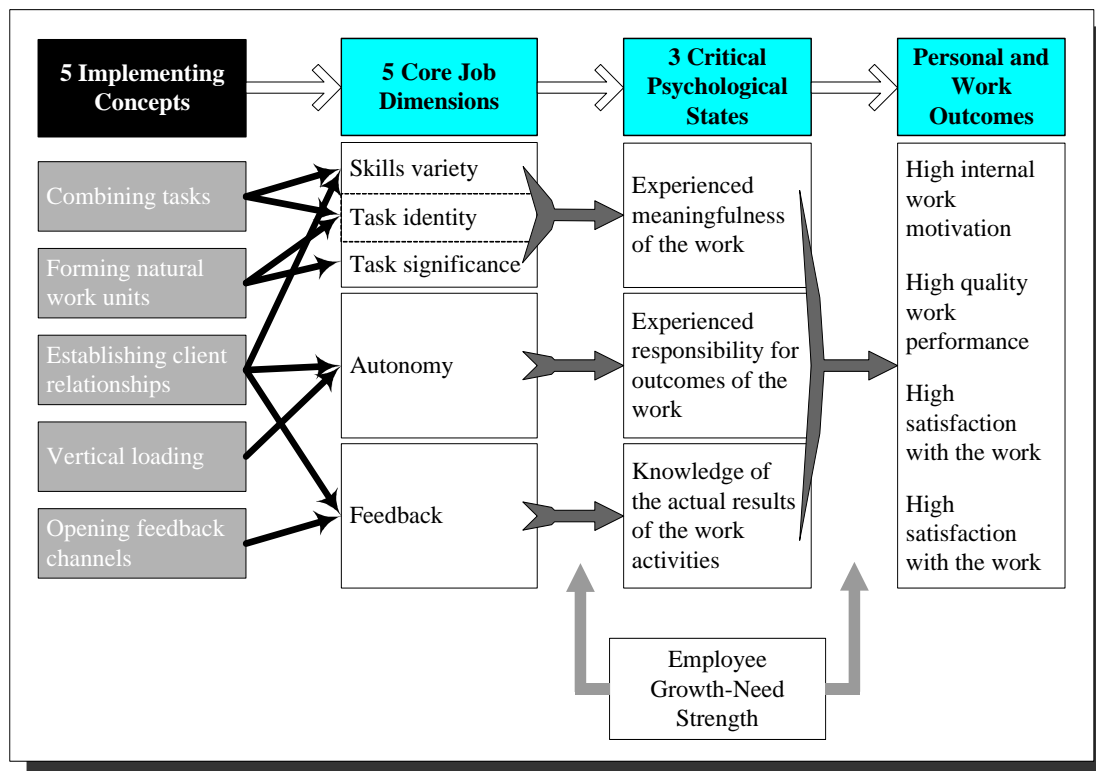
Herzberg’s two-factor [motivation-hygiene] theory was the first to provide a relatively easy to understand, intuitively appealing point of reference for redesigning jobs to take care of the psychological and social factors, and gave impetus to the development of job enrichment and job design theory and practice. According to Herzberg (1968, p. 114), the motivation-hygiene theory “suggests that work be

enriched to bring about effective utilization of personnel” and “such a systematic attempt to motivate employees by manipulating the motivator factors” is described as the job enrichment movement. Specifically, job enrichment refers to “vertical [job] loading or providing motivator factors”, as opposed to “horizontal job loading” that “merely enlarges the meaninglessness of the job” and which has “been the problem of earlier job enlargement programs” (Herzberg, 1968, p. 114). In practice, job enrichment is a technique that harnesses employees’ intrinsic motivation to create positive behaviors by making changes in the workplace. According to Daft (2005, p. 608), “job enrichment incorporates high-level motivators into the work, including job responsibility, recognition, and opportunity for growth, learning, and achievement”.

Whereas Herzberg (1959, 1968) focuses on general factors of achievement, recognition for achievement, responsibility, advancement, and growth, Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976) concentrate on specific factors that are an integral part of the job itself. Specifically, Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976) assert that an enriched job is relatively high in skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from the job. Both Herzberg (1959, 1968) and Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976) predict that when jobs are high in these characteristics employees will experience a sense of meaningfulness, responsibility for work outcomes, and knowledge of results of their work activities. Thus, the ultimate result is predicted to be higher job satisfaction, lower absenteeism, lower turnover, and higher internal work motivation.

The job characteristics model has been revised several times to determine the parameters within the job that lead to beneficial outcomes (Brief & Aldag, 1975; Evans, Kiggundu, & House, 1979; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975; Tiegs, Tetrick, & Fried, 1992). Figure 2-11 presents JCM graphically showing the “relationships among core job dimensions, critical psychological states, and on-the-job outcomes” ( Hackman et al., 1975, p. 58) and “concrete action steps” of job enrichment ( Hackman et al., 1975, p. 62).

Figure 2-12: Job characteristics model with implementation concept steps, adapted from Hackman, Oldham, Janson and Purdy (1975, p. 58)



Job characteristics model assumes that internal motivation can be achieved through the design of work and states that there are five job characteristics that foster three critical psychological states that lead, in turn, to four work outcomes. The effect of these relations is moderated by individual’s different needs for growth and development known as employee growth-need strength and the contextual satisfaction factors such as pay, job security, co-worker, and supervision (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Oldham, Hackman, & Pearce, 1976).

According to Hackman, Oldham, Janson and Purdy (1975, p. 58), the three “psychological states” experienced are “critical in determining a person’s motivation and satisfaction on the job”: [a] “Experienced meaningfulness: The individual must perceive his work as worthwhile or important by some system of values he accepts”; and [b] “Experienced responsibility: He must believe that he personally is accountable for the outcomes of his efforts”; and [c] “Knowledge of results: He must be able to determine, on some fairly regular basis, whether or not the outcomes of his work are satisfactory”. “When these three conditions are present, a person tends to

feel very good about himself when he performs well. And those good feelings will prompt him to try to continue to do well so he can continue to earn the positive feelings in the future. That is what is meant by motivational potential”.

Hackman and Oldham have identified five core job dimensions that determine a job’s motivational potential. Skills variety, task identity and task significance are “three job dimensions represents an important route to experienced meaningfulness”. Skills variety refers to “the degree to which a job requires the worker to perform activities that challenge his skills and abilities”. Task identity refers to “the degree to which the job requires completion of a ‘whole’ and identifiable piece of work - doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome. Task significance refers to “the degree to which the job has substantial and perceivable impact on the lives of other people, whether in the immediate organization or the world at large”. If the job is high in all three, the worker is quite likely to experience his job as very meaningful”. The fourth core job dimension autonomy refers to “the degree to which the job gives the worker freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling work and determining how he will carry it out”; and “people in highly autonomous jobs know that they are personally responsible for successes and failure”. The fifth core job dimension feedback refers to “the degree to which a worker, in carrying out the work activities required by the job, gets information about the effectiveness of his efforts” (Hackman et al., 1975, p. 59).

The Job Diagnostic Survey [JDS] was developed specifically to test the viability of the JCM (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In the original study, the JDS was sent to six hundred and fifty-eight employees across sixty-two different kinds of jobs in seven industrial and service organizations. Data were also collected from supervisors of the focal job of each employee using the job rating form. The results generally supported the relationships specified in the model, but with some exceptions. Most seriously for the model, the results indicated that the predicted relationship between autonomy and experienced responsibility was not strong, with the latter associated with some of the other job characteristics. The JDS has since been the focus of considerable criticism. Some studies have replicated the five-factor model produced by Hackman and Oldham in the original study, but other studies

have not. Other measurement problems are attributed to the unnecessarily complex way in which the Motivating Potential Score [MPS] is derived. Many have pointed out the reliance of the JDS on the same source of data, that is, self-report, making tests of the JCM subject to the problems of common method variance.

Loher, Noe, Moeller and Fitzgerald (1985, p. 280) have done a meta-analysis and it was found that the relation of job characteristics to job satisfaction “indicated a moderate relation between job characteristics and job satisfaction”; and “this relation is stronger for employees high in GNS [employee growth-need strength]”; and “situational characteristics appear to be more important in determining satisfaction for employees low in GNS”.

Fried and Ferris (1987) provide a comprehensive review and meta-analysis of relevant research on job characteristics theory. They concluded that: [a] job characteristics are related to both psychological and behavioral outcomes; and [b] the critical psychological states mediate the role between job characteristics and outcomes; and [c] growth-need-strength moderates the relationship between job characteristics and performance. However, they also noted that the correlations between job characteristics and the psychological states were less supportive of the theory; and although the results support the multidimensionality of job characteristics, there was no agreement on the exact number of dimensions.

Tiegs, Tetrick and Fried (1992) used a large sample [N=6,405] and did empirical investigations of JCM. They reported that “findings clearly cast doubt upon the proposition that a person’s reaction to a particular job characteristic or psychological state is jointly moderated by his or her desire for challenging work and satisfaction with a focal contextual aspect of the work environment. These findings are consistent with those reported by Oldham, Hackman and Pearce (1976), which found that GNS [employee growth-need strength] and each of the four context satisfactions did not jointly moderate the relation between the overall motivating potential of a job [MPS] and internal motivation, neither overall job satisfaction nor growth satisfaction were examined. However, it is important to point out that Oldham, Hackman and Pearce (1976) also reported finding positive support for the joint moderating effects of these individual difference factors on MPS-performance relations” (Tiegs et al., 1992, p. 590).



As concluded by Ambrose and Kulik (1999), tests of job characteristics theory generally find support for its predictions regarding employee attitudes and behaviors, and tests of the theory provide consistent support for the mediating effect of the critical psychological states, although the effects for growth-need-strength remain inconclusive.

The job characteristics model has been operationalized (Hackman & Oldham, 1975), in which employees are asked to rate the extent to which the five core job characteristics are present in their job. The ratings are then used to calculate the overall motivating potential of the job. A motivating potential score [MPS] is then calculated by obtaining the mean of the skill variety, task identity, and task significance scores and then multiplying the score for autonomy and the score for feedback as depicted in figure 2-12.

Figure 2-13: Motivating potential score, adapted from Luthans (1998, p. 202)

$$\text{Motivating Potential Score} = \frac{\text{Skill Variety} + \text{Skill Identity} + \text{Skill Significance}}{3} \times \text{Autonomy} \times \text{Feedback}$$

These MPS may turn out to be positive or zero. Jobs that produce a high MPS are expected to lead to higher performance, satisfaction, low absenteeism/turnover, and high internal motivation particularly for those employees high in growth-need strength. Knowing these scores can be useful as managers can have strategies to motivate the potential high achievers to make sure that they work hard so will be a sure business attainment. Alternatively, managers can use a different strategy to bring up those employees with below the average MPS.

To apply the job characteristics theory to managing sales people, Luthans (1998, p. 203-204) suggests examples of redesigning the jobs in a workshop. For skill variety, the sales people may be sent to work in different locations with different clienteles, sell different products and use different selling approaches, new merchandise and displays. For task identity, the sales people may be asked to keep a

personal record of daily sales volume in dollars, keep a record of number of sales/customers, and mark off an individual display area that they consider their own and keep it complete and orderly. For task significance, the sales people may be reminded that selling a product is the basic overall objective of the retail point, the appearance of the display area is important to selling, and they are 'the store' to customers and they were told that courtesy and pleasantness help build the store's reputation and that the products they are selling make a difference in the customers' life. For autonomy, the sales people may be encouraged to develop and use their own unique approach and sales pitch, may be allowed freedom to select their own break and lunch times, and encouraged to make suggestions for changes in all phases of the policy and operations. For feedback from the job itself, the sales people can be trained how to observe and interpret the non-verbal behaviors in the customers, and thus to gauge their own impact on the customer's feelings. Moreover, sales people may be encouraged to keep personal records of their own sales volume, encouraged to keep a sales/customers ratio, and reminded that establishing a good rapport with customers is also a success and are told that if the potential customer leaves with a good feeling about the store and its employees, the sales person has been successful. For feedback from agents [peers, bosses and customers], sales people may be encouraged to observe and help each other with techniques of selling, seek out information from their boss and relevant departments on all phases of their job, and invite customers for thoughts concerning technical knowledge, merchandise and services. Thus, the jobs of temporary sales people can be redesigned to initiate changes to move performance behaviors to the desired directions, to promote job satisfaction, in anticipation of improved performance.

## 2.8 Integrative models of motivational theories

Three types of integrative models of motivational theories can be identified. First, there have been several previous attempts to integrate current motivational theories (Locke, 1997; Naylor, Pritchard, & Ilgen, 1980; Robbins, 2003). These integrated theories allow better understanding of the interrelationships of the integrative theories (Robbins, 2003, p. 176). However, as Porter, Bigley and Steers (2003, p. 22) commented, they are more like organizing schemes attempting to show how motivational theories may relate to each other. Moreover, these integrated

empirical models of work motivation are complicated and contain a plethora of variables, making them very difficult both to validate theoretically and to put into practice. Accordingly, Ambrose and Kulik's (1999) review of the 1990s literature has suggested that these integrative theories have not been particularly successful in inspiring and guiding investigative research.

Second, there is growing realization that traditional models of motivation do not explain the diversity of behavior found in organization settings, Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl (1999) propose a meta-theory of work motivation incorporating theories of self-concept, both external and internal, that have been proposed in the sociological and psychological literatures into the current theories of work motivation they categorized into intrinsic process motivation, extrinsic/instrumental motivation, and goal internalization. According to the authors, the advantages of this expanded model are that it can explain situationally inconsistent behavior as well as the overall stability or cross-situational consistency of behavior. As the theory is still young, it may require quite some time and research work to establish to supersede or override the current theories. Yet, it serves as a reminder of the potential importance, in terms of motivation, of situationally consistent vis-à-vis inconsistent behavior.

Motivation varies between persons, the environment, and perhaps more importantly it is influenced by culture. The third type of integrative models of motivation is culture bound and is based on a bottom-up process of inquiry (Hsu[徐瑋伶], 2003; Liu[劉兆明], 2001). Liu and Hsu's models are developed for the Chinese society in Taiwan, and take into account culture-specific influences on motives, that is, needs such as *guān-xì* and face. Although these are indigenous models, many of the constructs are drawn from current motivational theories. These inquiry processes illustrate plausible directions for the understanding of motivation in Hong Kong.

## 2.9 Motivation of sales people

Sales force management has long been recognized by the business community as an important marketing activity (Wildt, Parker, & Harris Jr, 1987). Customer orientation requires greater expenditure of effort by the salesperson in

customer-related interaction and consequently, sales people have to be motivated to engage in this mode of selling (Thakor & Joshi, 2005).

A salesperson's motivation is regarded as one determinant of performance (Churchill Jr et al., 1985). In the area of salesperson's performance, motivation is the amount of effort a sales people plans to expend on tasks associated with his or her job (Walker Jr, Churchill Jr, & Ford, 1979), as cited in Badovick, Hadaway & Kaminski, (1992).

According to Gray and Wert-Gray (1999), the personal selling environment is unique when compared to most employment situations. In many cases, a salesperson cannot accurately predict a sale and so cannot confidently predict that an increase in effort will result better sales performance. It depends on the customer - an external party. Additionally a salesperson cannot confidently predict the rewards, for an example, from sales contests due to the inequalities in sales territory potentials.

The dominant framework for researching salesperson's motivation is expectancy theory (Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1994; Cron, Dubinsky, & Michaels, 1988; Gray & Wert-Gray, 1999; Ingram, Lee, & Skinner, 1989; Murphy, Dacin, & Ford, 2004; Smith, Jones, & Blair, 2000; Tyagi, 1982). Attribution theory has also been used in research involving salesperson motivation and performance (Badovick et al., 1992; DeCarlo et al., 1997; Dubinsky, Skinner, & Whittler, 1989; Sujana, 1986). Williams, Celuch and Vorhies (2002) examined how dimensions of supervisory feedback work through salesperson self-efficacy to influence key motivational consequences. There were some research studies that reported the sales people motivation using Hackman and Oldham's (1975, 1976, 1980) job characteristics theory (Thakor & Joshi, 2005; Tieg et al., 1992). However, all these research studies focused on full time, permanent sales people. The literature coverage in studying temporary sales people's motivation is rather sparse.

Wotruba (1990) compared job satisfaction, performance, and turnover between full-time and part-time sales people from four U.S. direct selling consumer goods organizations. It was found that [a] part-time workers had greater job satisfaction and less propensity to quit; and [b] the part-time workers were also better performers as measured by earnings per hour worked; and [c] the high levels of job

satisfaction for part-timers is consistent with the theory that they are less involved in organizational functioning so have less opportunity to accumulate dissatisfying experiences. Hoverstad, Moncrief III and Lucas Jr (1990) studied insurance agents, including all new hires over three two-year periods: 1971-1972, 1975-1976, and 1980-1981. It was found that part-time agents remained employed longer than full-time agents although there were some differences in two-year survival rates among the three periods. Allen and Sienko (1998) administered the Hackman and Oldham (1980) Job Diagnostic Survey to study the fastest growing segments of temporary but professional technical workforce of a major U.S. Telecommunications company. It was found that the contingent workers had higher motivating potential scores and scored significantly higher in task identity, feedback from the Job and combined growth need strength than the core or permanent workers. These findings suggest that temporary or contingent workers can be a rich source of motivated staff.

## 2.10 Role of culture in motivation

*“Management and organization scholars have historically looked for universal laws. For a long period, they had either ignored the roles of culture and environment or used them superficially” (Chen, 1995, p. 11).*

This section explores the influence of culture on management, with a focus on culture in Chinese societies, especially Hong Kong.

Fan (2000, 2002) studied different kinds of definitions of culture (Downs, 1971; Herskovits, 1955; Hoebel, 1960; Hofstede, 1980, 1984; Kluckhohn & Kelly, 1945; Terpstra & David, 1985; Tylor, 1871) and concluded that “culture can be described as the collection of values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, and attitudes that distinguish a society” (Fan, 2000, p. 4). Perhaps the most influential definition of culture is by Hofstede (1991, p. 6): Culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”.

Culture affects human motivation (Kashima, 1997). “At every level, culture profoundly influences the behavior of organizations as well as the behavior of people within organizations” (Adler, 2002, p. 35). Culture, in this context, can be explained

as the “deeply learned mix of language, beliefs, values, and behaviors that pervades every aspect of our lives, significantly influences our motivation” (Wlodkowski, 1999, p. 2). Thus, in a sense, culture determines motives and drives. Benedict (1935) indicated that each culture selects for emphasis only a few of the motives. Due to these cultural differences, the concepts of work and work motivation are viewed somewhat differently in Eastern, compared to Western societies where most of the management and motivational theories originated from.

According to Hofstede (1980, p. 42), “Many of the differences in employee motivation, management styles, and organizational structures of companies throughout the world can be traced to differences in the collective mental programming of people in different national cultures”. He has questioned the universal validity of management theories developed in the U.S., and he reasoned that the most popular American theories in motivation, leadership, and organization may apply elsewhere but “often, the original policy will have to be adapted to fit local culture” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 63). In his famous book, *Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Hofstede (1984, pp. 252-253) concluded that “organizations are culture-bound” and that “there are no universal solutions to organization and management problems”. Hofstede (1984, p. 253) explained further that “management itself is very much an American concept” and “the empirical basis for American management theories is American organizations; and we should not assume without proof that they apply elsewhere”. Hofstede (1980) examined motivational theories, starting from Sigmund Freud’s ‘id’ and ‘ego’ concepts to David McClelland’s achievement motivation, to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, to Frederick Herzberg’s two-factors theory, to Victor Vroom’s expectancy theory, and found that “the implication of the different motivation patterns in different countries is that personnel policies aiming at motivating people will have different effects in different countries” (Hofstede, 1984, p. 256).

Adler (2002, pp. 164-207) also examined global leadership, motivation and decision making and concluded that the ways that managers “approach these core managerial behaviors remain, in part, determined by their own cultural background and that of their work environment” (Adler, 2002, p. 195). According to Adler (2002, pp., p. 182), “Americans’ strong emphasis on individualism has led to expectancy

and equity theories of motivation: theories that emphasize rational, individual thought as the primary basis of human behavior. The emphasis placed on achievement is not surprising given Americans' willingness to accept risk and their high concern for performance. The theories therefore do not offer universal explanations of motivation". Likewise, Chinese emphasize other values and may in need for a unique theory to explain their motivation. In terms of behavior, Chen (1995, p. 17) explained the Hong Kong Chinese's traditional beliefs, ideas and practices that "while Americans see success as contingent upon their own efforts, Hong Kong Chinese tend to balance their own efforts with an element of 'joss' or luck in their business dealings".

Adler (2002) commented on the application of American theories elsewhere: "Far from being useless, traditional models guide the questions we ask. Only observation and analysis of each culture and situation can guide our answers" (Adler, 2002, p. 195).

#### 2.10.1 Dimensions of culture

Through factor analysis, Hofstede (1984) and Hofstede and Bond (1988) clustered the associated values that appeared to differentiate between cultures into several dimensions:

- [a] The Power Distance dimension addresses the issue of inequity in society and "indicates the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 45).
- [b] Regarding the Individualism versus Collectivism dimension - "individualism implies a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate family only" whereas a collectivist society is "characterized by a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups; they expect their in-group [relatives, clan, organizations] to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they owe absolute loyalty to it" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 45).

- [c] The Masculinity versus Femininity dimension measures “the extent to which the dominant values in society are ‘masculine’ - that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life, or people” (Hofstede, 1984, p. 46).
- [d] The Uncertainty Avoidance dimension “indicates the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behavior, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise. Nevertheless, societies in which uncertainty avoidance is strong are also characterized by a higher level of anxiety and aggressiveness that creates, among other things, a strong inner urge in people to work hard” (Hofstede, 1984, p. 45).
- [e] Later, an “Eastern dimension” (Hofstede & Bond, 1988, p. 19) was added to compensate for the potential Western bias of the original research, and the values of Chinese societies were considered (Bond & Hofstede, 1989; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). This dimension “deals with a society’s search for Virtue” (Hofstede & Bond, 1988, p. 19). As some of those values can be traced back as originated by the Chinese philosopher Confucius, Hofstede and Bond (1988, p. 16) “called this dimension ‘Confucian Dynamism’ to show that it deals with a choice from Confucius’ ideas and that its positive pole reflects a dynamic, future-oriented mentality, whereas its negative pole reflects a more static, tradition-orientated mentality”. “This dimension indicates a societies’ time perspective and an attitude of persevering” (Hofstede). In practical terms, it refers to Long-term versus Short-term Orientation of life, and the term was labeled subsequently by Hofstede (2001). “Long-term Orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, Short-term Orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of ‘face’ and fulfilling social obligations” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 359). Thus, individuals and companies in cultures with a Short-term Orientation tend to adapt to change more rapidly, because long-term traditions and commitments do not become



impediments to change. On the other hand, in Long-term Orientation societies, people may be more enduring, “overcoming obstacles with time, if not with will and strength” (Hofstede).

In summary, the first three dimensions described above refer to social behavior - “behavior toward people higher or lower in rank [Power Distance], behavior toward the group [Individualism/Collectivism], and behavior according to one’s sex [Masculinity/Femininity]” (Hofstede & Bond, 1988, p. 11). The Uncertainty-Avoidance is a uniquely Western dimension that deals with a society’s search for truth and the Eastern dimension Confucian Dynamism deals with a society’s search for virtue (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

Different countries score uniquely on these cultural dimensions. Business comprises people and business practices reflect culture, that is, how people think, feel and act from their own experiences. It follows that understanding where a particular culture is located in terms of these cultural dimensions is likely to facilitate better understanding of the kinds of managerial practices that are likely to be acceptable within that culture.

#### 2.10.2 Hong Kong culture

Based on the scores on five dimensions for fifty countries and three regions (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), Hong Kong is compared to the U.S., where most motivational theories originated from, and to two other Chinese ethnic countries Taiwan and Singapore.

First, Hong Kong culture is characterized by large Power Distance, reflecting a traditional patriarchal system. Hong Kong had a high Power Distance Index score [PDI] of 68, which was higher than Taiwan’s PDI of 58 and the U.S.’s PDI of 40 but lower than Singapore’s PDI of 74 (Hofstede, 1984, p. 77). Hong Kong people, like those in many Eastern societies, see large inequalities as natural and proper (Herbig & Genestre, 1977). According to Snape, Thompson, Yan and Redman (1998), as cited in Selmer & de Leon, (2003, p. 53), “priority is given to family/clan interests, authority is accepted without question, and a strong sense of obligation is followed in all relationships”. Loyalty is to the person in authority, not the institution.

Decision-making is highly centralized and employees do not expect, and are not expected, to be involved. Participative and open management systems, such as management by objectives (Alexander Hamilton Institute (U.S.), 1985), are unlikely to be successful. Likewise, conflicting with the goal-setting theory, participation in goal-setting may not necessarily be an effective strategy to motivate Hong Kong workers.

Secondly, Hong Kong exhibits a collectivist culture. The U.S. scored the highest Country Individualism Index [IDV] of 91. By contrast, Hong Kong's IDV score was 25, although the two other Chinese societies in Hofstede's study scored lower: Singapore's IDV was 20 and Taiwan's IDV score was 17 (Hofstede, 1984, p. 158). In collectivist countries, there is often an emotional dependence on the company; Managers aspire to conformity and orderliness; Group decisions are considered better than individual ones, and managers value security in their work; Employees expect their 'big boss' to make major decisions for them (Herbig & Genestre, 1977). "Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group" (Hofstede). According to Kirkbride and Westwood (1993), as cited in Selmer & de Leon (2003, p. 52), "Hong Kong people regard individuals as inseparable from membership of a distinct social group, and define themselves in direct reference to the communal situation in which they are entrenched". Hong Kong is one of "these cultures reinforce extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group" (Hofstede) and Hong Kong people may be especially responsive to concrete rewards that help them fulfill their family obligations. It is also inferred that team performance-based rewards may work well.

Thirdly, Hong Kong is a masculine society (Hofstede, 1994). Hong Kong had a Masculinity Index [MAS] score of 57, only a little lower than the U.S.'s MAS score of 62. The Hong Kong score was higher than those of both other Chinese societies in Hofstede's study: Singapore's MAS score was 48 and Taiwan's MAS score was 45 (Hofstede, 1984, p. 189). Masculine societies emphasize competitiveness, assertiveness and materialism; Successful managers are seen as more male - indicative, aggressive, competitive and tough, and in these countries, earnings, recognition and advancement are important to employees (Herbig &

Genestre, 1977). In general in Hong Kong, “economic security and material advancement are the prime motivators” (Selmer & de Leon, 2003, p. 53). As the society “reinforces the traditional masculine work role model” (Hofstede), it may work well to motivate the workforce with achievement, control, and power.

Fourthly, Hong Kong is a harmonious society. Hong Kong had an Uncertainty Avoidance Index [UAI] score of 29. This was lower than Taiwan’s UAI of 69 and the U.S.’s UAI of 46 but it was higher than Singapore’s UAI of 8 (Hofstede, 1984, p. 122). Of note is that among the cultures studied by Hofstede, Hong Kong had the fourth lowest UAI, much lower than the average UAI score of 63 for the Far East Asian countries. In the case of Hong Kong, this “indicates a society that not only tolerates uncertainty and a freedom of opinions, but uses this strength to be a place where many varying cultures and ideas can come together” (Hofstede, 1984). In strong uncertainty-avoidance societies, people will seek to reduce uncertainty and limit risk by imposing rules and systems to bring about order and coherence; while as a weak uncertainty-avoidance culture, Hong Kong people are comfortable accommodating ambiguity and using it (Herbig & Genestre, 1977). “Hong Kong people consider the preservation of outward social unanimity to be their crucial obligation. In all relationships, there is the tendency to avoid extreme, disruptive behaviour” (Selmer & de Leon, 2003, p. 52). Hence, comparatively, Hong Kong people can be said to have a moderate tendency to accept contingent, performance-based pay or ‘at risk’ pay instead of rewarding loyalty and seniority.

Fifth, Hong Kong had the highest Long-term Orientation or Confucian Dynamism index [LTO] score of 96, followed by Taiwan’s LTO score of 87, Singapore’s LTO score of 48 and the U.S.’s LTO score of 29 (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). For Hong Kong this very “high Long-term Orientation ranking indicates the country prescribes to the values of long-term commitments. This is thought to support a strong work ethic where long-term rewards are expected as a result of today’s hard work” (Hofstede, 1984). Therefore, Hong Kong people’s long-term traditions and commitments may give them an impetus to work harder.

### 2.10.3 Indigenous characterizations of Chinese people

*“Culture and management is an interesting but difficult field for study. It is more interesting and difficult to study Chinese culture and management. This is because both subjects are complex and multidimensional and little is known about the relationship between these two subjects” (Fan, 2000, p. 3).*

According to Fan (2000, p. 4), “Chinese culture gives the Chinese people their basic identity” although there exist differences in terms of political, social and economic dimensions in Chinese culture dominated societies in the mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, or in other overseas Chinese societies. “Chinese culture has been molded by three philosophical traditions - Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Briefly, Confucianism deals with human relationships, Taoism deals with life in harmony with nature, and Buddhism deals with people’s immortal world” (Fang, 2006, p. 51). Nevertheless, Confucianism is undisputedly the most influential thought, which forms the foundation of the Chinese cultural tradition and still provides the basis for the norms of Chinese interpersonal behavior (Pye & Pye, 1972), as cited in Fan (2000).

Confucianism [rú-jīā], is a moral and practical philosophy of human relationships and conduct (Tu, 1984), developed from the teachings of Confucius [551-479 BC]. “As in other Chinese societies, Hong Kong has been deeply influenced by traditional Confucian values that emphasize family socialization. Chinese philosophy emphasizes that one’s conduct should always be within the norms of propriety [lǐ] and in conformity to a rigid hierarchy of social relations [wǔ-lún]” (Selmer & de Leon, 2003, p. 52). As explained by Chen and Chen (2004, p. 307), “the fundamental Confucian assumption of human kind is that individuals exist in relation to others. Of the great variety of relationships, the most important ones were known as the Five Cardinal Relationships or wǔ-lún: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend”. Confucian morality “emphasizes virtuous personal qualities required in performing roles”, and the “required moral behaviour varies according to a person’s role, position and relationship with the other role-players” (Tan & Snell, 2002, p. 362). In Confucian terms, “... a person must demonstrate a considerable number of desirable qualities, plus the five cardinal virtues of benevolence or rén , filial conduct or xiào,

trustworthiness or xìn, loyalty or zhōng, and righteousness or yì” (Tan & Snell, 2002, p. 362).

Hofstede and Bond (1988, p. 8), from their cultural dimensions perspective, have summarized the key influences of the Confucian teaching: [a] “The stability of society is based on unequal relationships between people”; and [b] “The family is the prototype of all social organizations”; and [c] “Virtuous behavior toward others consists of treating others as one would like to be treated oneself: a basic human benevolence - which, however, does not extend as far as the Christian injunction to love thy enemies”; and [d] “Virtue with regard to one’s tasks in life consists of trying to acquire skills and education, working hard, not spending more than necessary”.

Besides Hofstede’s dimensions, there have been various other ways of characterizing distinctive aspects of Chinese cultures. Lockett (1988) analyzed the relationship between problems of management in the People’s Republic of China and China culture and identified four features of Chinese culture, important in understanding Chinese management practices and organizational behavior: [a] “respect for age and hierarchal position”; and [b] “group orientation”; and [c] “the concept of face”; and [d] “the importance of relationships” (Lockett, 1988, pp. 475-486).

Another view is that, the “three concepts of guān-xì, face and rén-qíng are the keys for understanding Chinese social behavioral patterns” (Chen, 1995, p. 52). Chen (1995, p. 53) further explains: guān-xì refers to “special relationships two persons have with each other”; and face refers to an individual’s “dignity, self-respect, and prestige” (Chen, 1995, p. 54); and rén-qíng, measures the relation orientation, refers to “human feelings”, which “covers not only sentiment but also its social expressions such as the offering of congratulations or condolences and the making of gifts on appropriate occasions” (Yang, 1957, p. 292), as cited in Chen (1995, p. 55). In Chinese traditions, Confucianism is a system for managing relationships - as expressed in rén-qíng, and for achieving social harmony - as in face, regulated within the doctrine of wǔ-lún - as reflected in guān-xì that “links two persons of unequal rank or social status” (Chen, 1995, p. 53). Individually, “if one fails to follow the rule of equity in exchange of rén-qíng, one loses one’s face, hurts the feelings of one’s friends and looks morally bad, and one’s quān-xì-wǎng [connection network] is in

danger” (Chen, 1995, p. 55). In summary, the Confucian influences promote a harmonious society with interconnected individuals self-governed by their roles - a model of utter utopia. It is this feature of the Confucianism that shaped the Chinese culture for over 2,500 years.

Guān-xì and face are so fundamental to the Chinese that Hsu[徐瑋伶] (2003) from Taiwan, proposed to consider them as the two basic needs in order to study the motivation of Chinese.

In Western cultures, in general, motivational theories have assumed that people are inherently unmotivated to work and that managers have to seek ways to improve workers’ personal satisfaction through incentives. However, motivation, in the Chinese tradition “is not necessarily driven by self-interest”, and contrasts “sharply with the Western focus on improving workers’ personal satisfaction ... The crux of motivating people to work in Eastern cultures is anchored in such nonmaterialistic properties as trust, altruistic sentiments, norms of reciprocity, and a moral duty obliging them to act and perform out of a spirit of spontaneous consensus” (Kao & Ng, 1997, pp. 120-121). Explained in Confucian terms, Chinese workers are fulfilling their expected roles in the workplace and are motivated from an inner acceptance of their place in society.

#### 2.10.4 Motivation studies in Chinese societies

According to a Hong Kong scholar, G.W. Cheung[張偉雄] (1996), various cross-cultural studies have been conducted to test the applicability elsewhere of motivational theories that have been hypothesized and verified in the U.S., and the findings show that for needs theories, different places emphasize different needs. Cheung[張偉雄] (1996) also explained that the cognitive process theories were less effected by culture and time variables as they do not have specific needs.

In Taiwan, W.L. Hsu[徐瑋伶] (2003) reviewed the development of work motivation research and the existing studies in Taiwan from the 1980s to date and found that the studies were moving forward in three phases, the same view as Liu[劉兆明] (1992): from ‘testing Western theories’ [驗證型研究] to ‘cross-cultural or

comparative and modifying Western theories' [跨文化或修正型研究] to 'indigenous theories' [本土理論型研究].

C.M. Liu [劉兆明], a scholar from Taiwan, used a bottom-up approach in a series of studies, and inquired into the core constructs of work motivation and their antecedents and consequences in Taiwan Chinese society. Liu[劉兆明] (Liu[劉兆明], 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2001) first reviewed the literature to develop an integrated theoretical framework then interviewed 524 business employees individually by using the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) and collected 955 motivation events, which subsequently were analyzed to form ten motivational constructs that he used to develop a work motivation inventory and then administered to 750 business employees and developed a four-factor structure from the factor analysis. According to Liu[劉兆明] (2001), the model states that four motivational antecedents [動機來源] effect the four psychological states [動機狀態], which in turn effect the consequences [動機後果] then their derivatives [衍生後果]. The motivational antecedents are 'leader behaviors' [領導行為], 'job characteristics' [工作特性], 'achievement rewards and punishments' [績效獎懲] and 'ruler-dominant organization climate' [人治取向]. The psychological or affective motivation states are 'future development' [未來發展], 'feelings of current situation' [現況感受], 'horizontal competition' [橫向競爭] and 'vertical or self identification' [縱向認同]. The only direct consequence variable is the 'intention to work hard' [努力意願] and its derivatives are 'job performance' [工作表現], 'work attitude' [工作態度], 'withdrawal behavior' [退縮行為] and 'life adjustment' [生活適應]. Finally Liu[劉兆明] (2001) tested his model with 1,111 business employees and the results of the path analysis indicated that most of the predicted paths in the conceptual framework were significant.

Hsu[徐瑋伶] (2003) queried Liu's[劉兆明] (2001) questionnaire and the complexity of the conceptual model. Her view was that work motivational theories had a cyclical nature, started from needs, ended in behavior consequences and back to needs again and Hsu[徐瑋伶] (2003) proposed that guān-xì and face needs lead to work obligation and responsibility, that lead to willingness to exert effort to work

harder, that leads to the performance and rewards judged equitably by guān-xì-governed decisions and collectivist considerations that in turn affect needs. As yet, this theoretical framework has not been validated.

As Liu[劉兆明] (2001) said in the beginning of his paper, work motivation is a very important issue in organizational psychology, the related studies in Chinese societies are just beginning.

#### 2.10.5 Implications of culture for the present study

Arguably, culture informs management as well as motivational theories, and may make the current motivational theories less applicable in Chinese societies. Some scholars, in the case of Taiwan, suggest the indigenous approach in motivation studies for a local model that grounded from the local contexts. Conversely, given the large number of motivational theories, this study should be open to drawing on current theories as a resource and reference point for enhancing the understanding of work motivation in the local context.

*“ ...the Hong Kong case seems to attest to the assertions that there is an alternative culture of work motivation in this territory, distinguishable not only from the Western mainstream but also from the newly popularized prescriptions of Japanese management. It has retained pervasive vestiges of the traditional Chinese heritage, such as informality and trust, yet is also capable of acclimatizing its organizations to a variety of Western management influences, such as individually negotiated pay and incentive packages. Moreover, it has applied these cross-cultural interfaces to form one of the world’s most successful venues for ‘free enterprise’ capitalism” (Kao & Ng, 1997, p. 126).*

It would follow from this that the present study will need to be sensitive to the local context and cannot assume that Western theories can be meaningfully applied without modification.



## 2.11 Summary of literature review and discussion

The needs based theories are relatively easy to understand and put into practice and they explain and predict job satisfaction, although some of the early theories lack empirical support. The goal-setting theory (Locke, 1968) explains productivity but not absenteeism, turnover, or satisfaction. On the contrary, equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) is weak in predicting employee productivity but is strong in explaining absence and turnover. Reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953) is good at predicting quality and quantity of work, persistence of effort, absenteeism, tardiness, and accident rates but neglects satisfaction. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) explains productivity, absenteeism, and turnover, but focuses on the individual's rational decision-making process without taking care of emotion, personality and attitudes. Ambrose and Kulik (1999) concluded that most of the traditional motivational theories have received considerable empirical support and argued that research continues to refine the models and to suggest moderators and boundary conditions. Regarding the integrated models, they are difficult to validate and also impractical to implement, as they require the control of too many variables.

The motivation process is complex and particular to individuals and to situations and there is no general formula that can be guaranteed to work, but understanding of the process will help to explain some of the problems and difficulties faced by people at work (Handy, 1993, p. 30). According to Porter, Bigley and Steers (2003, pp. 22-23), we are all unique with genetic and personal backgrounds that shape our wants, desires, and reactions to events and these individual differences play a crucial role in understanding motivation and variation in motivation, and it seems unlikely that one general theory of motivation will emerge. There are attempts at integrating current theories and showing how they relate to each other; there is meta-theorizing underway; and for the Chinese societies, there are local theoretical frameworks developed from the bottom-up that have considered the impact of the unique cultural factors. All these theories and frameworks constitute resources for the interpretation of accounts of workplace motivation and sparkle with excitement regarding the potential for carrying out further studies.

That Chinese society possesses its own uniqueness is already a common view. Among these common motivational theories, which have originated from the more

developed Western societies, none have considered the unique characteristics of the Chinese societies, especially for Hong Kong people and particularly for sales people in the temporary employment settings.

At present, current theories have already shed some light on motivation and more broadly on employee behavior. However, we still do not know enough to be very sure of the content, sources and processes of motivation of temporary sales people in Hong Kong, given its setting in a unique city on the edge of both East and West. To understand the sales people's own views and experience, we may have to research into their own accounts of workplace situations, grounding their explanations in a comprehensive understanding of the conditions in which they work. The next chapter explains and justifies the methodology adopted for this research study. This study seeks to uncover the meanings of motivation to managers and promoters or temporary sales people in the selling of IT / telecom products in Hong Kong. As such, it is concerned with perception and interpretation of reality presented as the voice of respondents. Using a constructivist approach, insights into promoters' impressions of, and reactions to, motivation methods practices by their managers will be gathered.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction to methodology

This study seeks to uncover the meanings of motivation to managers and promoters or temporary sales people in the selling of IT / telecom products in Hong Kong. As such, it is concerned with perception and interpretation of reality presented as the voice of respondents. Considering to adopt alternative research paradigms, this study will gather insight into the promoters' impressions of and reactions to the motivation methods practiced by their managers.

The following discussion sets out the alternatives open to the researcher in terms of paradigm, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Following this investigation it was decided to combine a qualitative exploratory interview design (Kuhn, 1970) and a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory aims at generating "an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). This small exploratory study sets the scene by generating insights and issues through the comparative analysis of focus group and in-depth interviews with the employers or owners/managers and employees or promoters.

The design of this research begins with the selection of a topic and a paradigm. The selected topic concerns the motivation of promoters or temporary sales people, and the chosen inquiry is oriented to the constructivist-interpretive paradigm following a qualitative-inductive approach to collect and analyze qualitative data. The interest of the researcher and the chosen theoretical perspective inform the research design and process, shape the questions to be asked and guide the data collection and analysis processes.

The present chapter discusses the key philosophical and methodological issues and the research processes adopted to investigate the motivation of promoters in the IT / telecom industries in Hong Kong. The rationales underpinning the constructivist paradigm, using qualitative research methodology and the adoption of grounded theory approach are discussed. The origin of grounded theory is described, along with the continuing debate regarding various grounded theory approaches, and leads to the choice of a grounded theory approach. The use of focus group and of in-depth

interviews as data collection methods adopted in this study is discussed. The principle of theoretical sampling (Crotty, 1998, p. 7) is discussed, and its use in this study is explained. The constant comparative method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p. 21) is explained, along with its use from the start of data collection and throughout the data analysis. The practices of coding, categorizing, memoing, sorting and writing to delimit the theory and integrating from the literature are discussed, and their applications in this study are described. The use in this study of data management software is also briefly described. Finally, the practices of trustworthiness and rigor are discussed.

### 3.2 Theoretical framework

This section accounts for the theoretical rationale on the philosophical and methodological perspectives in choosing the research methodology that leads to the use of associated methods and techniques. The research dilemma facing the researcher is considered to reason for the choice of a research paradigm of the constructivist perspective. Then the methodological approach is outlined. Finally, the chosen methodology grounded theory is discussed.

#### 3.2.1 Research paradigm

Constructivist ontology of qualitative research is a paradigm revolution. This section discusses research dilemmas or issues faced by the researcher, including the perceived dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and the antagonistic relationships of mutually exclusive theoretical or philosophical positions underpinning the chosen methodology. There has been much debate and positioning of constructivist research (Charmaz, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006), culminating in the current debate on mixed methods (Brannen, 2004; Bryman, 1992; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). There is still the need, especially in a positivist-dominated research region such as Hong Kong, to justify the use of constructivist research. Constructivist research is chosen after becoming aware of a paradigm revolution that has generated a wider variety of perspectives that promise to contribute to generating theory in new and interesting ways.

Science often advances through paradigm revolutions. The term paradigm shift was first used to refer to scientific revolution by Kuhn (1962, p. 1). Although not advocated by the originator, the concept of paradigm has been borrowed for use in social science to refer to a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world. Thus, in social science, a paradigm is a set of beliefs, values, techniques shared by members of a scientific community. Crotty (1998, p. 34-35) describes a paradigm as:

*“... a unitary package of belief of science and scientific knowledge ... an overarching conceptual construct, a particular way in which scientists make sense of the world or some segment of the world ...”.*

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s social scientists Rom Harré and John Shotter were among those advocates of a new paradigm, and who challenged the tradition of laboratory-experimental investigations into behavior (Parker, 1995). With regards to inquiry, Crotty (1998, p. 42) states that:

*“... a paradigm is the matrix that shapes the reality to be studied and legitimates the methodology and methods whereby it can be studied”.*

Therefore, the paradigm underlying the theoretical perspective informs the methodology - a particular research design that guides the researcher in choosing methods and shapes the use of the methods chosen. This view echoes the explanation of Guba and Lincoln (1994, pp. 107-108) that a paradigm contains the researcher's beliefs and assumptions about ontology and epistemology that inform the choice of methodology:

*“... a paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs ... that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the ‘world’, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts ... The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith [however well argued]); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. If there were, the philosophical debates ... would have been resolved millennia ago”.*

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 22) posit that “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm”. Ontology is concerned with how the inquiry defines truth and reality. Epistemology is concerned with how the researcher comes to know that truth or reality. Methodology is concerned with how an inquiry is performed.

Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify five main paradigms of contemporary qualitative research: [a] positivism, for example experimental, [b] post-positivism, for example manipulative, [c] critical theory, for example dialectical, [e] constructivism, for example interpretive, and [5] participatory, for example collaborative action inquiry. Paradigms share similar axiomatic elements or issues such as intended action and textual representation, for instance, “positivism and postpositivism are clearly commensurable ... interpretivist/postmodern critical theory, constructivist and participative inquiry fit comfortably together” but “... axioms of positivist and interpretivist models ... are contradictory and mutually exclusive” (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 6).

According to Goulding (2002p. 43), “positivism ... still remains the dominant paradigm within the field of organizational and consumer research”. The positivist tradition is more concerned with testing for causality and examining correlations between variables, which “psychologists prefer to use the term construct [rather than variable], which carries the connotation of more of an abstract idea than a specifically defined term” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). In this research, perceptions are studied, concerning about what and how the motivation is being constructed and re-constructed through the lens of promoters and their managers.

The constructivist-interpretive paradigm, as one of the “four major interpretive paradigms that structures qualitative research” (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997), is adopted in this research. Though embroiled in a fierce debate that persists in some circles, constructivism emerged as a paradigm shift, challenging the fundamental beliefs of objectivism. The rational-objectivist, or scientific, or positivist paradigm has been dominant for the past several hundred years. Guba and Lincoln (1989) contend that “the conventional paradigm is undergoing a revolution in Kuhnian sense (Kuhn, 1970), and that the constructivist

paradigm is its logical successor”. The constructivist paradigm is also called the “naturalistic, hermeneutic, or interpretive paradigm” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 83).

### 3.2.2 Theoretical perspectives

A theoretical perspective is:

*“... the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).*

and

*“... statement of the assumptions brought to the research task and reflected in the methodology as we understand it and employ it” (Crotty, 1998, p. 7).*

The particular theoretical perspective, chosen as a result of ontological and epistemological analysis, informs a particular methodology, guiding theory, questions pursued and conclusion drawn. That is, research is shaped by paradigmatic assumptions and also by the principles and concepts described in the theoretical perspective. This researcher is no exception and has a particular theoretical perspective ontologically and epistemologically, and the overall methodology adopted in this particular research embraces this underlying theoretical perspective. To the potential benefit of the researcher, and adding rigor to the current research, seeking better understanding of methodological issues provides an opportunity for research practices to improve, and to foster consistency between the underlying assumptions, literature review and theory-generating activities.

The research upon which this dissertation is based concerns the meanings of motivation to promoters and their managers. It is believed that in this research, the realities studied are subjective, not objective, and therefore cannot be discovered, rather they can only be reconstructed.

The theoretical or constructivist-interpretive paradigm of this research reflects the researcher’s theoretical framework within which a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices operate. It constitutes an inter-subjective perspective

on the experiences of motivation specifically in the IT / telecom industries, as expressed by managers and promoters to the researcher and is influenced by the values held by the researcher, managers and promoters whose these cognitive perceptions are explored. This constructivist view, reflecting the exploratory nature of the research, drives the interpretive process throughout the research activities.

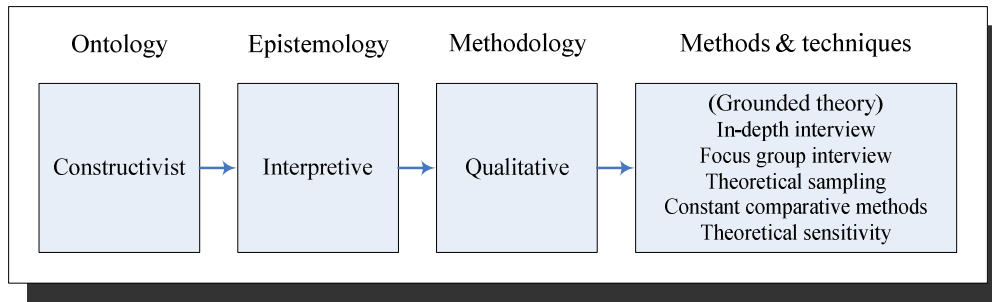
The intention is not to advocate one paradigm as opposed to another. Rather, it is purported to clarify a particular strand of thinking and researching specific to this research. The aim is to enable the strand to interweave into the research design and practice in a consistent and coherent manner, and be true to the underlying relativist-subjective assumptions and advance them to combine insights into new and interesting ways.

The particular paradigm adopted in this study assumes “a relativist ontology [there are multiple realities to be re-constructed] and a subjectivist epistemology [knower and subject create/co-construct understandings – interpretation]” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p. 21). As such, this interpretive research refers to a set of approaches where the core research interest is the meaning that promoters or their managers give to the promoter experiences on motivation.

To summarize, the chosen paradigm shapes research at its most basic level, and the chosen theoretical perspective frames the types of questions asked. Research arises from a particular paradigm that informs a particular theoretical perspective, that in turn shapes the choice of methodology, a general “strategy or plan of action” (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). The particular methodology subsequently is implemented through the use of particular methods and techniques. The research methodology, that is, grounded theory based methodology constitutes the ways of thinking about and studying social reality. The research methods consist of in-depth interview and focus group study are both actions and techniques such as theoretical sampling, constant comparative method and theoretical sensitivity for collecting and analyzing empirical materials. The overall theoretical framework of this research is depicted in Figure 3-1.



Figure 3-1: The overall theoretical framework of research



### 3.2.2.1 Constructivist ontology

*“What is the nature of the phenomena, or entities, or social ‘reality’, that I wish to investigate?” (Mason, 2002, p. 14).*

“Ontology is the philosophical science that studies being as common to all things or objects. Following the methodology of philosophy, it uses unaided human reason to study beings” (Sheeran, 1993, p. 21). The concept of ontology is used to refer to Aristotle’s first philosophy, and literally means what comes after physics. The term was only first coined in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Ontological analysis clarifies the structure of knowledge, and questions the nature of what is to be investigated.

The ontological perspective “is so fundamental, it takes place earlier in the thinking process than the identification of a [research] topic” (Mason, 2002, p. 14). Such a stance calls for the articulation of the nature and structure of the world, and the interaction between social structures and individuals.

This research is concerned with motivation - what is said to exist in the world of selling IT / telecom products that potentially the promoters and their managers can be talked about, constructing or re-constructing the social facts about motivation and participants. These social facts depend on human thought for their existence, and they are generated by human practices and human attitudes, including perceptions, feelings, and judgments (Searle, 1995).

Crotty (1998, p. 42) defines constructivism as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world,

and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context”. “There is no meaning without a mind ... Truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9).

Conformable with constructivism, this research does not attempt to describe a circumscribed stereotype but rather seeks to depict the depth and diversity of promoter motivation and perspectives possible within the IT / telecom industries - the fast moving consumer electronic goods. The theoretical framework also attend to issues and values that turned out to be important to promoters, for instance, matters of identity, representation, obligation, power, control, and social justice.

The basic beliefs and principles underlying the constructivist research perspective is of a relativist ontology that “questions the ‘out-there-ness’ of the world and emphasizes the diversity of interpretations that can be applied to it” (Willig, 2001, p. 21). By contrast, Searle (1995) defends realism and the correspondence theory of truth as necessary for our understanding of social reality. Realism sees a real world exists independently of human ideas and representations. The correspondence theory of truth asserts that statements are true if they correspond to facts in the real world. Attempting to repudiate the doctrine of realism, relativism argues that “since any such external world is inaccessible to us in both principle and practice, it need not be postulated or considered ...” (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 6). From this, it follows that there can be multiple realities that are complex and not easily quantifiable, and therefore realities can only be constructed.

From the constructivist perspective, and in this research, motivation is concerned with the perceived reasons for behavior, as meaningful representational phenomena, which are constructed as participants negotiate and intersect their praxis experiences with one another. Therefore, the meaning of motivation cannot be discovered objectively, but instead is constructed subjectively and transactionally. Incentives and other motivational tools, as business policies and practices, still have an existence but their particular significance and meanings are only derived from the context of promoter interaction with them, as processes, as events, in a given time and space. Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 43) assert that “realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such constructions as there

are individuals [although clearly many constructions will be shared]”. In other words, the world consists of multiple individual realities influenced by context. The motivation of promoter is context and time specific, and value bound.

### 3.2.2.2 Interpretive epistemology

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is the branch of philosophy concerns with the nature and scope, or limitations, of knowledge. It is “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The theory of knowledge is embedded in the ontology as well as in the methodology.

This research seeks knowledge about motivation. This section seeks to analyze and clarify the structure of knowledge representation about the motivation of promoter. It addresses the questions: What is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? What do people know? How do we know what we know?

The subjectivist view of this research is committed, in contrast to the objectivist perspective. The objectivists hold that a proposition is considered to be objectively true when its truth conditions are established independently of the mind. Therefore, objective truths are discovered and not the result of any judgment made by a conscious entity. Contrary to objectivity, subjectivity refers to a subject’s perspective, particularly feelings, beliefs, and desires, and is used in informal discourse to refer to unjustified personal opinions, in contrast to knowledge and justified belief.

Epistemologically, constructivism emphasizes the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant, and the co-construction of meaning. (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997) Individuals create the social world, and the world depends on the participants. Researcher, as ‘knower’ cannot be totally separated from the ‘known’, are part of the research, not objective observers, and their values must be acknowledged as an inevitable part of the outcome. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) In a similar vein, Nightingale and Cromby (1999, p. 6) also assert that “knower and known are interactive and inseparable ... knowledge is both part and product of social action”. There is no objective knowledge independent of mind or thinking and meanings are acts of interpretation. Interpretive research concerns with

the meaning and seeks to understand participants' definition of a situation (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Constructivism argues that knowledge and truth are the result of the perspectives that are adopted (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125). On the contrary, interpretivism addresses essential features of shared meaning and understanding, and hence, assumes that all truths are relative to some meaning contexts or perspectives.

Ryder (1994) posits that constructivist thinking views knowledge as the outcome of experience mediated by the researcher's own prior knowledge as well as by the experience of others. In contrast with objectivism which embraces a static reality that is independent of human cognition, constructivism holds that reality can only be represented by human thought. This is consistent with the view that each new conception of the world is mediated by prior-constructed realities, and that human cognitive development is a continually adaptive process of assimilation, accommodation, and correction (Piaget, 1968). Social constructionists, for example Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that reality takes on meaning through the social process and that lives are formed and reformed through the dialectical process of socialization. This forms the basic theoretical stance of the interpretive epistemology of this research.

The interpretive and related constructivist paradigms are distinguished by an interest in understanding the world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. Their concerns, therefore, are with subjective realities. Researchers working in this paradigm focus on particular situated actors who they construe as composing meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged processes of interaction that involve history, language and action. Thus, social reality is not given. Rather, it is built up over time through shared and taken for granted ideas as to the way the world is to be perceived and understood. Interpretive social research, then, focuses on what events and objects mean to people, on how they perceive what happens to them and around them, and on how they adapt their behavior in light of these meanings and perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Like many other management and organization studies, the grounded theory approach adopted in this research is involved in a more wholly interpretive study and in theorizing. The question of truth is to be answered by disclosing which or whose truth is true, and in understanding the particulars of the motivation and de-motivation

episodes in the world of lived experience of promoters in IT / telecom companies in Hong Kong calls for the in-depth knowledge of participants, emphasizing the inner view of social reality and therefore is driven by an interpretive epistemology.

### 3.2.2.3 Qualitative methodology

“Qualitative research is a field of inquiry” that “crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matters” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2). “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Creswell (2007, p. 15) defines qualitative research as:

*“A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of respondents, and conducts the study in a natural setting”.*

Accordingly, the procedures of qualitative research involve emergent methods, ask open-ended questions in interviews, and analyze texts and images (Creswell, 2007, p. 17).

Qualitative research for management provides insights. According to Gephart Jr. and Rynes (2004, p. 455), “an important value of qualitative research is description and understanding of the actual human interactions, meanings, and processes that constitute real-life organizational settings ... it provides insights that are difficult to produce with quantitative research ... has potential to rehumanize research and theory by highlighting the human interactions and meanings that

underlie phenomena and relationships among variables that are often addressed in the field”.

Qualitative research suits management studies. According to Gummesson (2000, p. 1), qualitative methodology provides “powerful tools for research in management and business subjects”. Gummesson (2000, p. 167) suggests that qualitative research is suitable for conducting management research as it fulfills the purpose to “contribute to improved research practices by addressing three key realities in management research, all being largely disregarded by research: complexity, context and persona [the human and social aspects of researcher behavior]”. “Qualitative research is practiced by management and organization scholars ... across a number of communities of research practice” (Locke, 2001, p. 6).

Qualitative researches are based on constructivist or participatory perspectives. Qualitative researchers have been described by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) as meaning-makers who draw on their own experiences, knowledge, and theoretical outlooks, to collect data and to present their understanding to the world. In qualitative research the researcher often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives, that is, the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern or advocacy/participatory perspectives, that is, political, issue-oriented, collaborative or change oriented or both (Creswell, 2003, p. 18).

Quantitative research bases on positivist or empiricist perspective (Creswell, 2007). A fundamental point to understand about methodological issues concerns the differences between quantitative and qualitative researches, which reflect different research paradigms and assumptions rather than merely different sets of research techniques. Quantitative research has a long tradition of adherence to the positivist paradigm that assumes an objective reality independent of the researcher, which is in contrast with the interpretive paradigm adopted in qualitative research that views realities as subjective and socially constructed (Kempster & Parry, 2011).

Qualitative research becomes more accepted. “Reading the contents of many of the ‘prestigious’ journals in our discipline gives the impression that research and practice in work and organizational psychology are dominated by quantitative techniques of analysis, informed by positivist beliefs about how good research should be conducted and how effective change can be brought about” (Symon, Cassell, & Dickson, 2000, p. 457). As a consequence, there is a danger of becoming overly restrictive in both the theoretical development and the solutions offered to organizations (Glaser, 1992, 1998). Nonetheless, in the past two decades, qualitative research has become more widely accepted across many fields and in many disciplines.

Bound within the ontological or relativist-constructivist and epistemological or subjectivist-interpretive premises, qualitative-inductive research methodology is logically chosen for this research to allow room for sense-making of the complex world of promoters and their environment.

### 3.2.3 Grounded theory approach

The term grounded theory was first used by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 1) to refer to “the discovery of theory from data” and “how the discovery of theory from data - systematically obtained and analyzed in social research - can be furthered” by using “a general method of comparative analysis”. Glaser (1998, p. 3) explains further that the theory is generated through “a rigorous research method”, and “is not findings, but rather is an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses”.

Grounded theory refers both to a method and the theory of the phenomena. “Grounded theory refers both to a method of inquiry and to the product of inquiry” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507). As a product of inquiry, a grounded theory is the continual process whereby the data drive the theory to as grounding the theory in the data, and the theory accurately reflects the data. It emphasizes to generate conceptualizations of “abstraction across time, place and people” (Glaser, 2002, para. 3). It uses the empirical data to identify and inter-relate abstract concepts into an analytic schema explaining basic social processes. “Grounded theory can be presented either as a well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 31).

Grounded theory generates “two basic kinds of theory: substantive and formal” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32). Substantive theory is developed for an empirical area and does not endeavor to develop explanations outside the research setting of inquiry. Formal theory is developed for the conceptual area of inquiry and has explanatory power within a discipline or across a range of situations. Substantive theories are used as “a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 79). The two types of theory are differentiated by the degree of generality. “Both may be considered as ‘middle-range.’ That is, they fall between the ‘minor working hypotheses’ of everyday life and the ‘all-inclusive’ grand theories” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 32-33).

Grounded theory is a rigorous research method. Grounded theory is selected as the qualitative methodology for this research underpinning the constructivist-interpretive-qualitative perspective. First, grounded theory is “a rigorous research method” (Glaser, 1998, p. 3) for theory generation. Although it offers flexibility yet the techniques, for example theoretical sampling and constant comparative methods, that put together provides a comprehensive guide from beginning to ending the research process.

Grounded theory generates both substantive and formal theories, and “may be the most widely employed interpretive strategy in the social sciences today” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. xviii). Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is developed to encourage the development of the empirical account to represent the pattern surfaced in the practical level or the grounded theory specific to the research setting, and grounded theory generates a mid-range level of theory which is ignored in grand social theorizing (Locke, 2001). Grounded theory seeks to attempt to ground these highly abstract concepts, that is, theories, in specific contexts, and the research processes endeavors to be ways of determining the concepts or general theories that are of empirical relevance and practical usefulness. The discoveries about the IT / telecom promoters’ motivations comprise a grounded theory as a substantive area of management research.

Grounded theory is popular in management research for its insights and detailed phenomenon. Locke (2001), Jones and Noble (2007, p. 84) assert that grounded theory “has proved popular in management research for three reasons: it is



useful for developing new theory or fresh insights into old theory; it generates theory of direct interest and relevance for practitioners; and it can uncover micro-management processes in complex and unfolding scenarios”.

Grounded theory rejuvenates where other methodologies do not work well. Glaser (1995, p. 15) suggests that grounded theory can become “an answer where other methodologies did not work well enough, especially in the sensitive dependent variable fields within the health science and business and management”. Grounded theory is more viewed as a well-established, widely recognized, credible and rigorous methodology suitable to be used in business research (Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001; Ng & Hase, 2008). Martin and Turner (1986) point out that the use of grounded theory in business and organizational research is advantageous owing to the “methodology’s ability to facilitate understanding and to identify improvements in work contexts”. In a similar vein, Locke (2001, p. 95) argues that grounded theory is “particularly appropriate to researching managerial ... behavior” as it captures the complexity of the managerial process involving in particular substantive issues. These features are attributed to “the logic of grounded theory guides your methods of data-gathering as well as of theoretical development” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 16). Work motivation involves complex mental activity of human beings, and therefore suits the principles of using grounded theory.

In management research, grounded theory provides an eclectic approach to theorizing mature theories. In developing a substantive theory from data, the researcher seeks to understand the problem situation experienced by participants and how they dealt with the problem (Glaser, 1992, 1998). In this study, the problem being considered is motivational processes and activities as experienced by managers and promoters. Locke (2001, p. 97) justifies business and management research using grounded theory by arguing that its “building approach has been used to bring a new perspective and new theorizing to mature established theoretical areas, enlivening and modifying existing theoretical frameworks”. Taking these stances the grounded theory is selected, and in pursuance of the study of motivation, it is expected that the grounded theory methodology can lead to an insightful account of the issues. However, the evolution of grounded theory has resulted in somewhat competing theoretical assumptions.

### 3.2.3.1 Variations of grounded theory

Grounded theory research adopts different techniques, processes and theoretical perspectives. Soon after their original publication ‘The discovery of grounded theory’, Glaser and Strauss disagreed on many techniques of “doing grounded theory” (Glaser, 1998, p. 1), resulting in a split in the theory that adopt some different techniques and processes. There are many academic debates concerning grounded theory methodology in what Glaser (1998, p. 35) calls a “rhetorical wrestle”. Glaser rebuts that the rhetoric argument “undermines grounded theory at every turn by preconceived forcing of the data”. An example can be seen in his book which Glaser (1992) argues chapter by chapter to the book *Basics of Qualitative Research* by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Both originators have developed partially different techniques and processes based on their stances of the theoretical perspectives. Charmaz (1990) points out that the original approach presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was inconsistent in promoting both positivist and phenomenological emphases, that is, reconstructed narrative based methods, and distinguishes between the objectivist or classical and her constructivist grounded theory (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 2000).

Glaser (1994) takes issue with most of the variations and considers that they have eroded its essential focus on the data. Glaser deems all other variations of descriptive grounded theory, including naturalist inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000, 2006), to be “qualitative data analysis” (Glaser, 2002), as a way to distinguish them from his classical or original version of grounded theory.

There are seven variations of most widely used qualitative research. Grounded theory methodology, with increasing popularity, is the “most widely used qualitative research” but has “many extended critiques” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Denzin (2007) lists seven different versions of grounded theory methodologies: “positivist, postpositivist, constructivist, objectivist, postmodern, situational, and computer assisted”. For instance, the grounded theory methodology as presented by Strauss and Corbin (1990) “remains firmly entrenched within the modernist, postpositivist tradition” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. xviii). Stern (1994) holds that

the Straussian and Glaserian represent two fundamentally different approaches. Annells (1996) places grounded theory in the domain of critical realism, rooted in the postpositivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Bryant (2002, abstract) posits that grounded theory “proceeds from an antipositivist orientation that sees truth as socially constructed and sustained”. Distinguishing her views from Glaser’s objectivist perspective, “a student of Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz (2000) has emerged as the leading proponent of constructivist grounded theory...” (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006) as she presumes that both the researcher and participants interpret meanings and actions. The objectivist perspective assumes the reality of an external world and assumes that the researcher as the neutral viewer derives concepts and categories from data. The constructivist perspective “recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523). “Charmaz is not prescribing the constructivist view as the only valid one, but is making the case for a full and proper consideration of issues of constructivism” (Bryant, 2003, para. 4). Glaser defends his classic or original grounded theory of the “true conceptual nature” (Glaser, 2002, para. 28). Glaser argues that his use of “constructivist data, if it exist at all, is a very very small part of the data that grounded theory uses” (Glaser, 2002, abstract) and refutes that the “constructivist grounded theory is a misnomer” (Glaser, 2002, para. 1). Glaser defends his classical or original grounded theory of the “true conceptual nature” (Glaser, 2002, abstract) that still “remains to be figured out what it is” (Glaser, 2002, para. 1).

Proceeding along this research, most of the methods and techniques are adopted from the classical grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and from Glaser (1978), within the conditions of and truth under the constructivist-interpretive paradigm of Charmaz (1995, 2000, 2001). It is argued that the genuine discovery nature of grounded theory is the most appropriate approach to study the motivation of promoters and that the researcher’ experiences, as well as the interaction with the promoters inevitably subjectively influence the theory generation.

### 3.3 Research design

*“A research design describes a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).*

Research design is the outline, plan or strategy used to answer the research question. It calls for decisions about how the research should be carried out, about how data should be collected and analyzed, and about how inferences should be drawn to realize the purposes of the research.

The qualitative approach structures the research questions, instead of the research objectives in quantitative research, to be answered by the research design. This section discusses the development of the research strategy and process.

#### 3.3.1 The research question - the research design answers the research question

*“In a qualitative study, inquirers state research questions, not objectives [i.e. specific goals for the research] or hypotheses [i.e. predictions that involve variables and statistical tests]. These research questions assume two forms: a central question and associated subquestions” (Creswell, 2003, p. 105).*

The title of this dissertation ‘The motivation of temporary sales people in IT / telecom industries in Hong Kong’ interrogates the extant theories to explain the motivation of temporary sales people or promoter in IT / telecom industries. The major disputes are that the promoters are local Hong Kong Chinese, temporary, part-time but long-term employees, contrasting with permanent staff employed under open-ended contracts. The domain of inquiry on management and motivation has been dominated by theories tested through hypotheses that have been based upon Western philosophies, and have been characterized by the imposition of super-categories on settings that may be deviating from the original ones.

This study involves the researcher to know from the promoters and their managers on their motivation. Researchers and participants are human and complex beings who attribute unique meaning to situations, and express reality as perceived. Therefore, in meetings to sharing with the researcher, truth is subjectively expressed

reality as perceived by the participants. The researcher, as knower is inseparable with the known, understands, comprehends and reconstructs the knowledge of the participants. This view of complexity and relativist-subjective reality does not only legitimate and inform a qualitative research approach, but also structures the research question.

This research studies people facing local part-time employment conditions that are different from the traditional settings. The focus is on the exploration or theory generation using qualitative data about the meanings of motivation processes, issues, or phenomena. The central research question, boiled down to the simplest form, is about the perceptions of and concerning managers and promoters about what and how to get promoters motivated. Immediately, it entails two sources of participants - the managers and the promoters.

The central research question is:

- *What are the meanings of motivation to managers and promoters in the selling of IT / telecom products in Hong Kong?*

The research subquestions are:

- *What are the current policies, practices and management of promoters?*
- *Associated with the job, what are the promoters' impressions of and reactions to the motivation methods practiced by their managers?*

### 3.3.2 The research strategy

*“Strategies of inquiry connect researchers to specific approaches and methods for collecting and analyzing empirical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p. 371).*

In this view, the strategies of this research entail two major components. First, committing to a constructivist-interpretive-qualitative perspective, this research adopts the grounded theory approach which is a rigorous methodology for theory-generative and organizational study. Second, the selected methodology, that is, grounded theory, and the chosen methods or techniques, that is, theoretical sampling,

constant comparative method, dictate the research processes and guide all activities from collecting to analyzing data to writing up the theory.

### 3.3.3 The research design

McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 599) define a research design as “the plan that describes the conditions and procedures for collecting and analyzing data”. From this perspective, the design of this research is a plan and structured framework, intended to guide the research process to address the research question and thereby expand knowledge and understanding. Through a clear and well-developed research plan, error is reduced and validity maximized, thus enhancing the confidence that readers have about the rigor of the work.

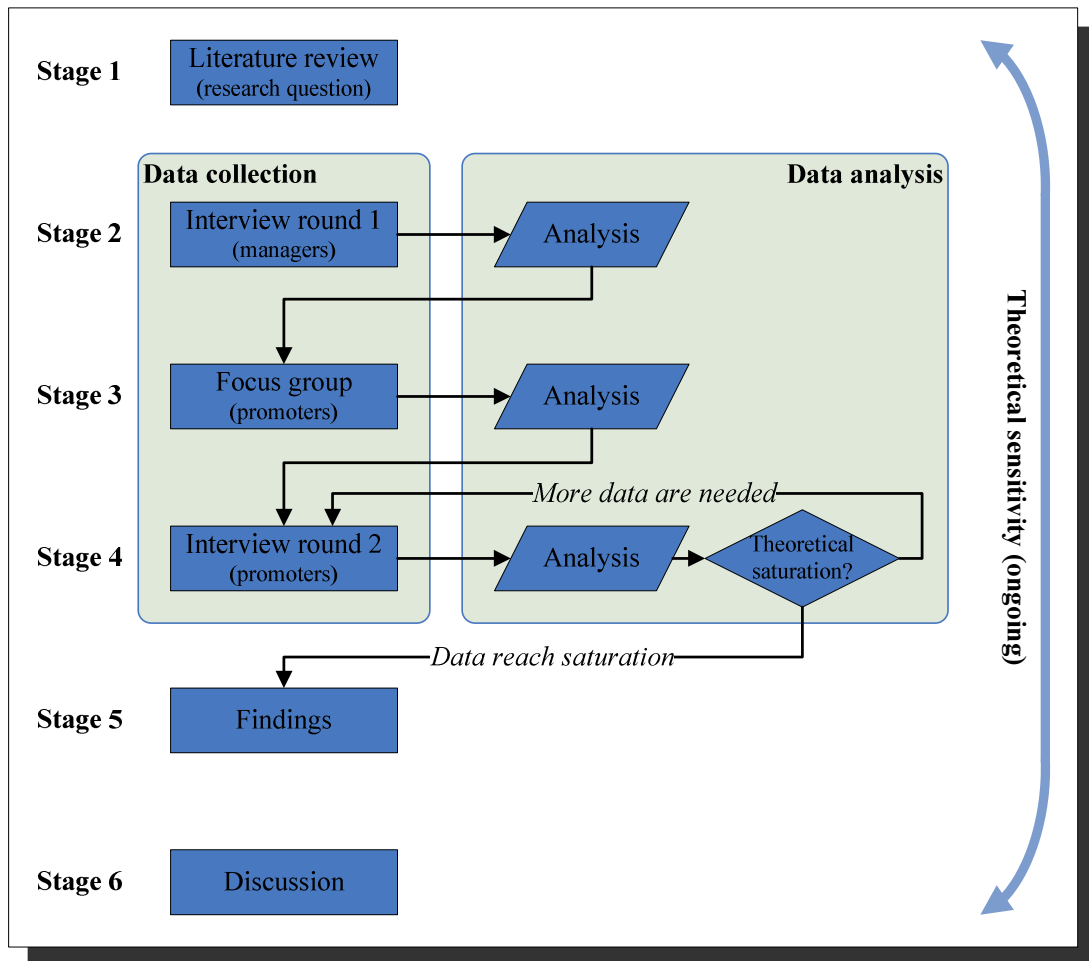
“The methods and procedures [are] really the heart of the research ... activities should be described with as much detail as possible and the continuity between them should be apparent” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005, p. 416). The design of this qualitative research is flexible regarding the various techniques of data collection and analysis, encompassing a variety of accepted methods and structures. In this research, focus group and in-depth interviews are carefully designed and conducted as per a standardized structure in the pre-set research process, in order to answer the research question.

### 3.3.4 Research process

*“The detailed, conceptual grounded route from data collection to a finished writing is a process composed of a set of double-back steps ...the steps are ...collection of research data, open coding of the data soon after, theoretical sampling, generating many memos with as much saturation as possible and emergence of core social psychological problems and processes, which then become the basic for more selective theoretical sampling, coding and memoing as the analyst focuses on the core” (Glaser, 1978, p. 16).*

Adopting the grounded theory approach, the overall research design and processes are depicted as in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2: The overall research design and process



### Stage 1: Literature review

This research begins by understanding the research problems to setting the context then reviewing relevant literature to inform the researcher without committing to one or more theories.

### Stage 2: Interview round 1 - managers

Adopting the strategy of triangulation, three rounds of data collection and analysis are designed to collect data from different sources using different methods.

The first round of data collection begins from understanding the managers or business owners as employers. In-depth interviews are used to understand the management policies and practices in using promoters. Following grounded theory principles, the first sample was purposive and as the study was qualitative and

exploratory issues of probability were not included. The managers' sample was small but care was taken in selection to ensure diversity in terms of location along the supply chain by selecting managers from different tiers on the chain. In-depth interviews are arranged as managers are mature and ready to talk. The data are analyzed immediately for an initial finding, forming the meanings on the knowledge of the motivation of promoters. This perspective of the manager is subject to be enhanced by incorporating the views from the promoter, thus informing the subsequent rounds of data collection.

#### Stage 3: Focus group - promoters

The second round of data collection employs the focus group interview in which the less-matured promoters are encouraged so that their opinions can be heard during the study. The promoters are identified from various sources and coming from different business environments. The data are analyzed for the continual development of the earlier-discovered categories of meanings. New categories of meanings are expected as well as variations which may be found to become the conditions of the particular meaning. These calls for further data collection and thus the sampling of promoter individual in-depth interviews are informed.

#### Stage 4: Interview round 2 - promoters

The final round of data collection is engaged in interviewing promoters individually. Promoters are selected according to the relevance. Data are analyzed in clusters of like with like promoter attributes and deemed relevance prioritize the analysis sequence. This sensitizes the research by offering more new data to flow in the analysis early, thus facilitating the reaching of the theoretical saturation.

#### Stage 5: Presenting the findings

Stage 5 presents the findings of three rounds of data collection and analysis and shows how findings are further compared. This stage concludes by presenting the analysis for the emerging central theme.

#### Stage 6: Discussion



In stages 2 to 5, field data are compared to field data. In stage 6, insights emerged from the field data. These were addressed in terms of the relevant theories discussed in chapter two, part one. This was literature reviewed going in to the study and related to the research questions. Secondly, field data were interrogated for their association with theory not reviewed going in to the study, using grounded theory theoretical sensitivity. The emergent theories were presented as part two of the literature review and discussed in the discussion chapter. The emergent literature provided ideas for a future research agenda for studying the motivation of temporary sales people or promoters.

### 3.3.5 Theoretical sensitivity

The term theoretical sensitivity was coined “to denote the researcher’s ability to ‘see relevant data’ ” (Udo, 2005, para. 8), “so that he can conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 46).

*“Theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher’s knowledge, understanding, and skill, which foster his generation of categories and properties and increase his ability to relate them into hypotheses, and to further integrate the hypotheses, according to the emergent theoretical codes” (Glaser, 1992, p. 27).*

### 3.4 Data collection

This research adopts interviewing, including the individual in-depth and focus group interviews, as the data collection methods. Recruitment of participants follows the principles of theoretical sampling. Considering the strategies of data and method triangulation, individual in-depth and focus group interviews are adopted. In both methods, interview schedules are developed to facilitate the participants to give meanings. The triangulation of data sources did not include qualitative and quantitative combinations. Data were gathered to elicit views from roles surrounding the sales promoters. This study has interviewed four managers, six promoters in a focus group, and another thirteen promoters individually. This section discusses the theories and practices of interviewing and theoretical sampling in this research.

### 3.4.1 Interviewing

Interviewing is about asking people, listening to them, building data slices and studying the meanings.

*“when finding information out about people - the best way is to ask them!”*  
(Yates, 2004, p. 156).

“Interviews are, by their very nature, social encounters where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective [and prospective] accounts or versions of their past [or future] actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts” (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004, p. 16).

“The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge. An interview is literally an inter view, and inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 2). “Qualitative interviewing is an extremely versatile approach to doing research ... Qualitative interviewing listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work ... Qualitative interviews also explore specific topics, events, or happenings” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 3).

Multiple data slices helps build better theory by ensuring the generated theory works from multiple perspectives. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), “different kinds of data give the analyst different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its properties; these different views we have called slices of data ...” and the researcher “works under the diverse structural conditions of each group” and collects data from “different perspectives of people in different positions”. First, managers practicing the motivation are interviewed contrasting to the perspectives from promoters. Second, promoters as well as the promoter supervisors are interviewed. Third, promoters of different brands and coming from different sites are interviewed.

Fundamentally underpinning the constructivist paradigm and the grounded theory approach of qualitative methodology, this research collects data by interviewing. Interviewing is an important tool to collect qualitative data (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). This strategy responds to the critique arguing that

positivist methods strip contexts from meanings in the process of developing quantified measures of phenomena (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As Marschan-Piekkari and Welch (2004, p. 6) state that the qualitative methods are “procedures for ‘coming to terms with the meaning not the frequency’ of a phenomenon by studying its social context ... and may include ... focus group ... and narrative interviews” (Van Maanen, 1983, p. 9).

#### 3.4.1.1 In-depth interview

In-depth interview is a guided and extended discussion. “Qualitative interviews are conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 4). There are many approaches which differ in the use of narrow or broad questions. They range from the use of open-ended questions in unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005) to more specific, semistructured or focused questions (Merton, Lowenthal, & Kendall, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The in-depth interviews in this research are basically semistructured, with questions prepared that “attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 706).

In-depth interviewing fits the grounded theory strategies. Specifically, “grounded theory methods depend upon a similar type of flexibility as in-depth interviewing ... the combination of flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing techniques fit grounded theory strategies for increasing the analytic incisiveness of the resultant analysis. Grounded theory interviewing differs from much in-depth interviewing because we narrow the range of interview topics to gather specific data for developing our theoretical frameworks as we proceed with conducting the interviews” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29).

The in-depth interview adopted in this study is a semistructured life world interview, that defined by Kvale (1996, pp. 6-7) as “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewees with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena”. To facilitate the participants to give meanings, interview questions are prepared. Charmaz (2006, p. 29) suggests that “questions must explore the interviewer’s topic and fit the participant’s experience ... questions

are sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and elaborate the participant's specific experience ... Having an interview guide with well-planned open-ended questions and ready probes can increase your confidence and permit you to concentrate on what the person is saying”.

The role of the researcher is to define and control the situation. “The topic of the interview is introduced by the researcher, who also critically follows up on the subject's answers to his or her questions” (Kvale, 1996, p. 7). Therefore, in conducting the interviews, the researcher planned out the settings, selected participants, set up questions, prepared probes and followed up the answers.

#### 3.4.1.2 Focus group

Focus group assembles people to discuss shared impressions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), and contributes to some individuals' recognition and awareness of their own subjugation (Madriz, 2000). Kreuger (1988, p. 18) defines a focus group as a “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment”. An underlying nature of the focus group interview is that the interviewer or moderator may direct the interaction and inquiry in a very structured or unstructured manner, depending on the interview's purpose (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 356). Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 703) state that “the group interview is essentially a qualitative data-gathering technique that relies on the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in a formal or informal setting ... Today, all group interviews are generically designated focus group interviews”.

Interviewing is “limited to those situations where the assembled group is small enough to permit genuine discussion among all its members” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 10). Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest a good focus group to consist of six to twelve members.

The milestones in focus group research is provided by Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) that trace back to as early as in 1913. They suggest that focus groups were previously called “focussed” (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 5) group interviews in 1941, and a definitive class in 1962 “The Group Depth Interview” (Stewart et al.,

2007, p. 6). The term focus group was later coined by Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956).

Focus groups were used in the late 1930's by social scientists to "investigating alternative ways of conducting interviews" (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 5). Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 365) state that Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956) coined the term 'focus group' in 1956 to apply to a situation in the follow-up study in which the interviewer asks participants specific questions about a topic resulted from considerable research. Patton (2001, p. 387), as cited from Krueger, (1994, p. x) that "the focus group is beneficial for identification of major themes". "Focus group today takes many different forms" (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 5) and can be used in a variety of settings.

Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (Stewart et al., 2007, pp. 41-42) summarize the more common uses of focus groups to include: [a] obtaining general background information about a topic of interest; [b] generating research hypotheses that can be submitted to further research and testing using more quantitative approaches; [c] stimulating new ideas and creative concepts; [d] diagnosing the potential for problems with a new program, service or product; [e] generating impressions of products, programs, services, institutions, or other objects of interest; [f] learning how participants talk about the phenomenon of interest. This, in turn, may facilitate the design of questionnaires, survey instruments, or other research tools that might be employed in more quantitative research; [g] interpreting previously obtained qualitative results.

Focus group allows for diversity and richness of data. Merton, Lowenthal, and Kendall (1990, p. 135) suggests that the focus group with a group of people "yield a more diversified array of responses and afford a more extended basis both for designing systematic research on the situation in hand". "Focus groups may be useful at virtually any point in a research program, but they are particularly useful for exploratory research when rather little is known about the phenomenon of interest" (Stewart et al., 2007p. 41). The use of focus group in this qualitative research is to allow diverse and rich data to emerge. Qualitative focus group encourages participants to disclose reality and express feelings in a safe and nurturing environment. Krueger (1994, pp. 10-11) maintains that "the focus group interview works because it taps into

human tendencies. Attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts, products, services, or programs are developed in part by interaction with other people. We are a product of our environment and are influenced by people around us". Thus, opinions may be held with confidence.

Focus group is used as an alternative to individual interviewing to realize the strategy of method triangulation. "Focus groups have also allowed researchers to explore the nature and effects of ongoing social discourse in ways that are not possible through individual interviews or observations. Individual interviews strip away the critical interactional dynamics that constitute much of social practice and collective meaning making" (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2005, p. 902). Focus groups "capitalize on the richness and complexity of group dynamics" (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2005, p. 903).

The role of researcher, as if in other interviewing, is to plan out and control the running of the focus group. On the spot, the moderator facilitates the discussion, becomes the group leader, ask questions and listens to the answers of the whole group (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The rationale for a focus group was based on two issues. First, due to the difficulty of securing respondents in this particular setting, the opportunity was taken to elicit data from respondents as a group. The second reason was the facility of focus group data collection to initiate and build on ideas and issues. In a collectivist context such as Hong Kong, respondents are very comfortable in group data collection.

#### 3.4.2 Theoretical sampling

*"Theoretical sampling allows the grounded theorist to build variation into theory, thus enhancing its explanatory potential" (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007, p. 135).*

"The detailed, conceptual grounded route from data collection to finished writing is a process composed of a set of double-back steps". The steps are "collection of research data, open coding of the data soon after, theoretical sampling, generating many memos with as much saturation as possible and emergence of core

social psychological problems and processes, which then become the basic for more selective theoretical sampling, coding and memoing as the analyst focuses on the core” (Glaser, 1978, p. 16).

“Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties, and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 62). “The adequate theoretical sample is judged on the basis of how widely and diversely the analyst chose his groups for saturating categories according to the type of the theory he wished to develop ... once discovered the relationship is assumed to persist in direction no matter how biased the previous sample of data was, or the next sample is ... For generating theory these biases are treated as conditions changing the relationship, which should be woven into the analysis as well” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 63).

“Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). The “general procedure” involves eliciting “codes from raw data from the start of data collection through constant comparative analysis as the data pour in. Then to use the codes to direct further data collection, from which the codes are further theoretically developed with respect to their various properties and their connections with other codes until saturated, Theoretical sampling on any code ceases when it is saturated, elaborated and integrated into the emerging theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 36).

Grounded theory is an iterative process directed by theoretical sampling. Comparison groups are selected based on the potential that they can further the development of the emerging categories. According to Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), generating grounded theory requires an iterative process of data collection, coding and analysis, and planning the subsequent research activities. As the iterative research processes continue, the research may explore the same group more deeply or in different ways, or may seek out new groups. The comparison participants are selected such that they further the development of emerging categories. For comparative analysis, the comparability of participants is important.

They are guided by the research results. Initially, the sampling is purposive and deemed theoretical relevance to the matters studied. The subsequent direction of which groups to study and how to analyze the data depends on the early findings, often in the form of questions, emerged and unclear during the coding and analysis. The researcher is needed to be theoretical sensitive in collecting and coding data to sense where the data is taking them and what to do next.

### 3.4.3 The practice - data collection implementation

This research was designed to collect data in three rounds from two types of participants. In the first round, four managers of different nature of employers were individually interviewed. In the second round, a focus group was conducted with six promoters. In the third round, another thirteen promoters were individually interviewed.

#### 3.4.3.1 Round one - managers' interviews

The research activities begin by interviewing managers who are setting and practicing motivation policies. Considering that the managers are mature enough and can express well, semistructured in-depth interviews are adopted.

##### 3.4.3.1.1 Sampling for managers' interviews

This qualitative inquiry used non-probability sampling that did not depend upon the rationale of probability theory, therefore it did not involve the random selection process. Instead, it was more concerned with achieving a wider coverage and representation of variation within the population. The interviewee selection process began by considering what the researcher knew about the range of types of employers that might hire promoters in the IT industries. The selection of the initial sample basically drew upon the theoretical relevance concerns. According to Charmaz (2006, p. 189), “when engaging in theoretical sampling, the researcher seeks people, events, or information to illuminate and define the boundaries and relevance of the categories”.

Retailers, distributors, manufacturing vendors and marketing consultancy are four types of employers known to the best knowledge of the research. In the IT



industries, sellers of all tiers along the supply chain might hire promoters to work in the retail field. The first type being the retail shops hiring promoters to add to their generic sales forces on the shop front. The second and third types are the distributors and manufacturing vendors hiring promoters and seconding them to the retail field to strengthen their product sales forces. The fourth type is the marketing consultancy hiring promoters on behalf of the distributors and manufacturing vendors, and charging them the costs of promoters as outsourced marketing services. Most of these hiring are funded out of the manufacturing vendors' cooperative marketing fund. Therefore, many promoters in the field usually represent specific brands and promote specific products.

In the outset, three managers were identified representing the retailer, distributor and manufacturing vendor. The first manager selected came from a retail chain store managing ten shops in Hong Kong. The second manager selected was also the owner of a local distributor representing overseas manufacturing vendors. The third manager selected came from the local office of a large multinational manufacturing vendor. All three managers had decided to use promoters and were engaged in directly or indirectly managing them. Sometime later, taking an opportunity as Repley (2004, p. 17) states that "recruitment happens on an ad-hoc and chance basic", two marketing consultants from a marketing consultancy were also interviewed. Although the sample is very small yet the mix of interviewees covers all the known types of employers. These managers are diverse in terms of experiences and responsibility ranging from the operational level to the business owner.

#### 3.4.3.1.2 Managers' interviews setting

It was intended that the interviews would be conducted comfortably and therefore the venue were chosen by the managers. The manager of the retail chain store proposed to be interviewed during lunch. To ensure the venue would not be too disturbing owing to noises from other tables setting too close, the lunch interview was arranged in a quiet private club house restaurant. The other managers' interviews were all conducted in rooms of the office setting that were considered appropriate. The owner-manager of the local distributor was interviewed in the researcher's office. The manager of the multinational manufacturing vendor was interviewed in the

meeting room at the vendor's office. The conversations with the two marketing consultants were taken in a meeting room in the office of the consultancy.

The interviewer was the researcher, and because he was a veteran of the IT industry, he was well versed with the terminology, and expected that he would readily comprehend the material described by the managers. On the other hand, he anticipated that he might be preoccupied with his own understanding of the situations, issues and viewpoints expressed that there were some risks to be addressed. These were that the interviewer might respond to the questions through the lens of his own personal views, might not inquire deeply enough into the interviewees' point of view, and might draw premature conclusions on behalf of the interviewees.

As one safeguard against this, the interview questions were sent to the interviewees prior to the meetings so that they could think through their answers, helping to reduce the influence of interviewer bias. Second, in the data analysis, the accounts from respondents (i.e., not the researcher) comprised the basis for evidence. Third, when analyzing the data the researcher sought advice from an experienced researcher, who helped him to question his interpretations and to recognize when he was allowing his prior assumptions to bias the interpretations.

The informed consent was sought by phone and email. The interview questions were sent to the interviewees when the appointments were made. During the meeting, the interviewees were asked again for their permission to record and the concerns of confidentiality and anonymity were explained one more time. "The tape-recorder alongside the presence of the interview guide, the initial greetings, and talk about the aims of the research create 'a particular social context for the interview communication (Warren, 2001, p. 91). They can work to forecast a specific interactional context, to shift the identities of the speakers to interviewer and interviewee, where the interviewee is produced as 'having something of importance to say' " (Rapley, 2004, p. 18).

#### 3.4.3.1.3 Managers' interview schedule

Recapture of the research question for the manager:

- *What are the current policies, practices and management of promoters?  
[see Section 3.3.1]*

The interviews were designed and scheduled with the intention of allowing the managers to talk freely about the use of and management of the promoters. The questions were scheduled to elicit the managers' views, and to let them follow their own train of thought regarding motivating promoter. As Berg (2004, p. 70) suggests that "questions are asked in a systematic way but participants are allowed freedom to digress". Therefore the questions were not meant to be followed strictly but rather were adjusted on the spot if it were felt necessary to enhance the quality of the dialogue.

There were four main sets of questions scheduled:

- [a] Is the use of the temporary sales force is a reality?
  - Does your business use a non-permanent sales force? If so, how long have you been using them?
  - Does your business plan to continue using a temporary sales force? What are your considerations regarding this?
  
- [b] Is the employment of temporary sales force a short term or long term strategy?
  - What are the types of sales force that your business is using? What do you call these various types?
  - Why does your business use a temporary sales force? What differentiates the temporary sales force from other categories of staff?
  - Do you use more temporary sales people during some specific times than at other times? Please explain.
  
- [c] What are the challenges and problems of managing a temporary sales force?
  - How does your business manage its temporary sales force?

- How do you go about motivating the temporary sales force? Can you tell me your most successful cases? Can you tell me the least successful cases?
- What are the considerations in motivating the temporary sales force?
- What are the problems [if any] in motivating temporary sales force, for example, in terms of employees' attitude, self-initiation, absenteeism, turnover, sales performance, etc.?

[d] What do you think is the psychological contract between employers and temporary sales people?

- What are the expectations of members of your temporary sales force in terms of career development, pay, fringe benefit, etc.?
- What does your business expect from the temporary sales force in terms of work attitude, loyalty, commitment, etc.?

#### 3.4.3.2 Round two - promoters' focus group

This promoters' focus group study was conducted after the managers' interviews. In this round the promoters' views on motivational incidents were asked to compare with the managers' perspectives. It was also planned to answer some of the questions that arose from the managers' interviews, and to explore directions for further inquiries. As promoters are less mature young people, the focus group is advantageous by tapping into the human tendencies where attitudes and perceptions can be developed through interaction with others, thus allowing the opinions to be held with confidence during the group discussion (Krueger, 1994).

##### 3.4.3.2.1 Sampling for the promoters' focus group

The principle of collecting relevant and good representative data maintained. The sources of the promoter participants were drawn on the relevance and also followed the criteria of "widely and diversely" range of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 63). Multiple strategies were used, and the promoters were sourced from cold canvassing in a computer shopping mall, referred by their managers and by the marketing consultants. They included both genders, came from different shops and sold a variety of different products.

As a sampling tactic, the cold canvassing used in this search might better be termed expert sampling, in that, the participants were chosen because they were knowledgeable, had expertise in the trade, and were currently working. For this part of the motivation study, the performers were treated as experts. It was assumed that motivated promoters, after accumulating the necessary knowledge and skills, would have higher intention to work harder and therefore greater likelihood of performing better. Some promoters worked in an open area and were therefore publicly accessible, so that the researcher could watch and select the performers to approach. It was intended to recruit some promoters of this kind to participate in the focus group. The researcher went around three shopping malls, watched for performers and cold-canvassed a few promoters. Two promoters agreed to participate in the focus group.

For referrals from the managers and marketing consultants, there is a risk of human bias. To contribute the most representational value of the sample, the purpose of the research was explained to the managers and the marketing consultants then discussed for a selection criteria of promoters that [a] six-to-four male-to-female gender ratio according to the marketing consultants' observed ratio of the promoter population; [b] with more than one year experience and still active in working as a promoter; [c] with generally expressive type of characters that are willing to talk; [d] have worked for multiple clients and are not affixed to a particular end employer or a combination of promoters who have worked for different managers; [e] have worked in different geographic locations or a mix of promoters who have worked in different locations; [f] have worked for different products or a mix of promoters who have experience in promoting different products. Eight potential participants were recruited from those sources.

It was planned that the focus group to consist of six to twelve promoters (Charmaz, 2004) all in one room for interactive group interview. A larger group may be more representative but the choice of a smaller group favors the interactive discussion. The recruitment stopped after ten promoters agreed to take part. Two were sourced from cold-canvassing; another two were referred by distributors; and six were referred by a marketing consultancy. Among them, six were female, and two were

full-time promoters. The mix of potential focus group members thus covered all known hiring sources, both genders, and different employment modes.

#### 3.4.3.2.2 Promoters' focus group setting

Six promoters turned out in the focus group, who took part in an interactive group setting where they were free to talk with other group members, in response to open-ended questions about their concepts and attitudes towards their job as promoters. They were asked: [a] to describe the life of being a promoter; [b] to recall motivation incidents; [c] to suggest the elements for a motivation system.

The study was scheduled on a Saturday late morning so that the promoters, after finishing the focus group study, could go straight to work, that usually would start at twelve or one o'clock when the traffic in the shopping mall is building up. This meeting schedule aimed at accommodating to the participants' working time in order to avoid bothering their work, so as to enhance rapport and to increase the attendance rate.

The venue was a commercial focus group study facility in a multinational market research company in a first grade high-rise commercial building near an urban underground train station. The meeting venue was a plain commercial conference room with full-height walls and a wooden door. Participants were kept undisturbed and undistracted from outside. One side of the room was a glass curtain wall with an elevated street view and one other side was a large one-sided mirror. The room was air-conditioned with office bright white light. During the discussion, the participants and the moderators were sitting round a wooden table and on comfortable office chairs. This meeting venue was chosen to give the participants a comfortable and easy environment to encourage them to speak out openly.

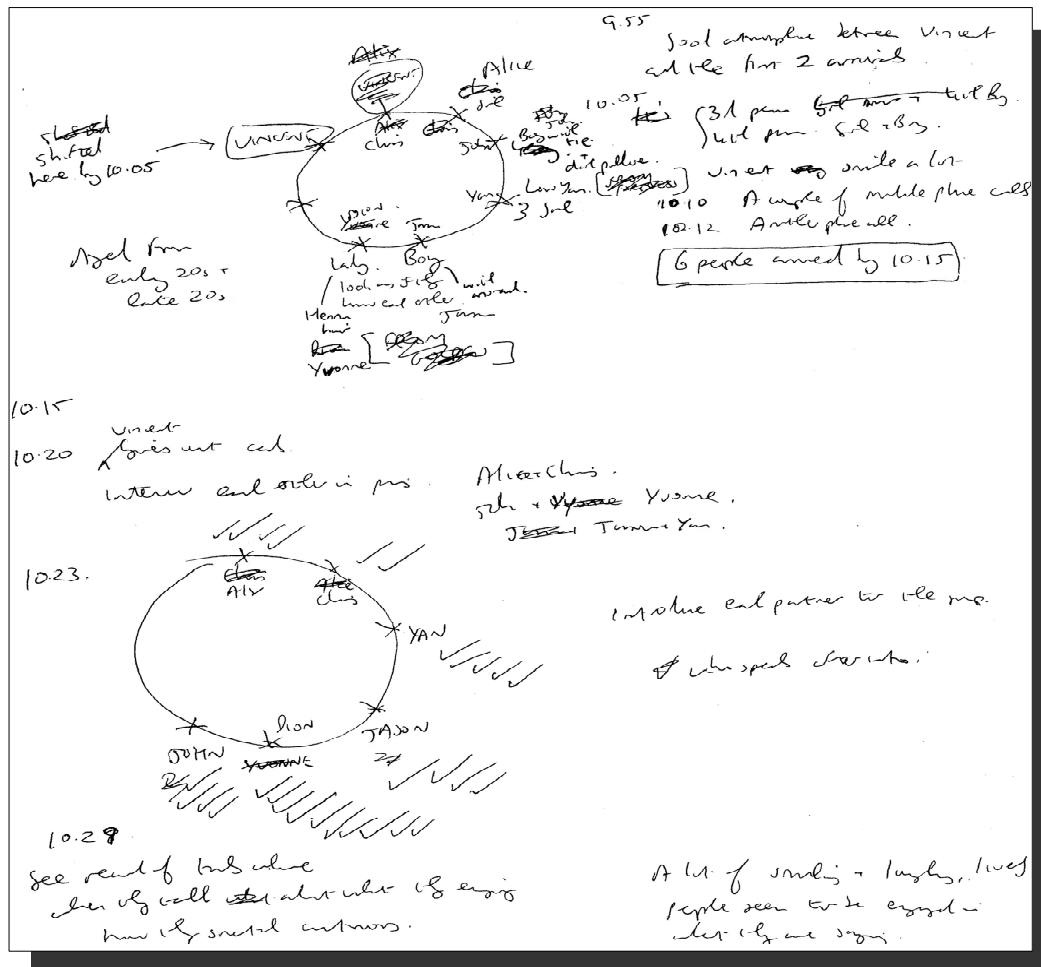
The focus group study moderator was the researcher, and he had experience of the industry and some knowledge about the trade. On one hand, this enabled the moderator to better comprehend the material described by the promoters. On the other hand, this might have predisposed the moderator to be preoccupied with his own understanding of the situations, issues and viewpoints expressed. There were risks that the moderator, during the facilitation, responded on the basis of his own

view, through his own lens, and might not have inquired deeply enough to reflect the participants' views. Macnaghten and Myers (2004, p. 71) state that "focus group moderators may be more or less interventionist ... may be more or less empathetic ... more or less identifiable ... contribute more or less in discussion ... the moderator intervenes by formulating [rephrasing what participants have said in his own words], proposing views to get a response, selecting speakers, and challenging them".

To compensate for this risk, the focus group meeting was designed to incorporate some structural control to reduce the influence of moderator bias. First, the focus group schedule was prepared in advance and was adhered to entirely. Second, moderator scripts and guidelines were prepared in advance and included the initial questions and probes. These directed the moderator to facilitate the meeting, and reminded the moderator to properly respond to all participants' answers and not to wantonly accept answers matching only the moderator's assumptions or ideology. Third, as noted above, a faculty member was invited as an observer to watch for any special problems during the meeting and to make immediate suggestions to the moderator to improve the data collection process.

Behind the one-sided mirror a faculty member was invited as the observer. The observer's role was to record any special note about the study. In this study, the observer made notes and gave feedback to the moderator. During the break, the observer commented on the moderation and the participants' responses, and made suggestions to the moderator's immediate actions to improve the data collection process. For example, one specific observation was that one participant was especially quiet and later in the second half of the focus group study the situation improved after the moderator encouraged the participant. Figure 3-3 shows partially the notes taken by the observer during the focus group study.

Figure 3-3: An example of the observer's note



The researcher played the moderator role to lead the interactive conversation. After greetings and collecting general demographic data, the promoters were divided into two groups, one for positive and the other for negative incidents of employers' motivational activities, for discussion. Each group then chose a representative to present their experiences.

“Using Videotape provide much more data for analysis” (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004, p. 73) and need not have some “extra features” in the transcript that “make the text nearly unreadable, and even influence readers’ sense of the social status of participants”. The advantage of a video file allows the researcher to always look at the video while analyzing from the transcript. The whole process was both video- and audio-recorded. The conversations were transcribed, managed and analyzed in QSR’s N6 (2002). The other data are the participants’ and the observer’s notes.



The focus group was designed to run for 85 minutes. The focus group study started actually several minutes later than the scheduled time, in the hope that the absentees would turn up, but they did not. The focus group was run more or less in accordance with the schedule as shown in Figure 3-4. The audio- and video-records showed that all the components were present and the meeting overran for two and a quarter minutes.

#### 3.4.3.2.3 Promoters' focus group schedule

Recapture of the research question for the promoter:

- *Associated with the job, what are the promoters' impressions of and reactions to the motivation methods practiced by their managers? [see Section 3.3.1]*

The focus group questions and schedule was designed so as to facilitate the promoters to answer the research question. The focus group schedule is summarized in Figure 3-4.

Figure 3-4: The focus group schedule

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
2 min.	Start and build rapport: - Introduce the study objectives and assure confidentiality
5 min.	Warm up and collect participants' profiles: - Do paired cross-interview for introduction of the promoters
5 min.	- Do individually round table cross-introduction
8 min.	General discussion on the work life of being a promoter  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do your employers hire you?</li> <li>• What skills do you have to be hired?</li> <li>• If you had a choice, would you still like this job? [Probe: If there is full-time work, would you still keep this job or why don't you give up this job?]</li> </ul>
20 min.	Recall motivation events [discussion]: - Recall the motivation events, in 2 groups
5 min.	Break
10 min.	Recall motivation events [presentation]: - Present the motivation events, in 2 groups
20 min.	Speak out the wishes: - Develop a wish list of a motivation scheme, in 2 groups
10 min.	- Present the wish list of a motivation scheme, in 2 groups
85 min. total	

The focus group schedule was planned to control the study in a timely manner and to ensure that discussions centered round the objectives. Some modified approaches were introduced to encourage speaking by creating a competitive atmosphere and making the activities interesting to participate in.

First, this focus group used participant cross-interviews in an attempt to warm up the group quicker and to maximize encouragement for the participants to speak up, without pressure and tell the entirety of their stories. In a traditional focus group study, the moderator might ask questions to start the discussion, but in this study, instead of there being a self introduction, members interviewed each other then introduced the interviewees.

There followed the traditional general and open discussions where the moderator asked questions to one after another and sought to create and maintain an open discussion atmosphere. Based on threads developed by analyzing the managers' interviews, the promoters were asked directly to answer and discuss three questions:

- Why do your employers hire you?
- What skills do you have to be hired?
- If you had a choice, would you still like this job? [Probe: If there is full-time work, would you still keep this job or why don't you give up this job?]

Then the participants were divided into two groups to compete for the longest listing of motivation events recalled from memory. The participants were encouraged to compete with the other group so as to inject more fun, to reduce moderator intervention and thus make participants feel more comfortable and stimulate each other.

In the last part, the two groups were asked to put themselves into the shoes of their managers to generate ideas for designing a preferred scheme to motivate promoters. This last exercise was also designed as a competition game, for similar reasons, that is, to encourage the promoters to be more free and open.

#### 3.4.3.3 Round three - promoters' individual interviews

To answer the second research subquestion, the focus group and in-depth interviews were designed to ask promoters to talk openly with guided interview questions to answer the research question.

Recapture of the research question for the promoter:

- *Associated with the job, what are the promoters' impressions of and reactions to the motivation methods practiced by their managers?*

The promoters' individual in-depth interviews were the third round of data collection. This section reports the data collection methods of the thirteen promoters' individual in-depth interviews.

#### 3.4.3.3.1 Sampling of promoters' individual interviews

To keep up with recruiting a wide and diverse range of promoters, multiple strategies were adopted in sampling and recruitment. The basic selection criteria of the focus group maintained, and purposely added a few promoters from Telecom companies to contrast with the focused IT promoters. These promoters were not the same interviewed before in the focus group to avoid contamination.

Recruitment attempts included electronic mailings to an undergraduate college, cold canvassing, and referrals from managers and marketing consultants. For direct recruitment, the research approached the promoters by himself to ask an appointment. For referrals, the researcher telephoned the promoters based on the contact information gathered upon the consent of the promoters.

Thirteen promoters were interviewed. There were seven male and eight female promoters. Ten of them were referred by marketing consultants, and two from their managers, and three from cold canvassing.

#### 3.4.3.3.2 Promoters' individual interviews setting

The strategies and adoption of interviewing in the data collection process in this research were consistent throughout the research. As was adopted in the managers' interviews, the promoters' individual interviews were also semistructured with an interview schedule prepared with open-ended questions so as to allow promoters to talk freely. Again, the promoters were allowed to choose the meeting point and time. The ten interviews of promoters referred by the marketing consultants were conducted in the meeting room in the office of the consultancy in the morning. The other five interviews were conducted in casual restaurants and food court near the promoters' work, with three interviews done before they started to

work before lunch time and two afterwards in the late evening. The researcher was the interviewer. All the interviews were taped.

#### 3.4.3.3.3 Promoters' individual interviews schedule

To facilitate the interviews, an interview schedule was prepared to guide the researcher to lead the conversation in the meeting. Broadly, the questions were designed so that they would elicit the interviewees to talk broadly about their experiences and views on motivation. Specifically, some questions were more purposive as guided by the results of the earlier findings.

The interview schedule contained the following items:

- [a] Start by introducing the objectives of the meeting:

Script: My name is Vincent Chan. I am doing a research for my doctoral thesis on the work of promoters in the IT / telecom industry. Thank you for helping me. I request you to be as true as possible in telling me about your stories of being a promoter. Our conversation will be recorded so that I can listen again for data extraction and the information I collected will only be used for writing up my thesis. Your name will be disguised.

- [b] Ask the promoter how she/he got started with the promoter job and to describe a typical working day:

Ask the task nature of their work?

Ask their perceived responsibility? Ask their responsibility being told?

Ask their relationship perceived with other people at work [boss, shop, peers, competitors, etc.]?

- [c] Ask the promoter how she/he feels about the job [task], in terms of nature?

- [d] Ask the promoter if there is any training for them? Ask them if the trainings are important?

Follow-up script: Does training matter and how? In addition to performing her/his job, does training matter to her/him in future development?

- [e] Ask the promoter to recall and describe the moments they felt good but still performing?

Ask if their boss and shop were satisfied? Ask if they are also satisfied?

Ask what made them feel good? Ask for their attitude and behavior when they feel good?

Ask for the critical incidents when they feel exceptionally good [got motivated] and bad [got de-motivated] and what made them feel good and bad?

Ask if there is any case that has made them work hard or harder? Ask if the results are good? Ask if they will work hard/harder again and what are the conditions [under what conditions make them stop work hard]?

- [f] Ask the promoter to list their expectation [wants/goals/ambitions] on employers?

Hints to promoters: what do you want the employer to do more often and less often?

- [g] Ask the promoter to list her/his expectations [wants/goals/ambitions] on themselves.

Ask the promoter how she/he feels about the promoter experience can affect the future career development?

- [h] Ask for the demographic information and closing.

Hint: Ask for their age, gender, work mode [part-time or full-time], experience, and education

Ask the respondent to allow future contact in case further clarification is required.

The average length of the interviews was 29 minutes 52 seconds according to the recorded tape, and the shortest was 17 minutes 13 seconds, and the longest was 49 minutes 50 seconds.

### 3.5 Data analysis

This section discusses the use of constant comparative method in this research for the analysis of data. The processes of analysis, from coding to categorizing to writing the concepts from data are described.

#### 3.5.1 Grounded theory data analysis

Grounded theory “involves alternating between inductive and deductive logic as the research proceeds” (Glaser, 1978, p. 73). Grounded theory is:

*“induced or emerged after data collection starts. Deductive work in grounded theory is used to derive from induced codes conceptual guides to where to go next for which comparative group or subgroup, in order to sample for more data to generate the theory ... Later as the generating continues, comparisons with extant theory may link it to a number of diverse theories which touch upon various aspects and levels of the emerging theory ... Research hypotheses in the generating approach are drawn from emergent connections between the emerging coded and questions [deduced from the codes] ... Theoretical sampling is, then, used as a way of checking on the emerging conceptual framework rather than being used for the verification of preconceived hypotheses” (Glaser, 1978, pp. 37-39).*

Constant comparative method is a data analysis process, combined with the use of theoretical sampling, guide the entire grounded theory approach of inquiry. This process involves a continual or constant systematic organization and classification of the data into a number of categories. As various categories emerge and additional data which fit these categories are gathered, subcategories are seen. These subcategories become the properties of the category and solidify the theory.

These properties solidify the categories and propositions based on data are then constructed.

### 3.5.2 Constant comparative method/analysis

Grounded theory is “a general method of comparative analysis” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1) and comparative analysis is “a general method, just as are the experimental and statistical methods” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 21). Data are “evidence collected from other comparative groups” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 23). Not just for a piece of evidence to be “used to check out whether the initial evidence was correct”; it is also used to generate a concept “from one fact, which then becomes merely one of a universe of many possible diverse indicators for, and data on, the concept” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 23).

Essentially this comparative analysis process examines all data slices which are similar on a given dimension or category and compares to slices which are similar on one or more dimensions but differ on theoretically important dimensions. For example, incidents quoted by promoters describing their experiences on motivation are collected and compared to incidents by managers who set and practice the motivational policies.



Figure 3-5: The design of the comparative analysis process

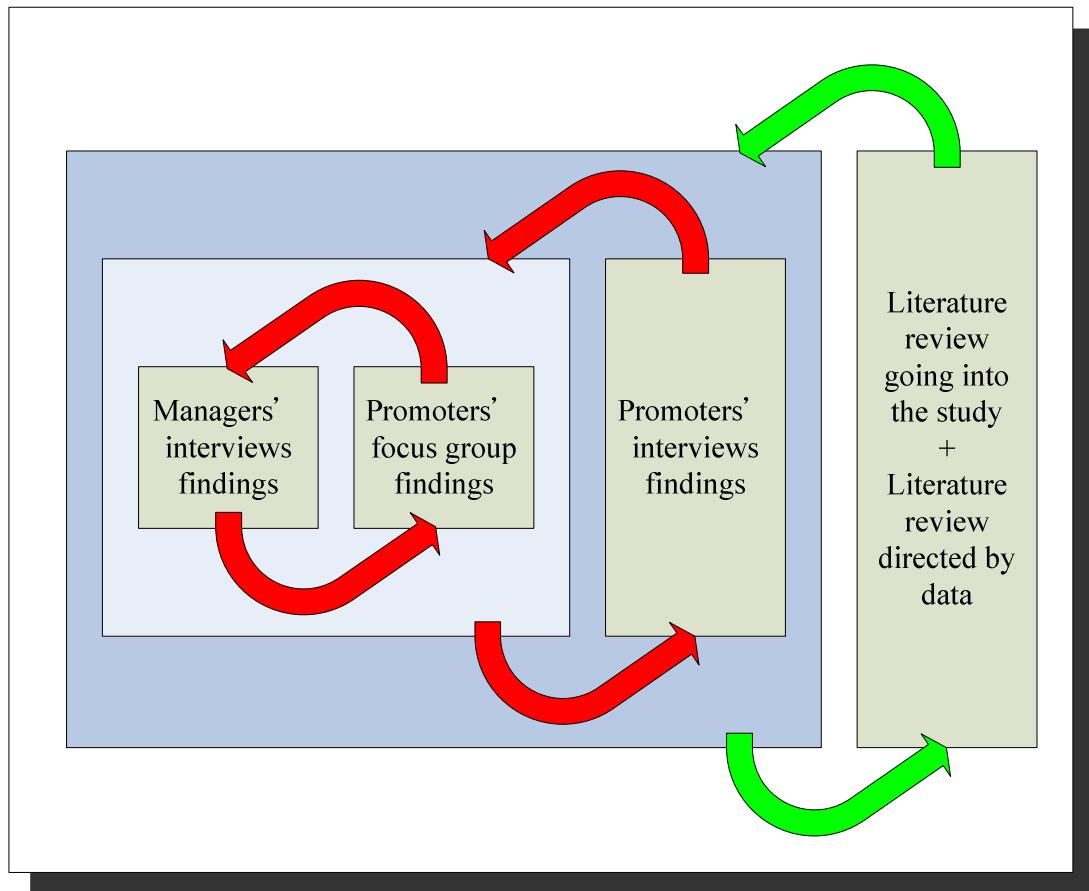
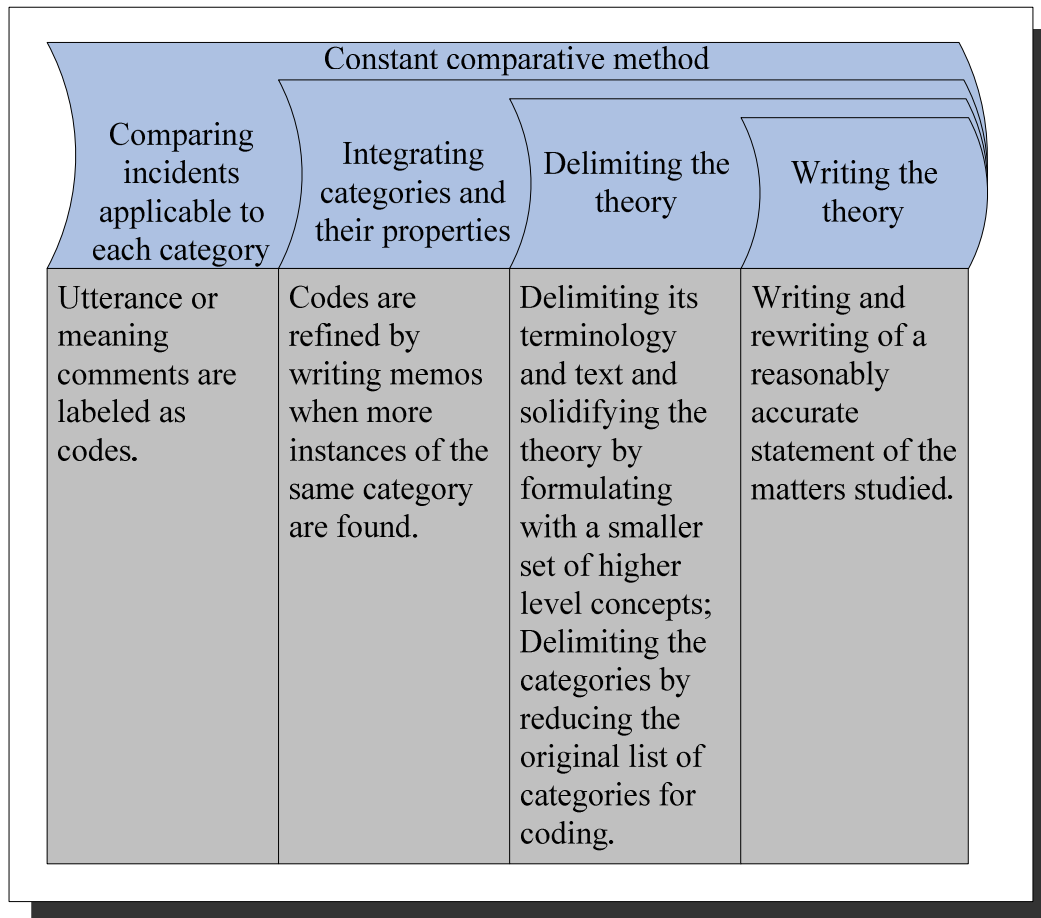


Figure 3-5 depicts the design of the comparative analysis process of multiple data slices for this research. The data of the managers' interviews were analyzed by grouping the meanings into themes as given by the managers. This resulted the understanding on the use and policies on motivating promoters from the managers' perspectives. These results were compared to the results of findings from the promoters' focus group, forming the initial combined view. This combined view was further compared to the results of findings from the promoters' individual interviews, concluding the current situations of the motivation of promoters. In the final stage of comparison, the current situations of motivation were checked against extant theories as if they were data slices, accounting for the situations with the theories or by adding variations and conditions.

Figure 3-6: The logic and process of constant comparative method



The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is depicted in Figure 3-6. The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis aims at generating theoretical ideas - categories and their properties, hypotheses and interrelated hypotheses. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 105) describe the constant comparative method as a mean for deriving a grounded theory in four stages: “[a] comparing incidents applicable to each category, [b] integrating categories and their properties, [c] delimiting the theory, and [d] writing the theory. Although this method of generating theory is a continuously growing process - each stage after a time is transformed into the next - earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is terminated”.

Constant comparative method stage 1 - Comparing incidents to category

The first stage is the comparison of incidents applicable to each category. The comparison begins by coding the data into as many categories as possible. The utterance or meaning comments are labeled as codes.

#### Constant comparative method stage 2 - Integrating categories and their conditions

The second stage is the integration of categories and their properties. When more instances of the same code are found, the codes are grouped into categories and memos are written of these ideas. The comparison evolves to focusing on emerging properties of the category, and diverse properties start to integrate. The resulting theory begins to emerge by itself.

#### Constant comparative method stage 3 - Delimiting the theory

The third stage is the delimitation of the theory and the categories. “First, the theory solidifies, in the sense that major modifications become fewer and fewer as the analyst compares the next incidents of a category to its properties” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110). The second level is to delimiting the categories by the “reduction in the original list of categories for coding” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 111). Sampling, that is, data collection, is stopped when codes are enough to saturate the properties of the categories. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 167) state that “the criterion for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category is the category’s theoretical saturation. Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category”.

#### Constant comparative method stage 4 - Writing the theory

The final stage is the writing and rewriting of the theory for “a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied” when “the analytical framework forms a systematic substantive theory” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 24).

### 3.5.3 Coding

“Substantive codes conceptualize the empirical substance of the area of research. Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 55).

Substantive codes are developed during coding process. Theoretical codes are used, in providing an account in theoretical terms, to group substantive codes to form a theoretical model about the area under inquiry.

Substantive coding is conceptualizing on the first level of abstraction. “Substantive codes are the conceptual meanings given by generating categories and their properties, which conceptually sum up the patterns found in the substantive incidents in the field” (Glaser, 1992, p. 27).

Theoretical codes integrate the grounded theory by weaving the fractured concepts into conceptions that work together in a theory that can explain the main concerns of the participants. In theoretical coding, the researcher applies a theoretical model to the data. This model is not forced beforehand but can only be emerged during the comparative analysis of the grounded theory process.

“Without substantive codes, theoretical codes are empty abstractions. But substantive codes could be related without theoretical codes, but the result is usually confused, unclear theoretically, and/or typically connected by descriptive topics but going nowhere theoretically” (Glaser, 1998, p. 164). In conceptualizing the data, the grounded theory researcher “talk substantive codes and think theoretical codes” (Glaser, 1998, p. 164).

Glaser (1978) presents an extended list of theoretical concepts stemming from sociological, philosophical or everyday contexts. These terms or codes include The Six C’s [causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions], the process, degree family, dimension family, and other fourteen set of codes are known as the coding families. The concept of theoretical coding offers an approach for analysis to develop empirically grounded theoretical models. It is argued that its utility for research practice should not be limited by only eighteen coding families.

In this research, three projects were opened at first for the managers’ interviews, promoters’ focus group and the promoters’ individual in-depth interviews. The interview meeting transcripts were used as data. Each interview was transcribed

and stored in a plain text file format then imported into the Document Explorer as an online document corresponding to the relevant project.

To conceptualize the data line by line, one line of transcript was set as one text unit for analysis so that each of them could be individually coded. The researcher then browsed each transcript file and examined the concepts contained line by line and started off the coding. At first, the research followed 'In Vivo Coding' function of QSR's N6 (2002) and coded a passage of text by a code whose name was that passage of text. The researcher also gave each code a brief description, and wrote a memo to record the ideas about the code, if any. These initial codes were all contained under 'Free Nodes' in QSR's N6 (2002) at first.

#### 3.5.4 Categorizing

Categorizing is combining concepts, or classification of possible concepts derived from the data, which are seemed to reflect the same phenomena. Similar codes are grouped into categories forming hierarchies and developed into analytic frameworks containing several codes (Charmaz, 2000). By categorizing data selected and common themes and patterns in several codes may be categorized into a category which is conceptual, as long as possible, and simultaneously remaining true to and consistent with the data (Charmaz, 2000).

In furthering the course of analysis, and as more data were coded, the like-with-like conceptual or substantive codes were merged into new concepts, resulted new codes forming a hierarchical structure. The newly created codes were eventually renamed, modified and stored under 'Tree Nodes' in QSR's N6 (2002). The original codes grouped under the higher level codes became the siblings and their properties contained in the description and memo fields defined their 'parent' codes. The concepts of the parent codes were written and stored in new memos to the parent codes. Variations were not removed but flagged in a memo as variations and/or conditions.

#### 3.5.5 Memoing

A memo is written to explain and clarify an idea. Memoing works as an accumulation of written ideas into a bank of ideas about concepts and how they

relate to each other. “Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing” (Glaser, 1998, p. 177).

Memoing records the development of ideas about naming concepts and relate them to each other when the researcher is conceptualizing incidents. Memos also keep tracks of the refinement of ideas when the researcher is delimiting the theory. Memo piles are the basics to writing the theory. In sum, “memo-making, that is, writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories, the crucial intermediate step between coding data and writing first drafts of papers” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 497).

### 3.5.6 Sorting

Memos are sorted when “coding is almost saturated” (Glaser, 1978, p. 116), that is, when reading of data do not yield new code. Sorting puts fractured data back together and categorizing codes. Sorting in the grounded theory process refers to the conceptual sorting. It requires the researcher to have “the sensitivity to determine how they may relate to other ideas to be integrated into a theory which accounts for the processing of a problem” (Glaser, 1978, p. 116).

Sorting is the key to formulate the theory for presentation to others. “The theoretical integration of a paper, talk or book, comes in the form of an outline generated by theoretical sorting” (Glaser, 1978, p. 116). New ideas emerge during sorting and are recorded in new memos giving the memo-on-memos phenomenon.

### 3.5.7 Writing

“Writing is a ‘write-up’ of piles of ideas from theoretical sorting” (Glaser, 1978, p. 128). With the outline and the memos on the outline after sorting, the researcher begins to write the grounded theory. The different categories are now related to each other. The concepts are mixed, and with thick description in words, tables, or figures to optimize readability. The writing is refined by rewriting. In the later rewriting the relevant literature is woven into and put the grounded theory in a scholarly context.

Glaser (1998, p. 197) notes “two conceptualization rules that that apply to writing. First think theory write substance. Or more fully, think theoretical codes,

write substantive codes. Second, try to always relate concept to concept instead of concept to people, which lower the conceptual level”.

### 3.5.8 Theoretical saturation

“Theoretical sampling may only require a few groups to exhaust one category, and many groups to exhaust another, depending on the extent of saturation and the level of theory, that is, substantive or formal, to be generated. When the initial comparison of incidents yields a few categories and their properties, the researcher “should try to saturate his categories by maximizing differences among groups” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 62). Saturation is reached when no additional data can be found that develops properties of the conceptual categories. Core theoretical categories are saturated more than subcategories.

### 3.5.9 Theoretical sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity means continually increasing sensitivity to concepts, their meanings and relationship. The researcher is needed to be sensitized to give insight and also to see the boundaries of the comprehension, as it evolved from data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 46), the researcher should be “sufficiently theoretically sensitive so that he can conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data”.

The researcher can enhance her/his theoretical sensitivity to what is going on with the phenomenon by improving from reviewing literature, drawing on the professional experience for knowledge and insights, and based on personal experience to easily understand and comprehend. Theoretical sensitivity is an ongoing process. The skills of and the informed researcher are of distinct advantages to enhance theoretical sensitivity. The technique to “talk substantive codes and think theoretical codes” (Glaser, 1998, p. 164), the course of conducting literature review alongside with and during the whole research process, and the seeking of advices from the faculty member are practices adopted in this research.

### 3.6 Data management

Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software QSR's N6 (2002) was used as a tool in the empirical analysis of the research data. QSR's N6 (2002) is software which has been used widely in social research and its development has been strongly influenced by grounded theory. It therefore suits ideally this research which is inductive rather than deductive (Gibbs, 2002). It does not automate the data analysis process but it supports the interpretations and constructions of the researcher by organizing and reorganizing the data according to the interpretations.

#### 3.6.1 Use of CAQDAS

*“Computer use in qualitative research can now look back on a history of two decades. Nowadays more than twenty different software packages are available that can assist qualitative researchers in their work with textual data, and some of these programs [like NVivo, ATLAS/ti or MAXQda] are widely applied. The field of ‘computer-assisted qualitative data analysis’ [sometimes referred to by the acronym ‘CAQDAS’] now represents a well-established field in the domain of qualitative methodology” (Kelle, 2004, p. 473).*

More and more qualitative research use software for data analysis despite of the fiercely debated topic among researchers (Charmaz, 2000; Kelle, 2004; Lonkila, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Particularly, there are increasing “grounded theorists adopt software to expedite their analyses” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

In Glaser's work, all examples of the grounded theory procedures are made based on manual work. Glaser has cautioned several times his views on what he calls “technological traps” (Glaser, 1998, p. 185) could suppress creativity. Glaser admits the popularity of NUDIST but comments it to “hinder and cop out the skills of doing grounded theory ... [and] legitimate non grounded theory production” (Glaser, 1998, p. 185).

There are concerns that the overly emphasis on coding could be dangerous in forcing the data, and undermine interpretative activities. According to Charmaz (2000, p. 520), some scholars (Coffey, Holbrook, & Atkinson, 1996; Lonkila, 1995)



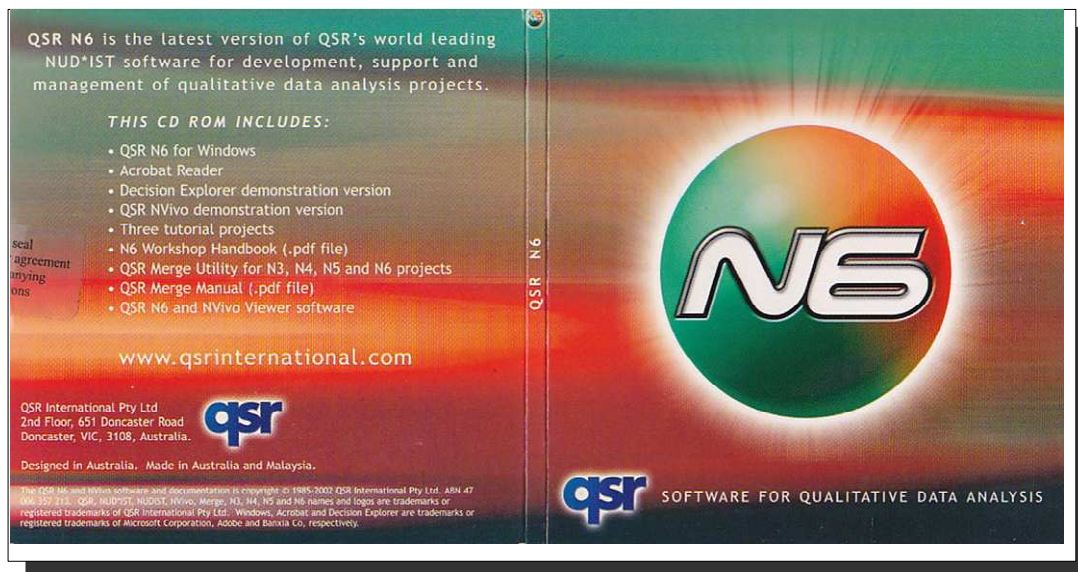
“express concerns about qualitative programs that based on conceptions of grounded theory methods and their uncritical adoption by users ... and fear that these programs overemphasize coding ...” and undermine “nuanced interpretive analysis”. She adds that “these software packages appear more suited for objectivist grounded theory than constructionist approaches ... because objectivist grounded theory echoes positivism, computer-assisted programs based on it may promote widespread acceptance not just of the software, but of a one-dimensional view of qualitative research” (Charmaz, 2000, pp. 520-521). Kelle (2004, p. 473) refutes, “Like many other controversies in the field of social research methodology, the debate is over-burdened with rather abstract concepts and ideas”. There are some advantages of using CADQAS.

The benefits of using CADQAS are traction or audit trail of data analysis, shortcuts for coding, sorting and integrating data that cope with grounded theory data analysis methods. It is suggested “that qualitative software may help the process of verification. Retention of the original coding frames means that these can be reapplied by another investigator, providing us with a type of audit tool” (Corti & Thompson, 2004, p. 334). According to Charmaz (2000, p. 520), “computer-assisted techniques offer some shortcuts for coding, sorting, and integrating the data ... including NUD.IST ... are explicitly aimed at assisting in grounded theory analyses”.

The data-handling and manipulation capability of CAQDAS provides great benefits to the data analysis by significantly enhancing the data to be accessed, retrieved, and viewed, and made notes into it. In using CAQDAS, the analysis is guided by its features and functions towards a more systematic and objective process that could be more transparent and rigorous (Richards, 1999).

### 3.6.2 QSR's N6

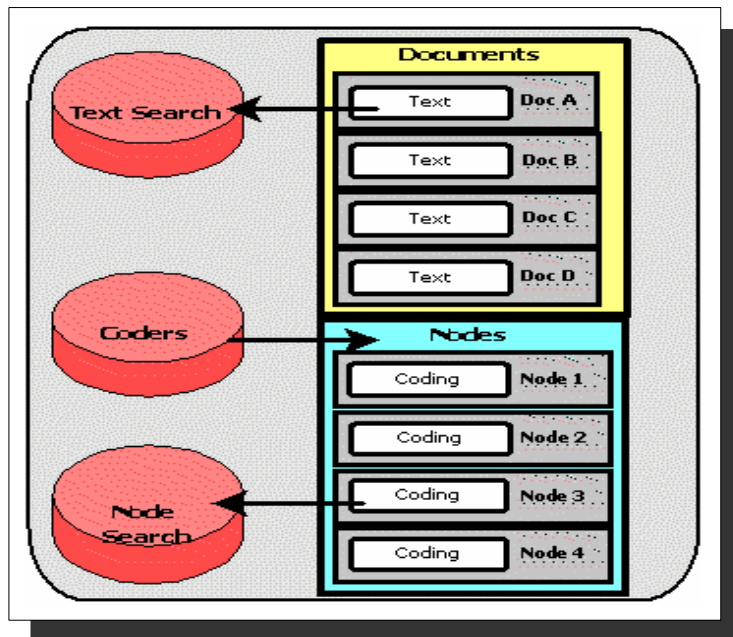
Figure 3-7: The QSR's N6 full version of NUDIST



The QSR's N6 (2002) full version, as shown in Figure 3-7, has been used in this research. QSR's N6 (2002), released in 2002 from QSR, is the sixth version of NUDIST, an acronym for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing, originally worked in scroll mode on time-sharing mainframe computers. It is designed and built by Tom Richards, an Australian computer scientist, for a very large qualitative research project being undertaken by sociologist Lyn Richards in the early 1980's. Universities and other research centers began buying licenses to it in the 90s. Subsequent revisions took it to the Macintosh platform, then to PC/Windows platforms.

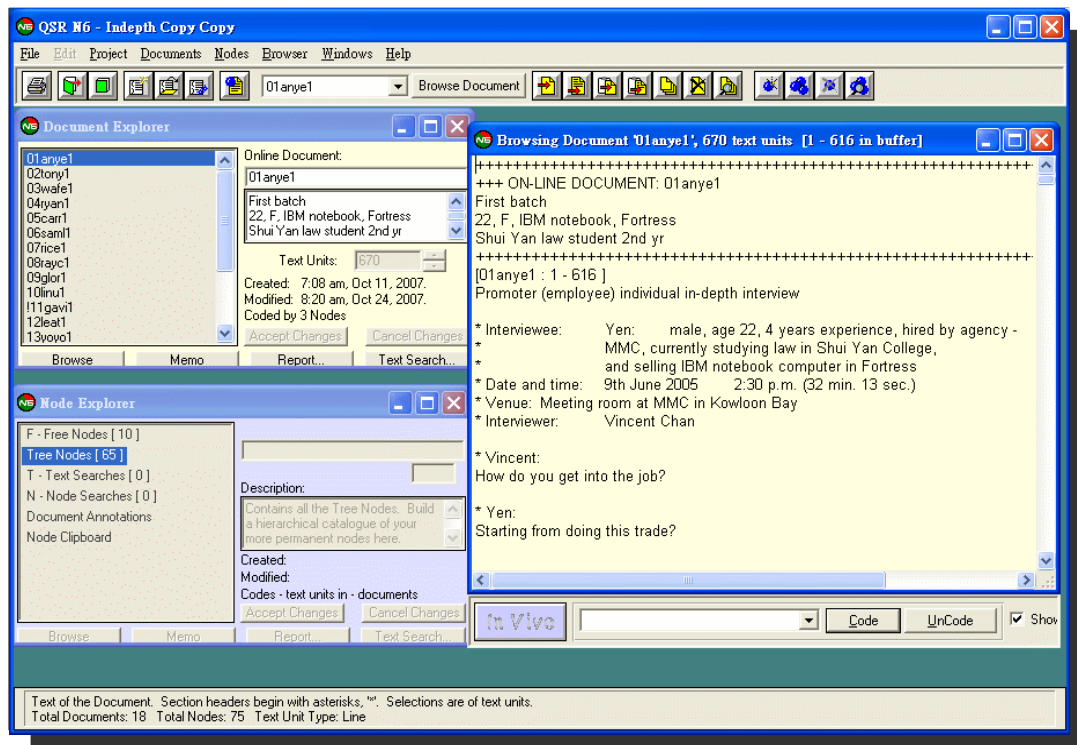
QSR's N6 (2002) is used in this research for data management, and as a repository for coding and categorizing. The use of QSR's N6 (2002) in this research is primarily for data management purposes, and it is extremely helpful to be able to store and retrieve these data. Moreover, QSR's N6 (2002) is used for coding the interview transcripts, analyzing and exploring that coding, memoing in interpreting and categorizing codes.

Figure 3-8: A basic NUDIST system, adapted from QSR's N6 online help



As shown in Figure 3-8, QSR's N6 (2002) has basically three tools: the coders, text search and node search, which operate in two explorer systems. The document explorer holds all data and research notes contained in memo to the document and provides text search.

Figure 3-9: Screen capture of QSR's N6 Document Explorer and Nodes Explorer



The node explorer represents all the topics and categories that matter to the research, and holds all codes and their memo containing the researchers' ideas about them. Figure 3-9 captures the screen of the QSR's N6 (2002) running the document explorer and the nodes explorer systems.

### 3.6.3 Coding and categorizing in QSR's N6

The document and nodes systems are connected by coding. Codes are contained on the nodes that index passages of related text. The text search and node search are tools that assist the researcher to develop and relate categories from codes on nodes during the process of analysis, store ideas about these categories in memo, as well as test, explore and modify them and their codes incrementally, as understanding grows. The text search looks for passages containing words or phrases the researcher is searching for, and codes those passages as a node. In the node search, the researcher looks at existing nodes and compares their coding, often resulting in creating new nodes and new memo recording the theoretical account of grouping categories or the conditions of the respective node. As the researcher further analyzes from the nodes, they are further organized usually into a tree

hierarchy. Thus, the categories are grouped and the meanings, including variations and conditions, and ideas are managed.

### 3.6.4 Reporting in QSR's N6

Figure 3-10: An example of a partial report from the Nodes Explorer in QSR's N6

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                                                    FG
QSR N6 Full version, revision 6.0.
Licensee: Unregistered.

PROJECT: Promoter Motivation Focus Group, User Vincent Chan, 9:48 am, Sept 7, 2007.

+++++
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: Focusgl
+++ Document Description:
*Focus Group Study 01Nov2003
*10:15 ?11:45 in R.I. FG Room
*6 x Temporary Sales People - Alex, Chris, Yan, Dione, York, Jason
*Moderator: Vincent Chan
*Observer: Professor Robin S. Snell

(1 17)                /marketing support/resource/road show
++ Units:327-327    675-675
(1 24)                /marketing support/resource/advertising support
++ Units:393-393    563-563
(1 28)                /marketing support/resource/premium support
++ Units:480-480    482-482  563-563
(1 29)                /marketing support/resource/promotion program support
++ Units:341-341    343-343  484-484  486-486  488-488  490-490  504-504  547-547
(3 17)                /self efficacy/snatched a customer
++ Units:555-555    577-577  644-644
(4 32)                /expectation to employer/expect fair compensation
++ Units:744-745    862-862  866-866
(4 44)                /expectation to employer/expect support in marketing
++ Units:886-886
(5 1 8)                /job meaningfulness/skills/promoter's attribute
++ Units:139-139
(5 1 10)                /job meaningfulness/skills/presentation skill
++ Units:153-153
(5 3 4)                /job meaningfulness/task significance/contribution
++ Units:63-63      69-69
(5 3 5)                /job meaningfulness/task significance/function
++ Units:77-77
(5 4 2)                /job meaningfulness/task identity/responsibility
++ Units:45-45      101-101  245-245

```

Reporting could be done in both the document explorer and node explorer. The researcher made document reports about the data in the system, displaying the text and coding. The researcher also made report about a node showing sibling nodes and coding data. These reports were the base for the researcher to write the theory and make reference to data. An example of a partial report from the Nodes Explorer in QSR's N6 (2002) is shown in Figure 3-10. In this partial report of the analysis of the focus group, the relationships of codes are shown with reference made to the data where the concepts are coded.

### 3.7 Trustworthiness and rigor

In qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness concerns persuading the “audiences [including self] that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality are four aspects of interest conventionally. For grounded theory, “the fundamental sources of trust in grounded theory are the four criteria for its evaluation” (Glaser, 1998, p. 236) and they are fit, relevance, workability and modifiability. This section discusses the trustworthiness and rigor of this research.

#### 3.7.1 Trustworthiness of qualitative research

The evaluation of qualitative research differs from quantitative research which attain rigor through the use of statistical criteria and conceptions of reliability and validity to assess the quality of quantitative findings, and common concerns include method biases, sample size and sampling error. In contrast, interpretive research is assessed in terms of trustworthiness criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Figure 3-11 summarizes the four main aspects of consideration and the corresponding area of concerns for both qualitative and quantitative research. Both approaches are rigorous.

Figure 3-11: Aspects of trustworthiness, adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Aspect	Area of concern	Quantitative inquiry	Qualitative inquiry
Truth value	Confidence in the truth of the findings	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	Applicability in other contexts or with other respondents	External validity (generalizability)	Transferability
Consistency	Inquiry, if replicated, will result same findings	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Findings & interpretations are from data; Not biased	Objectivity (reliability &	Confirmability

In Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), some techniques for establishing trustworthiness have been introduced. Although there are some

refinements at some more recent time yet the original recommendations have allowed the researcher to grab a more holistic view on the comprehensive guidelines for the planning of research activities throughout the research process.

In principle, the consideration of rigor of this grounded theory approach research follows the guidelines of the method but many of the techniques inherited from general qualitative research methodology have been adopted, and some slight traces can be found in many places, especially in this chapter.

### 3.7.2 Rigor in grounded theory

Underpinning the constructivist paradigm, this grounded theory approach research has drawn most of the techniques and methods from the classic grounded theory. It is logical to assess the trustworthiness and rigor of this research, taking the view from the methodology standpoint to follow Glaser, and to focus on the four aspects. These four aspects concern the fit, relevance, workability and modifiability of the grounded [conceptual] theory.

#### 3.7.2.1 Fit

“Fit is another word for validity” (Glaser, 1998, p. 236) and by “fit we meant that the categories of the theory must fit the data” (Glaser, 1978, p. 4). According to Glaser (1978, p. 4), there are three vital properties to fit: [a] The first criterion of fit is automatically met when the categories of grounded theory are generated directly from the data; and [b] The other criterion is to constantly refit emerging categories to the data, and [c] The last is to develop and emergent fit between the data and an extant category that might work. They are all related to how thoroughly theoretical saturation is achieved and the constant comparison of incidents and phenomena to concepts was done.

#### 3.7.2.2 Relevance

“Grounded theories have ‘grab’ and they are interesting. People remember them; they use them” (Glaser, 1978, p. 4). A relevant inquiry captures attention as it deals with the real concern of participants. If “a reader becomes sufficiently caught up in the description so that he feels vicariously that he was also in the field, then he

is more likely to be kindly disposed toward the researchers' theory ...” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 230). “It is automatic that the emergent concepts will relate to the true issues of the participants in the substantive area. Grounded theory generates a theory of how what is really going is continually resolved. This is very relevant” (Glaser, 1998, p. 236).

### 3.7.2.3 Workability

A grounded theory works when it offers analytical explanations for problems and processes in the context to which it seeks to refer. “By work, we meant that a theory should be able to explain what happened, predict what will happen and interpret what is happening in an area of substantive or formal inquiry ... For the theory to work, its categories must fit, to be sure, but also it must ‘work’ the core of what is going on; it must be relevant to the action of the area” (Glaser, 1978, pp. 4-5).

### 3.7.2.4 Modifiability

“A theory must be readily modifiable, based on ever-emerging notions from more data” (Glaser, 1978, p. 4). A grounded theory is a modifiable theory that can be altered when new relevant data is compared to existing data. New insights of empirical research in the future are able to extend and continually develop the theory.

### 3.7.3 Strategies for trustworthiness and rigor

In accord with the practicality, many of the guidelines have been followed in this study. For example, data triangulation and methods triangulation techniques (Patton, 2001) are adopted. This has helped to understand the concerns from multiple data sources and use multiple research methods. Peer review is also adopted and the researcher has sought discussion with a faculty member from a university in Hong Kong on the research's interpretations and conclusions with other people. This disinterested researcher is not directly involved in the research and plays the role of the devil's advocate (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This peer has challenged the researcher to provide proof of solid evidence for all interpretation. Last, the complete set of data analysis documents are on file and available upon request. This access is making the research process repeatable as close as possible, and the research

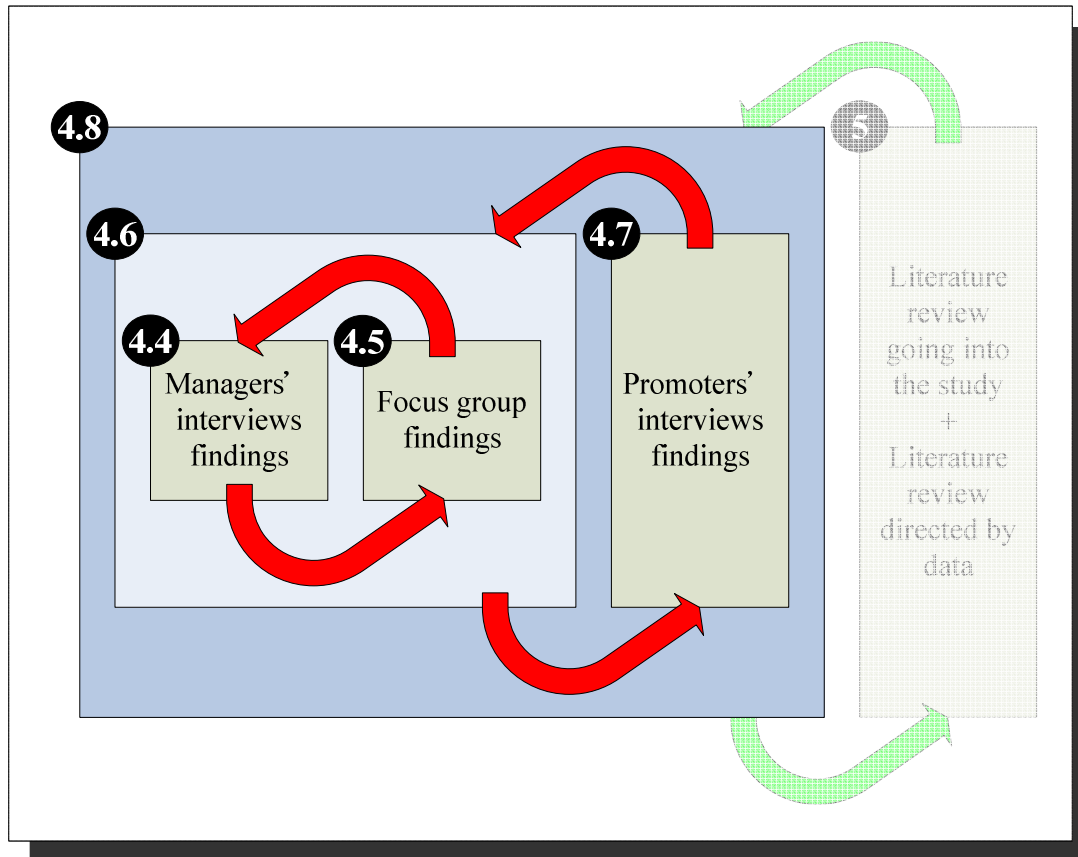


document trail is allowing other researchers to be able to transfer the conclusions of this inquiry to other empirical studies.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Introduction to the five rounds of data analysis

Figure 4-1: The five rounds of data analysis



This chapter presents the results of findings in five rounds of analysis of data collected in three stages. Section 4.1 introduces and sets out this chapter. Section 4.2 states the presentation convention used. Section 4.3 describes the background of the different participants in this research. Sections 4.4 to 5 present the five rounds of data analyses. Figure 4-1 presents graphically the logic as well the procedures of applying the constant comparative method in the analysis. It also sets out the next stage of furthering the analysis by comparing the overall findings to extant literature. Section 4.4 reports the findings from four individual interviews of managers from different firms playing different roles along the supply chain of offering the IT products to consumers. Section 4.5 reports the findings from the focus group study with six members of diverse backgrounds. Section 4.6 reports the findings on the combined view on motivation resulting from the comparison between the managers' interviews

and the promoters' focus group study. Section 4.7 reports the findings from individual interviews of thirteen promoters. Lastly, section 4.8 reports the findings from the comparison between the promoters' interviews and the combined view of motivation from the managers' interviews and the promoter's focus group.

## 4.2 Presentation convention

### (a) Graphical presentation

Each emergent theme is presented in a tree map showing the grouping of categories at the conceptual levels. The coding and categorizing is a dynamic process and the names of codes are modified by the researcher during the analysis. Therefore the initial codes, including the in vivo codes, cannot be shown in full in the graphical representation of categories. At the lowest level of grouping presented in the graph, the unit meanings shown are adopted or derived from the in vivo codes as well as the labeled codes. Nonetheless, the passages coded are quoted as evidence in the text to support the emergent concepts.

### (b) Direct quotations

According to Glaser (1978, p. 16), "data is used to illustrate the resulting theory". In this chapter, direct quotations from data are used extensively as evidence to support the emergent themes. Direct quotations as said by the participants are shown in italic type, and indented in the text. The punctuation convention of // xxx // xxx // are used to indicate quotations from different participants, or quotations taken for the same participant but from different parts of the interview. The sources and positions of the direct quotations are cited in curly brackets { }. Words in square brackets [ ] in the direct quotations indicate the annotations made by the researcher to clarify the meaning, especially when not to do so, would cause confusion as to the meaning or context of the quotation given. The insertion of triple-dot ellipsis ... in some portion of a direct quotation indicates that the researcher has removed words that are not relevant, under the condition that the contextual meanings are not altered.

### 4.3 Background of participants

This section describes the background of the managers in the in-depth interviews, the promoters in the focus group and the promoters in the in-depth interviews.

#### 4.3.1 Managers in individual in-depth interviews

In this stage, alongside the distribution chain including from the manufacturing vendor, distributor, and retailers, three managers or owners have been selected to be interviewed. Taking an opportunity, two employment agents from a marketing and employment consultant were also interviewed.

The three selected interviewees were veterans of the trade and were well verse of managing promoters. The corporate manager from the multinational manufacturing vendor had more than ten years experience in managing the product groups that sell to consumers through distributors and retailers. She was responsible for the marketing and sales and ultimately the business performance of the product groups in Hong Kong. She managed the marketing fund that supported both direct and indirect hire of promoters.

The manager from the local distributor was the owner of a private business. A business man in his forties, he had founded the firm ten years previously, and made all managerial and operational decisions for the company. On behalf of manufacturing vendors he hired and seconded promoters to the retail stores.

The manager from the retail chain store used to be a corporate manager of a regional distributor. At the time of the interview, he was responsible for the profit and loss of all the ten retail outlets of a small scale retail chain store. He managed promoters that were hired by his company as well as promoters seconded from manufacturing vendors and distributors.

The two marketing consultants were actually employment agents operating the outsourcing services that provided promoters. Both in their twenties, they were responsible for recruiting the promoters, liaising with the manufacturing vendors and

distributors, dispatching the sales people to the retail stores, and for administrating the charges and payouts to the promoters.

In conclusion, the interviewees covered all managers known that would hire and manage promoters.

#### 4.3.2 Promoters in focus group study

Figure 4-2: Sources and profiles of promoters in focus group study

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Year of experience</u>	<u>Work mode</u>	<u>Source [employer]</u>
Alex	Male	18	0.5	Part-time promoter	Agency
Chris	Female	19	0.5	Part-time promoter	Agency
Dion	Female	22	2.0	Part-time promoter	Distributor
Jason	Male	22	3.5	Part-time promoter supervisor	Manufacturing vendor
Yan	Female	19	0.5	Part-time promoter	Agency
York	Male	22	3.0	Full-time promoter	Agency

There are six participants in the focus group study. Figure 4-2 summarizes the sources and profiles of participants in the focus group study. The mix of attending promoters remained close to the original design and the diversity was considered satisfactory. Four participants had been recruited from an agency and two by cold-canvassing by the researcher in computer shopping malls. One of the latter two was employed directly by a Japanese manufacturing vendor and the other one was employed by a local distributor representing a Taiwanese manufacturing vendor. The six members consisted of promoters of different employment modes and with different levels of experience. There was one full-time promoter and five part-timers.

The full-time promoter was a day-time university student and he worked after hours and in weekends. He also supervised other junior promoters. Instead of being paid by hourly rate, he had a fixed basic monthly salary. Their promoter experience ranged from 0.5 to 3.5 years, with an average of 1.7 years. Part-timers worked during the weekends and public holidays. Full-timers worked six days a week and could choose one weekday as the rest day of the week. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 22 years old, with an average of 20.3 years. There were three females and three males promoters.

#### 4.3.3 Promoters in individual in-depth interviews

Figure 4-3: Profiles of promoters in the individual in-depth interviews

Name	Yen	Tony	Wafer	Ryan	Carrie	Sam	Rice	Ray	Gloria	Linus	Gavin	Lea	Yoyo
Gender	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	F	F
Age	22	21	22	22	23	22	24	22	20	19	39	22	18
Yr. of experience	4	1	2	3	3	2	4	2	0.75+2	1	5	3	1
Employer	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	Agency	IT vendor - Apple	IT vendor - Apple	Telecom service vendor - HKBN
Full-time work / study	Shue Yan University	University (local)	HKU SPACE	IVE	HKBU	IVE	IVE	IVE	IVE	IVE	Photographer (with a US Uni. degree)	CityU	HKBN Promoter
	Law	Translation	Assoc Degree	HDip Computing	Finance	Electronics Eng	-	Computing	Multi-media	Dip Computing		BBA	
Brand	IBM	IBM	IBM	IBM	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	Apple	Apple	HKBN
Product	LapTop Computer	Laptop Computer	Laptop Computer	Laptop Computer	Computer, printer, projector & PDA	Printer	Computer & printer	PDA	Printer	Printer	iPod to Mac	iPod to Mac	IDD Service
Shop	Fortress	GOME Mongkok	Fortress	Broadway	Fortress mostly & Broadway or sometimes GOME	BEST	Fortress all over	Broadway Mongkok	Fortress Cheung Kwan O	Broadway Mongkok	Not Fixed	Not Fixed	Street

The profiles of the promoters in in-depth interviews are summarized in Figure 4-3. Twelve promoters were part-timers selling computer products and one full-timer was selling Telecom service plans. Eleven out of the thirteen promoters were full-time students of whom seven were students doing post-secondary study and four were university undergraduates. There was one promoter with a university degree who was working as a full-time photographer. Ten promoters were employed through agencies and they were selling personal computer based computer products; two by the Macintosh computer manufacturing vendor; and one from a Telecom service provider. Ten promoters worked in fixed locations in the shop front of large and chained computer retail stores; two were not fixed but many times they had worked in product road shows in different shopping malls; the Telecom promoter worked at mobile booth on the main streets of a designated district. Their experiences ranged from 1 to 5 years with an average of 2.6 years. They represented information technology or Telecom promoters of diverse background.

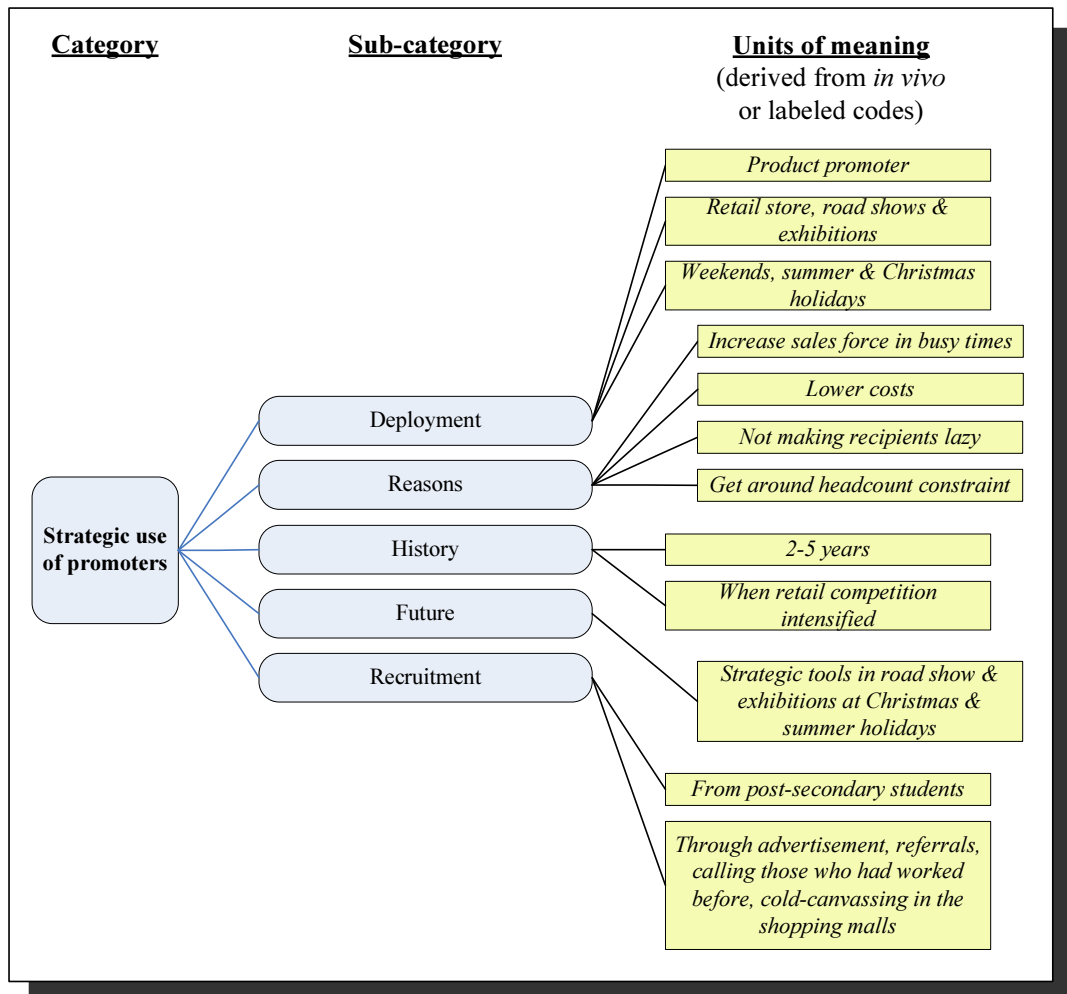
#### 4.4 Findings from the managers' individual in-depth interviews

This section presents categories found in the managers' individual in-depth interviews. Themes and categories are emerged and compared within the data from the managers' interviews.



#### 4.4.1 Strategic use of promoters

Figure 4-4: Strategic use of promoters from the manager interview



(a) Where and when to deploy promoters

The promoters hired by a brand were product promoters, and worked in the retail environment inside the stores, in road shows and exhibitions, especially during the summer and Christmas periods:

*// Promoter are hired by the brand, say, if they have agreed with some stores to place promoters at some specific time to help them out, and this help, of course, is mainly to sell their products // {Marketing consultants in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 1-2}*

*// Every year in summer and Christmas Jusco organizes one big road show other than in the shops, for example, in East Harbor City. The shops inside are open doing promotion in parallel with the road show. Therefore it requires more manpower and we hire temporary staff // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 33-35}*

*// They are used in road shows and also in exhibitions // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 40}*

The promoters hired by the retail chain store were called sales assistants and they worked during weekday evenings and at weekends:

*// For all retail stores under our management ... we have some sales assistants and they are part-timers ... and we treated them as long-term employment but they work in part-time mode and they report duty at evenings, on Saturday and Sunday ... two to three evenings during the week // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 39-41, and p.2, ln. 8}*

They appeared to be different from the other product promoters by having to cover all brands and products carried in the store.

(b) Reasons for using promoters

The employers hired promoters because they intended to keep down labor costs and to place lower level sales people to the field flexibly such that there were stronger sales forces at busy times and high seasons:

*// another reason is about skill set and whether certain skill set is required ... or for certain skill set, when the temporary sales force can suit our needs then I will go for temporary sales force // permanents are more expensive // at high seasons we need to capture more sales by adding more resources // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 31-32 and 42, and p. 2, ln. 32-33}*

*// cost is one reason and the other is flexibility ... because not all the time we need that many staff but we can always put that many people // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 19-20}*

*// We have to promote the products and we need to contact with the customers. But these contacts are all happened in a short period of time. There is no use if we are there all the time. In fact during the weekdays there are not so many of clients. Usually in the launch of a campaign to introduce a new product, we want a lot of people to know about it in a short time, this is a quite good way // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 13-16}*

According to the retail chain store and the distributor, there was not enough work to keep a full-timer busy at all times, so, in their view, the hiring of part-time promoters prevented employees from falling into the Chinese management trap ‘to make the recipients lazy’:

*// In fact other than cost and considering for managing these people we cannot allow to give them nothing to do and it is also not good for these people as well // If they get used to leisure work then they cannot be aggressive again when we need them // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 21-23 and 27-28}*

*// If we have a full-timer there may not be enough work for him. Our aim is to make him contact the customers // Hourly rate // should be more expensive than a full-timer // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 21-22 and 26}*

The multinational manufacturing vendor explained that their use of promoters also functioned to get around the corporate headcount constraint:

*// Business need. We will look at the cost, and whether these skills set require a permanent headcount. You know all companies are talking about cutting costs. Headcount is difficult to get. If business must go on then it is a creative way of getting people to do the business in the*

*field. Maybe temporary sales force is a solution // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 25-27}*

(c) History of using promoters

The marketing consultants might have been among the early ones to use promoters. The manager of the retail chain store said when they started to use promoters these had been supplied via a marketing consultant:

*// Sometimes ago we used promoter agency. For one to two years, we found that the agency cannot provide us with the right candidates and we started to do the recruitment by ourselves // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 25-26}*

The retail chain store and distributor reported that they had used promoters for four to five years:

*// for four or five years or around four years // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 37}*

*// about four to five years // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 44}*

The vendor reported that they had used promoters for two years:

*// we have been using these promoter for over two years. If we use this word temporary to define them then this temporary is rather long-term temporary sales force // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 9-10}*

This might reflect that the use of promoters had arising from an intensification of competition in the battlefield at retail.

(d) Future envisaged use of promoters

All employers clearly expressed that they would continue to use promoters. This might have evolved to become a strategic tool in road shows and exhibitions, at Christmas, during summer holidays, and at weekends:

*// Every weekend and in department stores, there are a lot of promoters and temporary staff // They sell fruits, home products, and many others // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 55-56, and p.2, ln. 4}*

*// In many exhibitions there are plenty of promoters for example in jewelry exhibition and it is not limited to IT but also in jewelry, watch // all kinds of exhibitions // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 39-40}*

The distributor and retail chain store explained that the use of promoters had become popular in many industries:

*// At this moment in the foreseeable future // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 21}*

*// in near future for road shows // probably yes for the two times [summer and Christmas] road shows // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 50}*

(e) Recruitment of promoters

Many part-time promoters were students. The distributor estimated that 80% of part-time IT promoters were students:

*// Some are students, some are doing it part-time to earn more money // Many of them are students particularly during the summer holidays // and may be also many in ordinary days // I mean there are also students on Saturdays and Sundays // students may account for 80% // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 47, and p. 4, ln. 1-2 and 15}*

The agency said that they recruited promoters by placing advertisement in websites for post-secondary students:

*// We place advertisement in job recruitment web sites. There are many feedbacks from the JUPAS [Joint University Programmes Admissions System] and it is a joint web site with job posting for students of all the eight universities. We advertise in the corresponding column. IVE*

*[Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education] also have a web site and we also post there. The reason is that it is free of charge and costs nothing. They require the job details to be very clear and we do not mind. The feedbacks from there are very good, particularly at summer holidays. In any single day there are many emails replied applying for the job of promoter // {Marketing consultants in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 16-22}*

The retail chain store and distributor recruited promoters through advertisements, from referrals, by calling those who had worked before, and through managers watching and approaching them on site in the retail store as they were working:

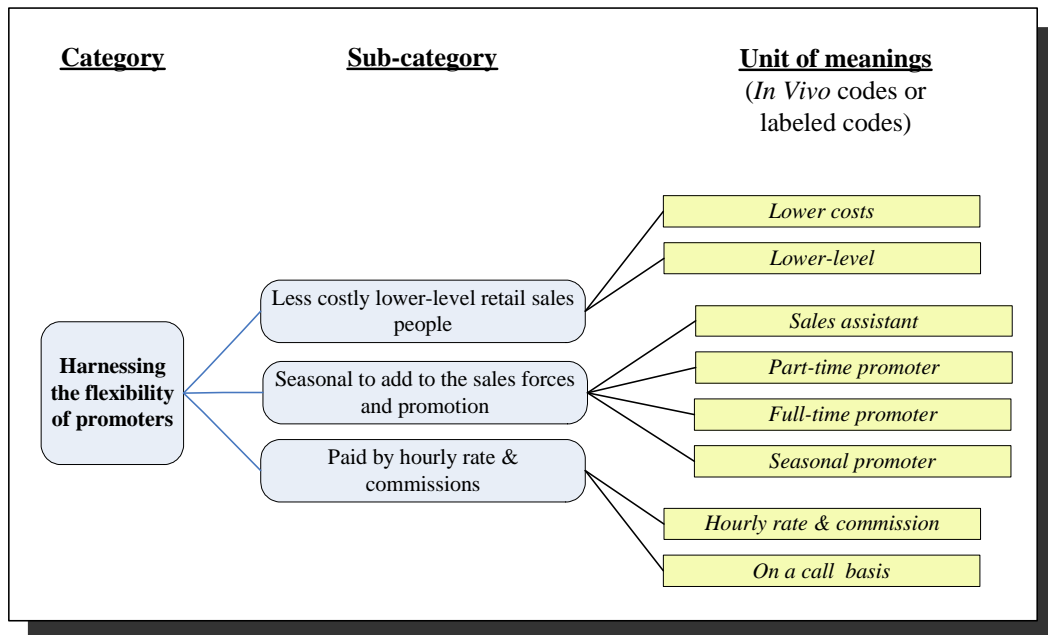
*// Normally I do two ways to recruit. One way is to advertise and the other to call back those old temporary staff // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 5, ln.32-33}*

*// we advertise on newspaper. Second, they are being referred // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 6}*

*// Sometimes we see them in the shopping mall, and then we approach them and ask them if they are interested, then we keep their telephone numbers // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 10-11}*

#### 4.4.2 Harnessing the flexibility of promoters

Figure 4-5: Harnessing the flexibility of promoters from the manager interview



(a) Less-costly lower-level retail sales people

It might be explained that the vendor and distributor were not operating any point of sale. Their sales people were doing different tasks as compared to promoters employed by retail outlets. The vendor commented further that their permanent sales people were doing higher level sales tasks:

*// I would define our company's staff in sales and in terms of duty they are of higher pay and work at a higher level // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 4, ln.1-3}*

Promoters were doing different selling jobs and dealing with different clientele. The permanents followed up with longer-term customers while promoter focused on passers-by and casual customers inside the store:

*// Their job natures are different. Permanent sales may need to do some more long-term work and they need to follow up. Temporary promoters are working at particular moments to particular customers. There is only one customer at a time. Their natures are very different.*

*For ordinary sales people, they may have an account to follow up, he may need to see the customer tomorrow and then serve the customer on the day after tomorrow. For a temporary promoter, when a customer passes by he may have talked to him for a while but after the customer has gone he will not look for the customer again //*  
*{Distributor in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 20-25}*

(b) Four types of promoters to add to the retail sales force

According to the managers, promoters seconded to the retail field from distributors or manufacturing vendors are different from their permanent sales people. There are four types of promoters and they are additional resources to the field sales force.

Figure 4.6 illustrates the four types of promoters, and four types of promoters contrasting to the permanent sales people.

Figure 4-6: Types of promoters from the manager interview

		<i>Types of promoters</i>				
		<i>Part-time sales assistant</i>	<b><i>Part-time promoter</i></b>	<i>Seasonal [summer and X'mas] promoter</i>	<i>Full-time promoter</i>	<i>Permanent sales people</i>
<i>Employment mode</i>	Open-ended contract	Long term on-call basis		Termed contract	Open-ended contract	
<i>Working time at retail</i>	Friday evening and weekends	Weekends	Weekends and 3 other days per week			
<i>Product</i>	Sell all brands and all products in the store	Represent a brand and promote specific products				



<i>Remuneration structure</i>	Paid by hourly rate and commission				Pay monthly salary and commission
<i>Sales people hired by retail store</i>	Work in stores / road shows / exhibitions	N/A	N/A	N/A	Work in stores / road shows / exhibitions
<i>Sales people hired by distributor</i>	N/A	Promoters are seconded to stores / road shows / exhibitions		N/A	Sell at higher-levels to designated customers
<i>Sales people hired by vendor</i>	N/A	Promoters are seconded to stores / road shows / exhibitions			
<i>Sales people hired through agency</i>	N/A	Promoters are seconded to stores / road shows / exhibitions on behalf of the vendor or distributor			N/A

The retail chain store hired part-time sales assistants to work with the full-time permanent sales people to operate the store. These sales assistants also formed an additional sales force for the summer and Christmas holidays in road shows and exhibitions:

*// We have some sales assistants and they are part-timers ... and we treated them as long-term employment but they work in part-time mode and they report duty at evenings, on Saturday and Sunday ... two to three evenings during the week // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 1, ln. 39-41, and p.2, ln. 8}*

This study revealed that there were four types of promoter, namely sales assistants, part-time promoters, full-time promoters, and seasonal, for example summer and Christmas promoters:

*// I would define temporary sales force more as a contract sales force. The word temporary is ... and as I said I have been using these temporary for over two years. If we use this word temporary to define*

*them then this temporary is rather long-term temporary sales force // at high seasons we need to capture more sales by adding more sources then we will do so and likewise the other way round // We have full-time and part-time contract sales force. Full-timers are self explanatory by the name. Part-timers are seasonal, on-call. For example for certain promotion I need more people I will go through the agency to call for more people // Full-timers are working more in terms of days, so more man-days [more pay days]. Regarding [working] hours, during that day they are more or less the same in terms of starting time. For example they start their duty at twelve o'clock and close at ten. Full-timers are defined by man-days // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 8-10, and p. 3, ln. 32-33, 39-41 and 47-49}*

*// We have mostly two types. One is on hourly rate basis, and they are hired to work on Saturday and Sunday when sales ... and there is high traffic. The other one is that we also hired in summer and summer holidays are also consumer sales busy season. We hired students for summer jobs and their pay is less expensive. The advantages are that they can report duty everyday and their pay is inexpensive then we can train them up and then send them to work on Saturday and Sunday. For a particular part-timer we seldom hire them on contract or sign him year after year // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 49-54}*

*// Yes these are fixed. That's why and I am not sure whether they should be called temporary or contract sales force // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 2, ln. 24-25}*

*// During the week we only hire the assistants and keep on hiring more of them [promoter] weekend after weekend // We are looking at hiring more and in fact we are looking at doing more road shows the scale may be bigger // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 4, ln. 6-7 and 16}*

*// It is seasonal // summer holidays is a busy season // In summer holidays the traffic in the shopping mall is more even // the daily people traffic is more even so it is worthwhile to hire // They are used in road shows and also in exhibitions // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 31, 35, 39 and 40}*

*// Normally for full timers they are hired throughout the year. Part timers are affected by seasonality ... at high seasons we may have 20% more and at low seasons we may have only 10% less // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 4, ln. 23-25}*

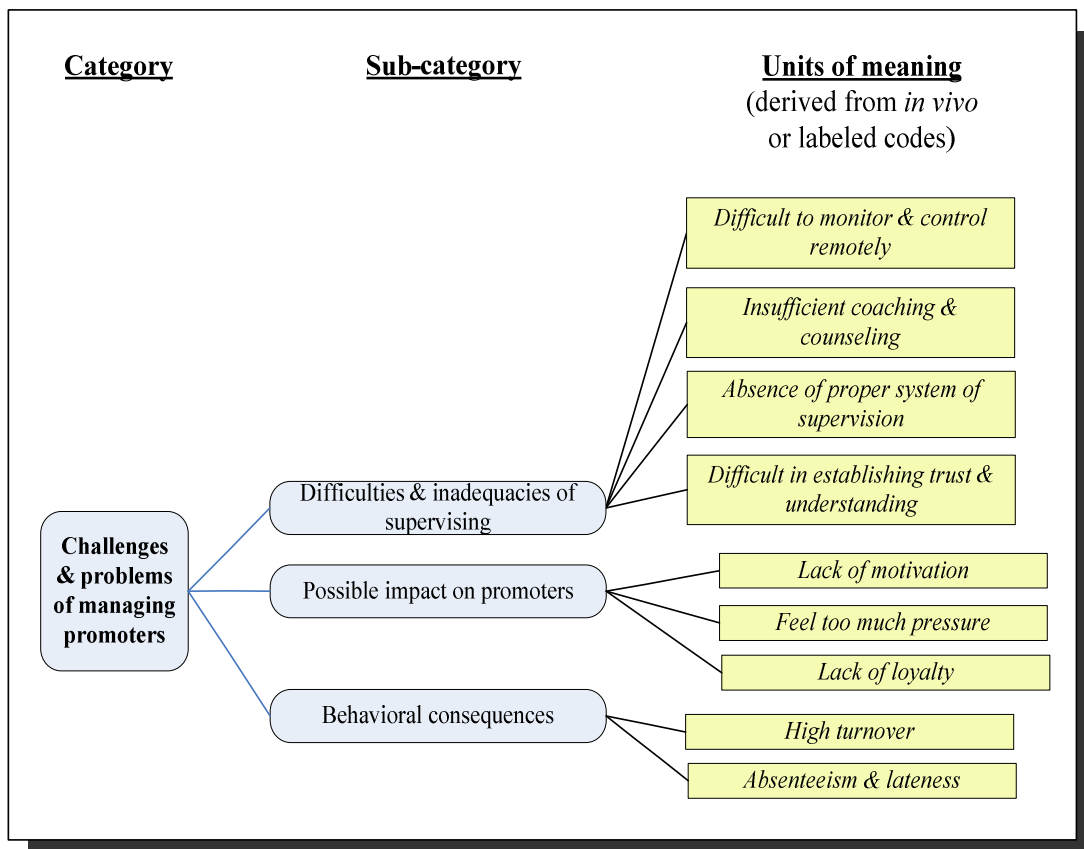
(c) Paid by hourly rate and commissions

All of the promoters were paid by an hourly rate and sales commission.

4.4.3 Challenges and problems of managing promoters

From the managers' interviews, it is found that they were facing the challenges and problems arising from the difficulties and inadequacies of managing. The possible impacts on promoters were the feelings of too much pressure and lack of motivation. The behavioral consequences were high turnover, absenteeism and lateness. This theme is illustrated in Figure 4-7.

Figure 4-7: Challenges and problems of managing promoters from the manager interview



[a] The difficulties and inadequacies of supervising

For the daily operation, the vendor and distributor said they were using permanent staff to supervise the promoters:

*// In fact I have another colleague helping to manage the temporary sales force on a daily basis, and performing the overall sales force management // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 4, ln. 33-34}*

*// We have a supervisor to supervise them // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 4, ln. 21}*

The dispatch of promoters was city-wide and this added to the difficulties in the management of promoters.

Because a large promoter force was scattered over the territory of the city and there were limited supervisory resources, it might not be possible for the vendor to provide sufficient coaching and counseling for the promoters:

*// if they face some problems is there any effective and easy way to feedback to the management here // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 20}*

Similarly, it might be difficult for vendor and promoters to establish trust in each other. The lack of contact between them might make it difficult for the vendor to understand and appreciate the promoters' competence and working attitude. For example, the vendor may regard the market intelligence reported by promoters as suspect:

*// Another problem is that if they feedback market intelligence or market information how accurate the information is // he / she may not know how to answer customers' queries. Or, a customer return with a specific situation and he / she does not know how to deal with it. Sometimes it is the individual's attitude issues // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 21-22 and 34-35}*

[b] Possible impact on promoters

The vendor said that the turnover of part-timers was higher than full-timers, and attributed the causes of this as difficulties of supervision, lack of motivation, and too much pressure:

*// part-timer turnover is definitely higher than full-timers // Whether there was no motivation, or pressure being too intense, or not managed well, or too loose, whatever, I do not know if there were particular reasons // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 6, ln. 44, and p. 8, ln. 36-37}*

The vendor explained that the promoters might feel pressure as their sales performance was closely monitored and deliberate and obvious actions

were taken against under-performing promoters, such as relocating them to another retail shop:

*// for example if the quota was not met several times continually then we would already have someone looking into it to see what was happening and what we could help. For those continually missing the quota it is an issue. We may dispatch him to another location // we will try some other methods to make him perform. And, if at last he is not performing then we have no other way // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 8, ln. 49 and 53}*

The distributor stated that the promoters might be lacking in loyalty:

*// Lack of loyalty, and disappeared after working for only one or a half days // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 4, ln. 50}*

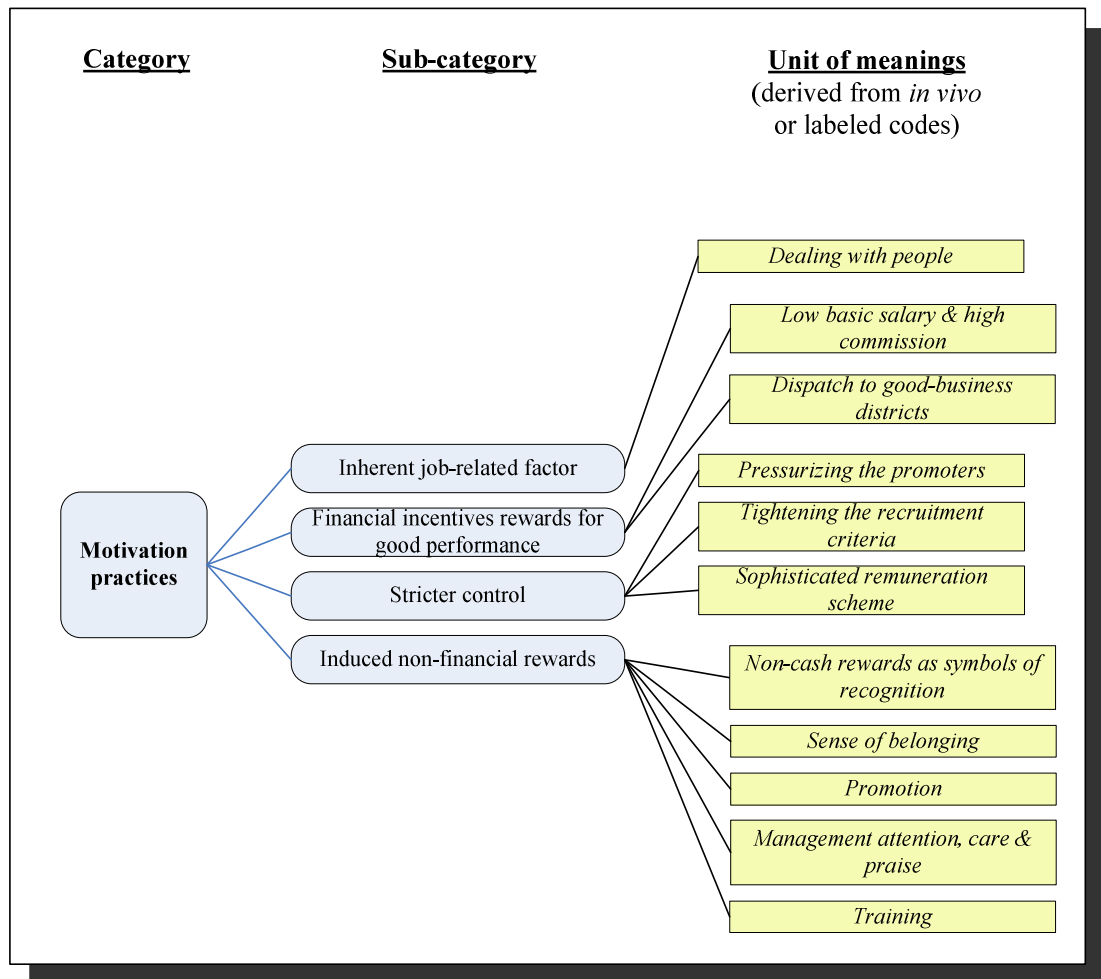
[c] Behavioral consequences

According to the vendor, it was difficult to monitor and control remotely and therefore absenteeism and lateness were possible problems as there did not appear to be a proper system of supervision:

*// It is because the record is not accurate and I cannot say or judge whether the problem is serious or not but there are late to work situations // Temporary sales forces are more remote to us. For example, regarding late to work and early leave, it is really hard to track the details and I am still exploring whether there is any way of doing so // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 1-2 and 18-19}*

#### 4.4.4 Motivation practices

Figure 4-8: Motivational factors from the manager interview



Four motivation practices or the motivational factors from the managers' perspectives were identified. They include [a] inherent job-related factor, [b] financial incentives rewards for good performance, [c] stricter control, and [d] induced non-financial rewards.

(a) Inherent job-related factor

The retail chain store manager mentioned that one promoter might have stayed with the job because he liked dealing with people:

*// I have one sales assistant who has been working for me for four years and he is still working for me as an assistant. I think he is doing*

*this more for his interest and may be in here he feels good; may be his full-time work is very boring. In here he can work by chatting with people that is interesting // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 23-27}*

The distributor also mentioned that the company viewed training a motivational tool. In his view, training allowed promoters to understand the nature and importance of their objectives, and provided them with the opportunity to learn and grow:

*// With training they know what they are doing. Without it, they just stand there, ask customer directly to buy, and they feel like they are silly and there is nothing to learn. With training there is something to learn // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 5, 21-22}*

(b) Financial incentives rewards for good performance

The distributor argued that the most successful form of motivation was when the promoter earned a large sum of commission:

*// An example is that we have run a program well and they have learned a lot of money from it // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 6, ln. 20}*

The distributor compared the difference between motivating permanent sales people and motivating promoters and concluded that money provided the strongest source of motivation for promoters:

*// For permanent sales, it is their bread and butter. Everyone must attach importance to his / her core job, and is having loyalty. For permanent sales, the fringe benefits are different too. It is also their career. For a part-timer, if they earn a dollar then is only one dollar, and they can choose not going back to the work the next day, and it is not seriously affected them // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 43-46}*



The distributor was using a remuneration scheme with a low basic salary and a high commission rate, hoping that this would encourage the promoter to take more initiative in looking for customers:

*// we offer incentive // incentive to motivate them // Low basic salary and higher commission rate // My idea is that if you give them higher basic salary there is no motivation as one can just stand still all the time to earn the money // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 4, ln. 21, 39 and 44-45}*

He also said that he was considering motivating the promoters by relocating them to good-business districts, thereby giving them opportunities to earn more commission:

*// if they perform well then they were given good districts // So they know there is the differentiation, and they perform they will be given good districts and this is also a recognition // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 6, ln. 2-3 and 7-8}*

To improve staff performance, the manager from the retail chain store said that he was considering setting up a more sophisticated pay scheme:

*// For the time being this is what we are doing - we hope through setting up sophisticated recruitment criteria and the pay scheme could improve business results // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 8, ln. 54-55}*

(c) Stricter control

To improve staff performance, the retail chain store was considering pressurizing the promoters harder, tightening the criteria for the recruitment and selection of promoters, and setting up a more sophisticated pay scheme.

*// And, we pressure them a bit harder // For the time being this is what we are doing - we hope through setting up sophisticated recruitment*

*criteria and the pay scheme could improve business results // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 8, ln. 48 and 54-55}*

(d) Induced non-financial rewards

The vendor was considering using non-cash rewards as symbols of recognition for good performers in order to raise their spirit:

*// I have not been using extra money to incent them to do more because to perform is the basic requirement. Perhaps in looking at a key contributor or something like this, we may use some monetary reward like giving away a MP3 player, something like that. But we are not giving away one thousand or two thousand dollars // and they would be proud of it so that the teams also want to get it // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 8, ln. 12-15 and 19}*

The vendor considered that a sense of belonging was an important motivational factor for promoters:

*// I think this sense of belonging is important to them - this is from the feedback of my other colleagues and during short conversations with the sale force the little information I collected // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 50-52}*

The vendor recalled that once a promoter valued the promotion to being a permanent staff of the company:

*// there is a successful case and a permanent sales people who is coming from the temporary sales force // as a temporary staff and later get promoted to become a permanent staff and I think this is career development // the permanent staff who used to be in the temporary sales force and he values the transfer // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 7, ln. 31-32, 48-49 and 53-54}*

The vendor said that she was paying more attention to and demonstrating more care for the promoters and praised them more often:

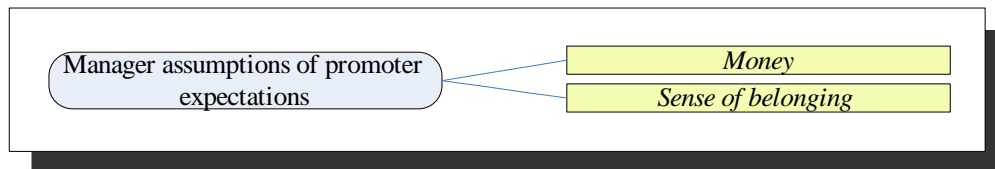
*// I will show up to give them some encouragement and they did well I will recognize them, verbally // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 6, ln. 38-39}*

However, the distributor questioned the effectiveness of the non-material motivational means and claimed that these were not necessarily welcome by the promoters:

*// They are not doing a full-time job. If they are doing a full-time job, they will have certain requests, for example, they can take sick leave. If they are doing a part-time job, and if they don't show up then there is no money. Unless they really cannot come, they will come to earn the money, and they will show up // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 6, ln. 47-50}*

#### 4.4.5 Managers' assumptions about promoter expectations

Figure 4-9: Managers' assumptions about promoters' expectations



The managers assumed that the promoters have only little expectations from the promoter job. Money and some sense of belonging can satisfy the needs of promoters.

#### [a] Money

The distributor appeared to assume that they were mostly concerned with money and did not believe that the promoters might have non-monetary requirements in order to be motivated:

*// For temporary, there is hardly any request of these. They are not doing a full time job. If they are doing a full time job, they have certain requests, for example, they can take sick leave. If they are doing a part*

*time job, if they don't show up then there is no money. Unless they really cannot come, they will come to earn some money, and they will show up // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 8, ln. 48 and 47-50}*

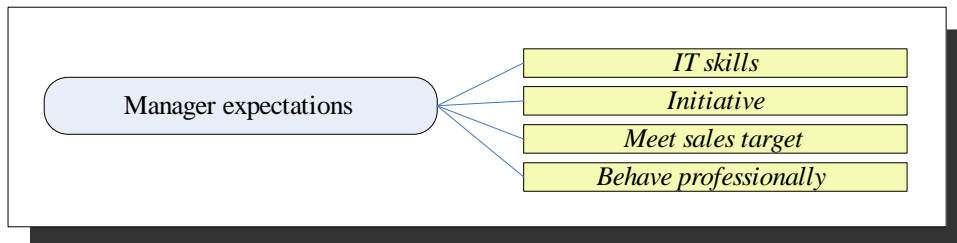
[b] Non-monetary needs such as sense of belonging

The vendor believed that the sense of belonging was important to promoters and that they would perform better when management gave them more attention, and showed up in meetings and gatherings to cheer them up, and gave praise to the promoters:

*// I think this sense of belonging is important to them // I am thinking maybe at my level I also need to join their meetings // I will show up to give them some encouragement and if they did well I will recognize them, verbally // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 50-51, and p. 6, p. 1-3}*

#### 4.4.6 Managers' expectations of promoters

Figure 4-10: Managers' expectations of promoters



The retail chain store expected promoters to possess IT skills and be self-initiating:

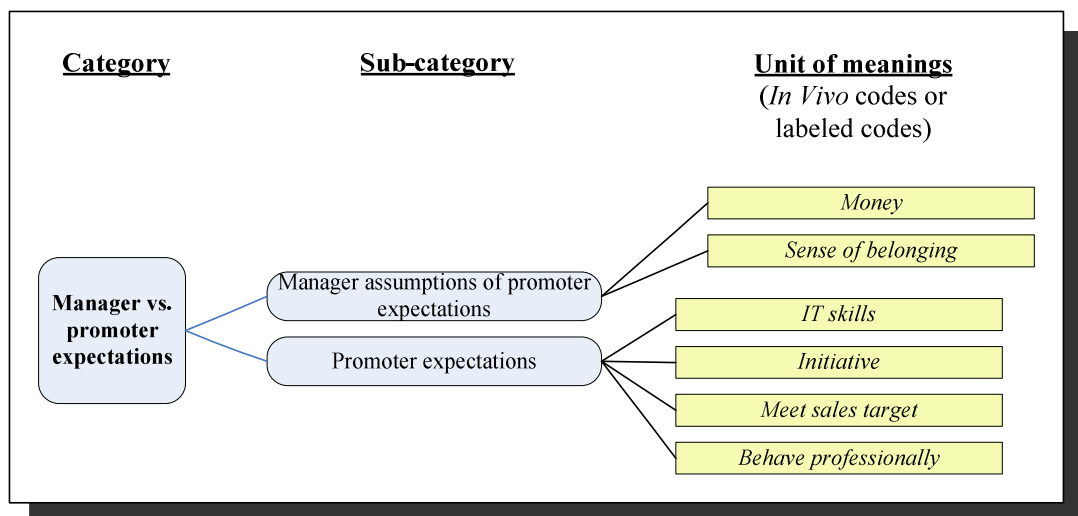
*// ... IT skills ... and I also want them to be more self-initiative // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 3, ln. 53}*

The distributor expected the promoters to meet the sales target and behave professionally to project a good brand image to protect the interest of the company:

*// we have expectations ... like quota // like our brand image // show their knowledge // if they offend a customer then the company will lose one customer // {Distributor in-depth interview p. 6, ln. 55, and p. 7, ln. 3 and 7 and 11}*

#### 4.4.7 Comparison of manager assumption and promoter expectation

Figure 4-11: Managers' assumptions on and promoters' expectation from the manager interview



There could be gap between the management's assumption and policies on motivation and the effects or practices. The managers assumed promoters needed money and sense of belonging and expected after fulfillment they would have possess IT skills, initiative, capability to meet sales target and behave professionally. It is apparently that there are plenty of rooms to improve in this area for the managers.

#### 4.4.8 Summary of findings from the manager interview

According to the managers, the promoter trade was a relatively new but popular occupation within the IT retail sector, as was the case in relation to many other retail products. The use of IT promoters has evolved to become a strategic tool for manufacturing vendors, distributors and retail shops during busy times and busy seasons.

Four types of promoter were identified, namely, sales assistant, part-time promoter, seasonal promoter, and full-time promoter. Many part-time and seasonal promoters were students. Usually they represented specific brands and worked inside the store, or at product road shows or exhibitions. They were paid by means of a relatively low hourly rate and a high sales commission scheme. As promoters worked remotely from their employer and/or manager, there were associated issues in supervising and motivating them, such as lack of support and lack of relationship building, which were suggested to be causes of relatively high turnover, .

Various motivational factors were mentioned by the employers, some of which were said to be practiced by employers, and some of which were merely under consideration. These factors included inherent job-related factors, financial incentives for good performance, stricter control, and induced non-financial rewards.

The retail chain store and distributor indicated that they were managing the promoters by monitoring the sales results, and that they were motivating them primarily by using money. The vendor manager, perhaps because she was directly or indirectly paying the promoters, had begun to consider using non-financial rewards as motivational tools.

#### 4.4.9 Furthering the study after the manager interview

This stage of the research project collected data from various types of manager, but because of the small numbers it cannot be deemed to provide a comprehensive picture of employers' views in general. Nevertheless, this inquiry fulfilled its purpose by casting light on current employer practices and by identifying ideas about motivational practices that subsequent parts of this research project may investigate further.

The interviews reflected the perspectives of the employers about motivational policies but not the ideas of the promoters themselves. The subsequent stages of the research project focused on the perspectives of the promoters via a focus group study and through individual in-depth interviews.

This stage of the research project has identified three types of promoter. The main focus of interest in the remainder of the research project will be on the

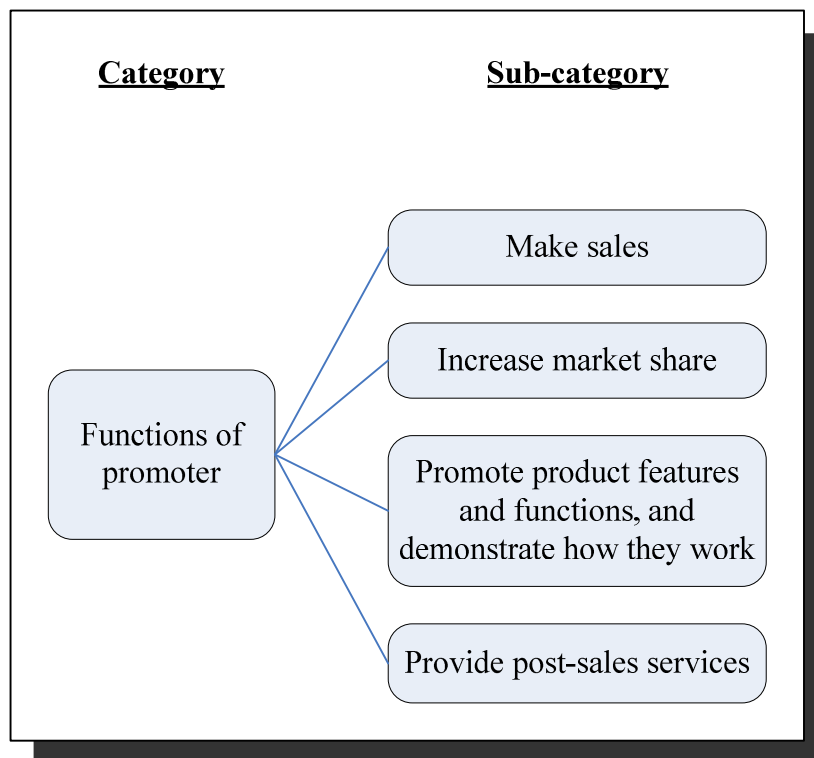
long-term [contract] part-time promoters as a special kind of peripheral work force. This part of the research project, because it came in the beginning, adopted a sampling method that inevitably addressed the situation of other types of promoter. Among the promoters, it appeared that the part-timers were in a medium-term transitional position, and it was this apparent 'in-between' characteristic that particularly interested the researcher.

#### 4.5 Findings from the promoters' focus group study

This section reports the promoter focus group study - the second qualitative inquiry in this research. It was planned to answer some of the questions that arose from the employer interviews, and to explore directions for further inquiries.

##### 4.5.1 Promoter functions

Figure 4-12: Functions of promoters from the promoter focus group study



The promoters were asked, "Why do your employers hire you?" Four primary functions of promoters were identified: [a] to make sales; [b] to increase market

share; [c] to promote product features and functions, and demonstrate how they work; and [d] to provide post-sales services.

[a] To make sales

One promoter mentioned the need to get sales and that the primary function was selling:

*// In the mall there are many people and it is impossible to introduce to every one of them. Regarding the product, there is not only my brand but there are many others. We have to judge if the customer will buy a computer or not. If he or she is a real potential then we have to stop him/her at the shop entrance to buy // {Focus group study p. 6, ln. 7-10}*

[b] To increase market share

Other promoters said that they have to ‘snatch’ customers to buy at their booths and shops, and ‘snatch’ customers from another brand as well:

*// For a product there is more than one brand so you have to get customers from other brands // {Focus group study p. 3, ln. 41-42}*

*// Snatching the customer is to get customers to switch from other brands or from other shops for the same brand. I'll pull in the customers to come to my shop // {Focus group study p. 3, ln. 48-50}*

[c] To promote product features and function, and demonstrate how they work

There was also the idea that the promoter’s role was to promote the features and functions of the product, and to demonstrate how the product works:

*// We will talk to the customers more about the functions and usage so they become knowledgeable about how to use more of the product // {Focus group study p. 4, ln. 3-4}*



*// If there is no promoter, customers would most likely not buy them [the products], as they do not know if they are reliable, if they [or the brands] really work and what is the accuracy // {Focus group study p. 5, ln. 1-2}*

The most experienced promoter in the group also agreed that the two major functions of promoters to be sales and product promotion:

*// They [functions] are mainly two-folded. One is to chase after the numbers and there is a sales quota. The other is to pass information. Say if it is a new product, and for example like a MP3 and some time ago no one knew about this, then there is a need for someone to introduce and explain its usage // {Focus group study p. 4, ln. 11-14}*

[d] To provide post-sales services

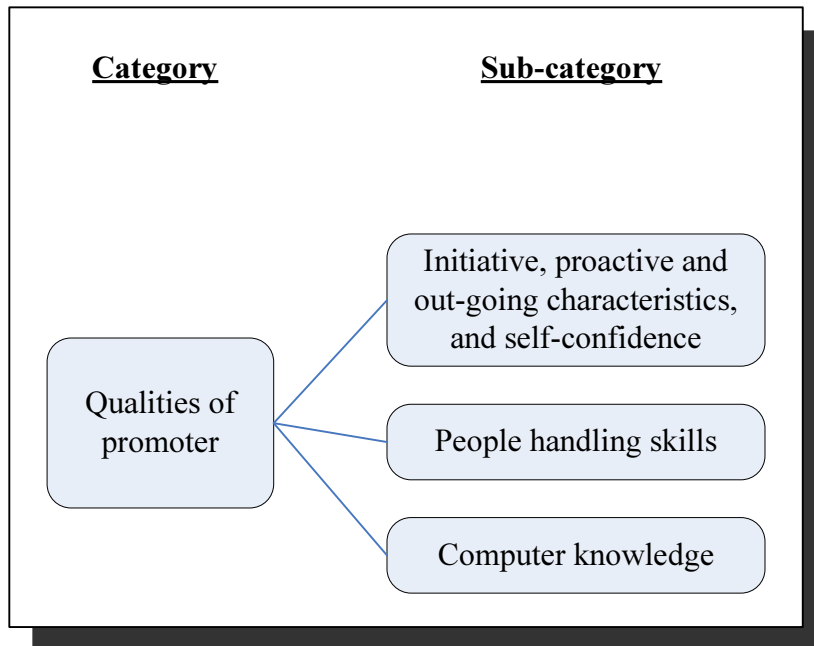
Finally, another experienced promoter added that they are there also to provide customer service. This may include post-sales and technical services in equipment operation:

*// We can answer questions even after the sale // {Focus group study p. 6, ln. 44-45}*

Thus, four roles of promoters were identified. There was no mention whether the promoters learnt about these goals from their employers, but it appeared that the nature of these goals were clearer for the more experienced promoters.

#### 4.5.2 Promoter qualities

Figure 4-13: Qualities of promoter from the promoter focus group study



Promoters were asked, “What skills do you have to be hired?” They identified three sets of promoter qualities for the employers to hire them. They were [a] initiative, proactive and out-going characteristics, and self-confidence; [b] people handling skills; and [c] computer knowledge.

[a] The first promoter quality mentioned was the promoters’ initiative, proactive and out-going characteristics, and self-confidence:

*// Taking initiative to talk to customers ... and I think the characteristics must be out-going so that he or she can be a promoter. // {Focus group study p. 5, ln. 33-34}*

*// Have to be proactive to sell to the customer. You cannot just do your own thing when the customer is approaching. Looking over, one just cannot pretend there is no customer there. // {Focus group study p. 6, ln. 1-2}*

*// Initiative is important, and one cannot be shy. // {Focus group study p. 8, ln. 2}*

- [b] The second promoter quality was people handling skills, including skills of expression, persuasion, and presentation, and the flexibility to adjust to different customers:

*// Eloquence. // {Focus group study p. 6, ln. 32}*

*// We look for good presentation. Products are dead [cannot talk itself] and are not easy to understand. If you can understand one concept then you can understand the other hundred ones. We are concerned about presentation skills. We look at this skill first before anything else. // {Focus group study p. 8, ln. 49 - p. 9, ln. 2}*

*// The flexibility to adjust to all levels of customers is important. // {Focus group study p. 8, ln. 4-5}*

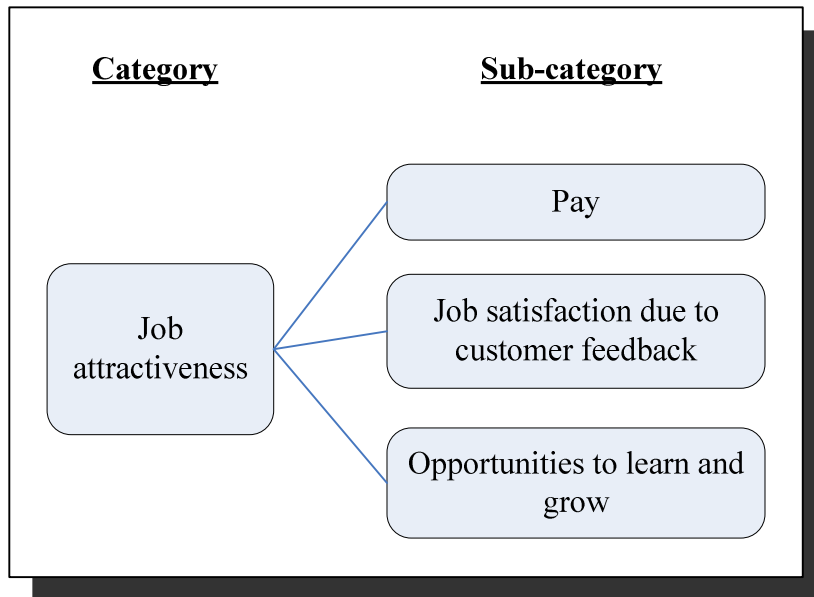
- [c] Finally, a promoter mentioned a third promoter quality - some knowledge about computers:

*// It is very basic to have some computer knowledge, like what they are and what are their functions. For a deeper knowledge, say how to compare products, we can always go back to them later. Presentation, to our company, is more important. Maybe we are more concerned about our company image. // {Focus group study p. 9, ln. 8-11}*

Although they were selling computer products, which apparently require substantial technical knowledge, this area was the last to be mentioned.

### 4.5.3 Job attractiveness

Figure 4-14: Job attractiveness from the promoter focus group study



Promoters were asked, “If you had a choice, would you still like to do this job?” Promoters indicated that they were attracted to do the job for three main reasons: [a] the pay; [b] the job satisfaction due to customer feedback; and [c] the opportunities to learn and grow.

#### [a] Pay

At first, the promoters responded that there were hardly comparable jobs available:

*// There really are not many choices // {Focus group study p. 9, ln. 43}*

*// It is difficult to have other choices // {Focus group study p. 10, ln. 2}*

Then everybody mentioned that the pay of the job was relatively good by comparison to the other jobs available:

*// I also feel bored, but this is easy money // {Focus group study p. 11, ln. 32}*

*// Office work is paying very low // {Focus group study p. 11, ln. 49}*

*// The pay is so low for an office job // {Focus group study p. 12, ln. 3}*

*// This job earns more money. I do not want to give up the higher pay //  
{Focus group study p. 12, ln. 21}*

*// I work only on Saturday and Sunday and can get about three  
thousand dollars or more. It is worth it // {Focus group study p. 12, ln.  
25}*

*// I look up to the money // {Focus group study p. 12, ln. 31}*

*// Money is also an important consideration // {Focus group study p.  
13, ln. 45}*

The promoters found that the job was attractive and paid them decently. Although some mentioned that they had felt bored with the job, they also indicated that they would not give up their job. Therefore, pay appeared to be the primary reason why promoters chose to stay with the trade.

[b] Job satisfaction due to customer feedback

In counterpoint to the mention of dullness of the job, one experienced and enthusiastic promoter said that he liked the job so much that he worked extra time so that he could greet the returning customers whom he treated like his fans:

*// although there is only required seven hours [of work], I put in at  
least ten hours every day // {Focus group study p. 10, ln. 6-7}*

*// There are familiar customers and fans come in for me // {Focus  
group study p. 10, ln. 13-14}*

This view was challenged by another experienced promoter, who explained that she worked for the money only:

*// I feel a little bored after more than 2 years working in this job ... but  
the salary for office work is so low, a lot lower than I work as a*

*promoter. Therefore, I keep on working this job // {Focus group study p. 11, ln. 1-4}*

Then another promoter supported her, and explained that the job required hard work and that the competitive environment was pressurized:

*// As a matter of fact this job requires quite hard work. I have to put in long hours each day ... we need to OT [work overtime] a lot. Many times I reported duty at 1 pm and left at 10 pm. And, within this length of time, I have to keep an eye on the printers, to make sure that other brands' people cannot mess them up, cannot belittle them [sabotage them]. So I feel it is quite hard // {Focus group study p. 12, ln. 35-39}*

Despite the various opinions, the notion of the job satisfaction due to feedback from customers could not be obliterated.

[c] Opportunity to learn and grow

There were mentions that the job provided opportunities to learn and grow:

*// I can learn something on this job. It is interesting to talk to customers. I have learnt one thing that does not teach in school. It is communication. I work at Golden [Golden Shopping Arcade] and there are people from all walks of life. I have to face different people. People can be grouped into different kinds ... and there are only a few kinds // {Focus group study p. 13, ln. 45-49}*

*// This job gives us rich experience and extensive knowledge // {Focus group study p. 14, ln. 19}*

*// It makes us bolder with people // {Focus group study p. 14, ln. 25}*

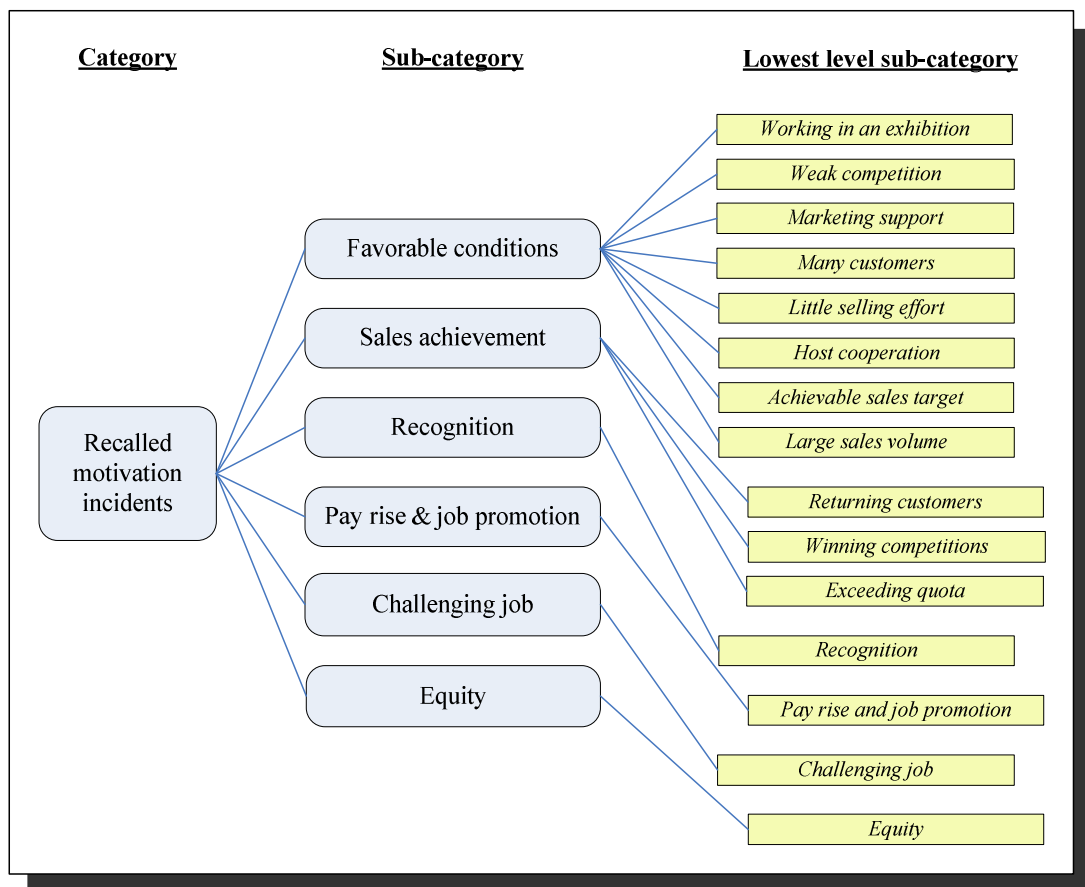
*// It makes me more mature // {Focus group study p. 14, ln. 28}*

*// We can still use the skills in bargaining ... elsewhere // {Focus group study p. 11, ln. 22-23}*

While explaining the above reasons for continuing to do the job, the promoters also identified negative factors about the job such as difficulty, pressure, boredom, and hard work, but these issues were not probed because they were not on the schedule.

#### 4.5.4 Promoters' experience of motivational incidents

Figure 4-15: Recalled motivational incidents from the promoter focus group study



During the focus group study, participants were divided into two arbitrarily-composed groups to discuss their experiences of motivation events. Each group listed their quotations on paper. Then, a representative of each group presented them. Both these notes and the transcript are used as data for analysis.

Group A listed fifteen quotations and Group B eighteen. To begin the analysis it was arbitrarily decided to examine and categorize the set of quotations from Group A first. Quotations with similar attributes were clustered together by appending latter quotations right after the earlier ones, thus preserving as well as possible the original

sequence of the list. Clusters were then grouped into categories and sub-categories, and labeled. After all quotations in Group A were grouped, quotations in Group B were examined and appended to the emerged categories.

Altogether, six categories of motivation incidents were indentified, and the groupings were shown in Figure 4-15. Five categories were built from quotations in Group A. Most quotations from Group B fitted neatly into four of these categories, while and a sixth category was built to accommodate the rest. The six categories were [a] favorable conditions; [b] sales achievement; [c] recognition; [d] pay rise and job promotion; [e] challenging job; and [f] equity.

[a] Favorable conditions

Eight favorable conditions to making sales achievement were recalled from when promoters felt they had accomplishment from the job. It consisted of substantially more quotations than other categories and there were eight quotations from Group A and eleven from Group B. In this category, promoters reported that they were happy when the conditions were favorable. The favorable conditions recorded were: [i] working in an exhibition; [ii] weak competition; [iii] marketing support; [iv] many customers; [v] little selling effort; [vi] host cooperation; [vii] achievable sales target; and [viii] large sales volume.:

[i] Working in an exhibition

*// At a road show when I had been in the trade for only 3 months. [At that time,] the market was slow and the mall had been a deadly place. [When I worked in the exhibition,] our prices were low and I sold 18 units all by myself. // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A01}*

*// Worked in a computer exhibition and sold many products // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. B06}*

[ii] Weak competition



*// Other competitive brands were running out of stock. // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A05}*

*// Competitors were running were running out of stock. // competitors were suffering from negative news // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B04 & B05}*

[iii] Marketing support

*// The brand advertised // Shop prices were a little cheaper than others // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A08 & A14}*

*// The brand advertised // The brand released new products // the brand reduced prices // Many special offers // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. B11, B01, B03 & B16}*

[iv] Many customers

*// I was lucky as when I started to work there came more and more customers // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A09}*

[v] Little selling effort

*// Customers were easy to sell to // Customers just came, pointed at the products and ordered straight away // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A11 & A12}*

*// Customers just came to buy // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B14}*

[vi] Host cooperation

*// Shop sales helped [to get approval] and there were many free gifts [from the shop] to give away to customers // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A13}*

*// Shop people helped [when I was busy] // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B15}*

[vii] Achievable sales target

Reduced the sales target made achieving sales quota easier.

*// company reduced the sales target [made achieving sales quota easier] // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B08}*

[viii] Large sales volume

*// One customer bought many units from the promoter // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B09}*

*// Corporate customers // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B13}*

[b] Sales achievement

The second category was sales achievement and consisted of five quotations. It was interpreted that favorable conditions were likely to result in sales achievement. There were recorded three signs of sales achievement: [i] returning customers; [ii] winning competitions; and [iii] exceeding quota:

[i] Returning customers

Customer returning is a buying signal.

*// Customer returned [after shopping around] // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A02}*

*// Customer returned to look for me // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B07}*

[ii] Winning competitions

Winning sales over competition is sales achievement.

*// fought against Canon [competitive brand] and won the customer // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A04}*

*// Snatch customers successfully // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B02}*

[iii] Exceeding quota

Fulfilling sales expectations is sales achievement.

*// Exceeding quota // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A07}*

[c] Recognition

The third category was recognition. There were five quotations in this category. Direct and indirect praises from the employers, customers and the shops were interpreted as results of sales achievement and were seen as recognition of promoters.

*// At last, the vendor representative praised me. // Praised by customer.  
// Praised by shop owner// {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A01, A06 & A15}*

*// Praised by customer // Customer said the product was useful //  
{Focus group study Group A notes item no. B18 & B10}*

[d] Pay rise and job promotion

The fourth category was pay rise and job promotion. There were two quotations in this category. The pay rise and job promotion were also interpreted as results of sales achievement:

*// Rise in commission [rate] // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A03}*

*// Job promotion // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B17}*

(e) Challenging job

The fifth category was challenging job. A promoter from Group A reported making sales using a second language - Putonghua. It was

interpreted that this promoter was pleased and self-satisfied about the mastery of a second language:

*// Sold to mainland customers, using Putonghua // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A10}*

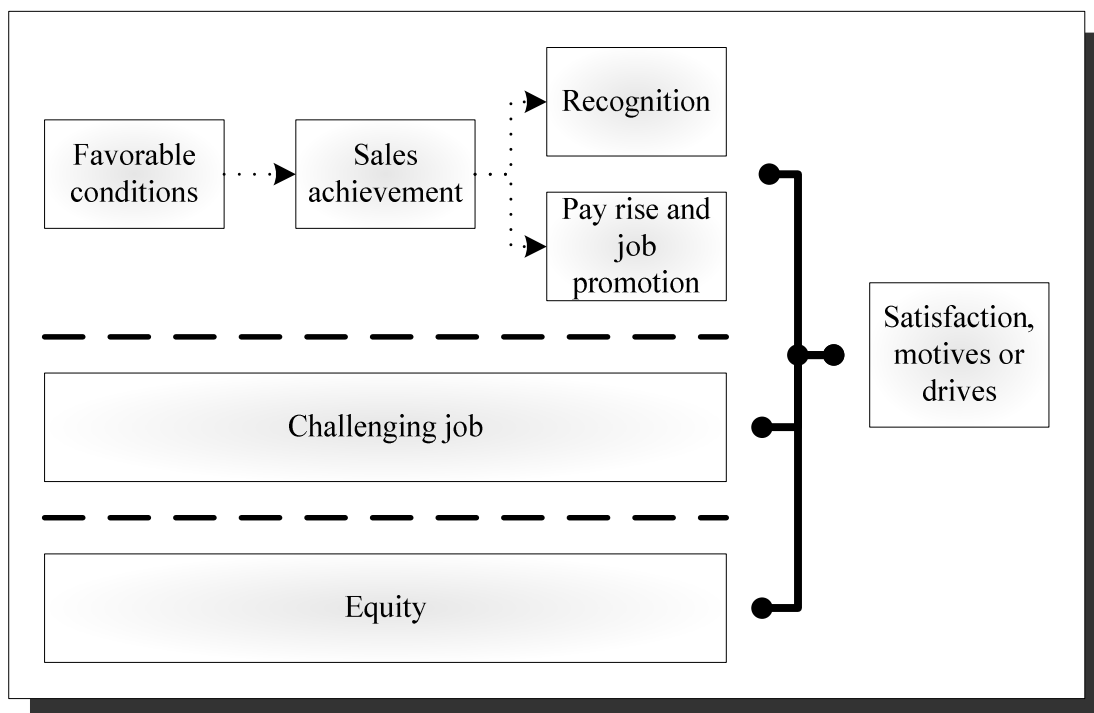
(f) Equity

The sixth category was equity. There was one quotation from Group B in this category, mentioning that getting paid on-time was important. The expectation of fair treatment may be risen out of bad experience:

*// Company paid on-time // {Focus group study Group B notes item no. B12}*

The categories of these initial findings could be outlined into a schema of motivation in Figure 4-16. In summary, promoters had recalled motivation incidents when they received recognition and pay rise; the job was challenging; and they were being treated equitably.

Figure 4-16: Schema of motivation from the focus group study



This schema suggests that three types of factors account for the motivation, that is, satisfaction, motives or drives of promoters. They are the sales achievement reflected from financial and non-financial rewards, a challenging job, and equity.

#### 4.5.5 Promoters' perspective on a motivation scheme [preferred motivation scheme]

Figure 4-17: Preferred motivation scheme from the focus group study

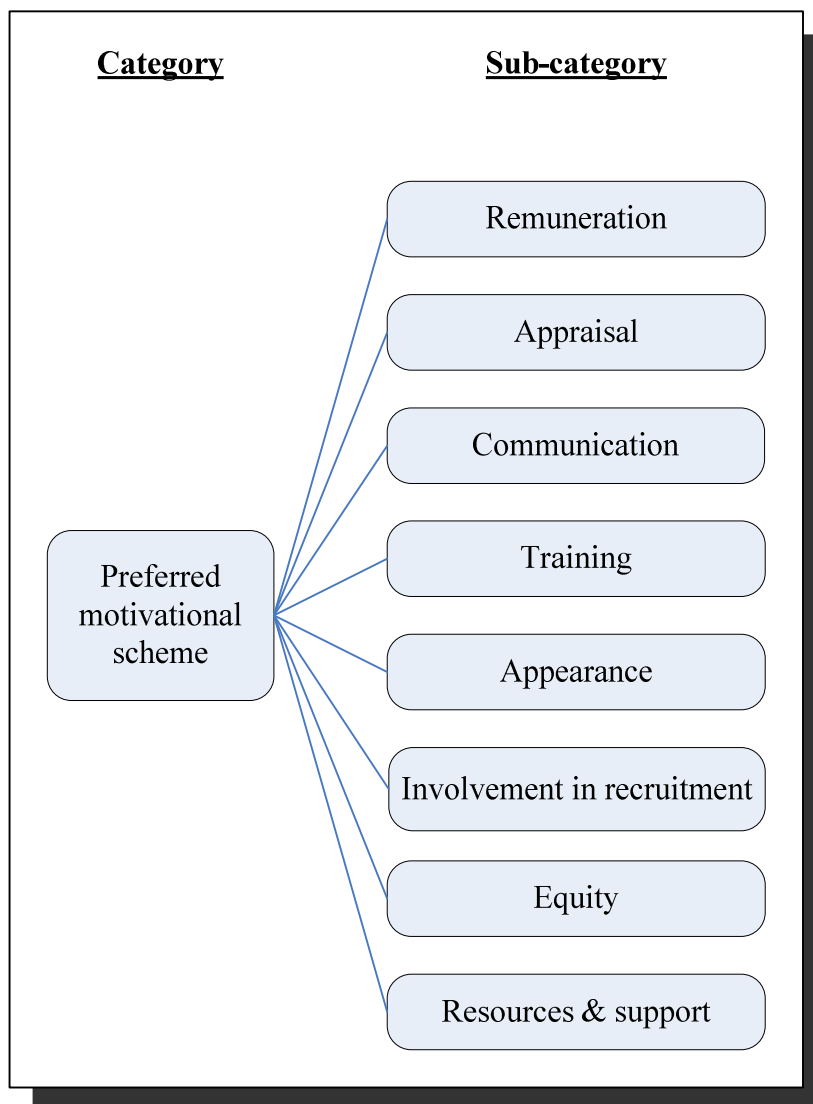


Figure 4-17 showed the grouping of the categories and descriptions of a preferred motivation system from the focus group study. Continuing the focus group study after the discussion of their experiences of motivation events, promoters were shuffled and arbitrarily divided into another two groups. They were asked to put themselves into the shoes of the employers to propose a system or ways to improve

the performance of promoters. They listed their thoughts in writing, and then they presented them. The quotations were subsequently transcribed and analyzed.

The Group C produced a list of thirteen items and Group D eleven. A similar analytical procedure was adopted to that described in the previous section 4.5.4 - Promoters' experience of motivation incidents. The temporal sequence of category emergence was maintained. During the process, three items were interpreted to have two meanings; each was sorted into two different categories. Finally, eight categories emerged: [a] remuneration; [b] appraisal; [c] communication; [d] training; [e] appearance; [f] involvement in recruitment; [g] equity; and [h] resources and support.

[a] The first category was remuneration. Promoters proposed a low basic wage, high commission rate scheme, and different quotas for different locations and different basic wages. They also proposed allowance for promoters to attend meetings and trainings, a staff purchase benefit program and exceeding-target bonus. The composite picture was of a more comprehensive remuneration scheme than currently existing in the experience of respondents.

*// Have direction, low basic wage with high commission rate // Set sales target based on the shop location // Progressive commission rates // Have travel allowance to attend meetings // Staff discount // Bonus // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C01, C02, C05, C08, C10 & C13}*

*// Different hourly rate in different mall // Set sales target with commission and exceed-target bonus // Fixed meeting time schedule and paid by hourly rate // Training with more textual description and paid by hourly rate // Meal allowance // Staff purchase discount // {Focus group study Group D notes item no. D01, D02, D08, D10, D09}*

[b] The second category was appraisal. Promoters expressed that an evaluation system was important, and that must also include shop feedback and field evaluation. They proposed praising promoters when they performed well, and removing non-performers. As remuneration was a means of keeping and

motivating promoters, a proper appraisal scheme was required to support the remuneration.

*// Must have performance evaluation // Must get feedback from the shop // Have regular field visit performance evaluation // Praise // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C03, C04, C09 & C12}*

*// Field evaluation to kick out non-performers // Praise when performing well and censure when committing wrongs // {Focus group study Group D notes item no. D06 & D11}*

- [c] The third category was communication. Promoters proposed more informal and social gatherings. It might reflect their desire to enhance the relationship with company officials, and peers who they might not see each other at work.

*// Organize gatherings and meal gatherings // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C06}*

*// Gatherings to enhance communications // {Focus group study Group D notes item no. D05}*

- [d] The fourth category was training. Promoters suggested up-to-day training contents that covering greater details. They also mentioned that the training need to be well scheduled and they proposed to pay them allowance to attend these training courses. This reflected the current trainings were insufficient and in need to be structured in contents and scheduling.

*// Provide sales training // First time updated information // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C06 & C11}*

*// Training with more textual description and paid by hourly rate // Fixed meeting time schedule and paid by hourly rate // {Focus group study Group D notes item no. C08 & D04}*

- [e] The fifth category was appearance. Promoters showed their concern on their appearance and they asked for help from the company to build their images.

*//Appearance // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C07}*

*// 'Sharp' costume to make promoters pretty girls and stylish guys, and also look mature and dignified // {Focus group study Group D notes item no. D07}*

- [f] The sixth category was equity. Promoter suggested that the motivation need to be of high transparency. It might had arisen out of the promoter's bad experience and reflected the need for a transparent system to allow for self evaluation.

*// High transparency // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C14}*

- [g] The seventh category was involvement in recruitment. Promoter showed the interest to be involved in recruiting other promoters. There was not further explanation but it might reflect the promoter's desire to build the peers and team, and control the internal competitors.

*// Through friends to recruit new promoter // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C15}*

- (h) The eighth category was resources and support. Promoter asked for resources and support from the company in order to make more sales and to make the sales easier.

*// More free gifts for promoters // {Focus group study Group D notes item no. D03}*

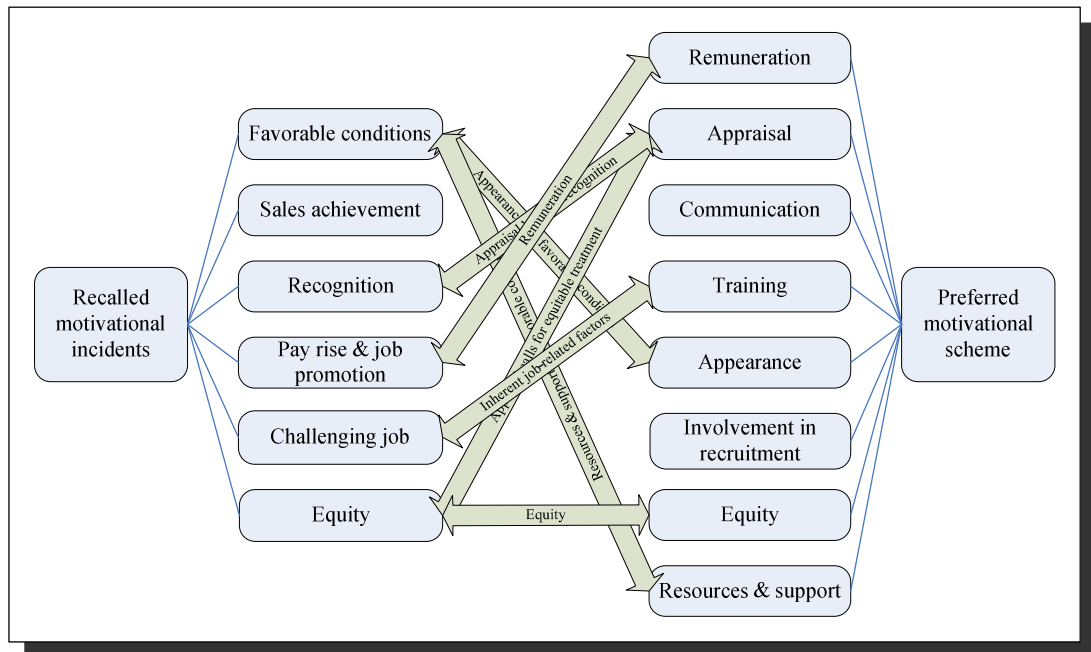
#### 4.5.6 Comparing recalled motivational incidents to preferred motivation scheme

The recalled motivational incidents consisted of six categories. The preferred motivational scheme consists of eight categories. In the comparison, the categories were compared to the categories of the other code. The comparing categories were examined to see if they are compatible. Their relationship was checked as the researcher was thinking of the theoretical codes - the conceptual relationship in theories while working on and thinking about the meanings of these substantive



codes. The results are merged codes with broader or more descriptive definitions or may be conditions.

Figure 4-18: Comparing recalled motivational incidents to preferred motivational scheme



Combining the promoters’ experiences and their expectations yielded a richer description of the concepts of motivation on promoters. There was no contradiction between themes. Instead, the combined view extended our knowledge on the motivation of promoters. Adding to the initial schema in Figure 4-16, communication and involvement in recruitment are now the fourth and fifth motivation factors.

#### 4.5.7 Summary of findings from the focus group study

The focus group study has allowed the researcher to understand more from the promoters’ perspective on promoter functions, promoter qualities and job attractiveness. The focus group study has revealed four promoter functions and three attributes of a promoter’s quality. Moreover, the study has unveiled some motivational factors from the perspective of promoters on the basis of their recalled incidents and preferred treatment. Promoters are attracted to the job fundamentally because of pay and the opportunities to learn and grow. The job returns satisfaction from various feedbacks, including praises mostly from the customers. The

motivation factors now expanded to include sales achievement reflected from financial and non-financial rewards, a challenging job, equity, communication and involvement in recruitment.

#### 4.5.8 Furthering the study after the focus group study

This section of the research project collected data from different promoters in a focus group study. Also due to the small number of members it cannot be deemed to provide a comprehensive picture of promoters' views in general. Nevertheless, this inquiry fulfilled its purpose by casting light on promoter functions and qualities, job attractiveness, and motivation factors. It can be planned to collect further data in order to expand the knowledge, and perhaps to find if there will be any further data to support the current understanding.

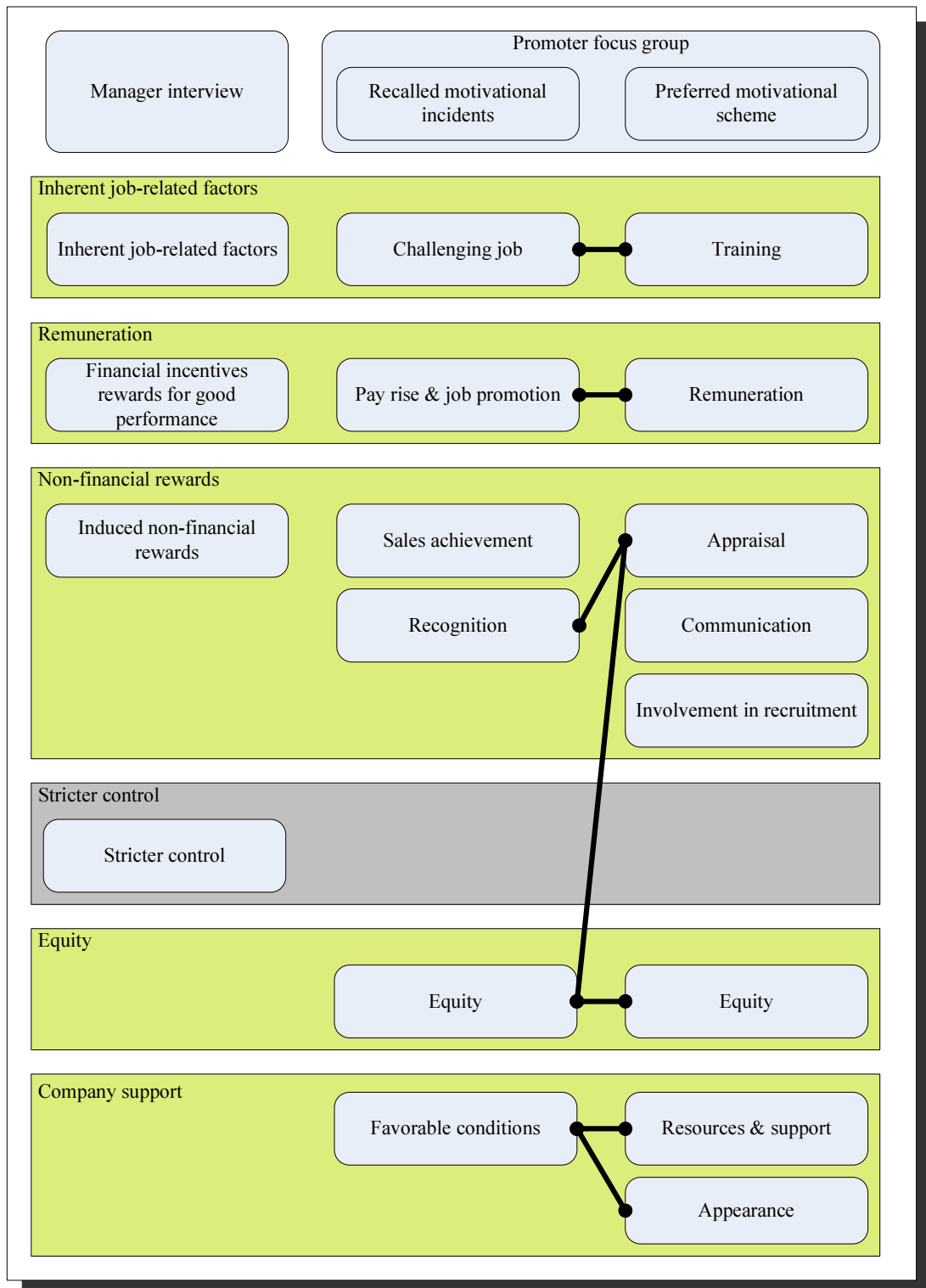
The planned individual in-depth interviews with promoters will fit this direction. This stage of the research project has identified three types of promoter. The main focus of interest in the remainder of the research project will be on the long-term [contract] part-time promoters as a special kind of peripheral work force. This part of the research project, because it came in the beginning, adopted a sampling method that inevitably addressed the situation of other types of promoter. Among the promoters, it appeared that the part-timers were in a medium-term transitional position, and it was this apparent 'in-between' characteristic that particularly interested the researcher.

#### 4.6 Comparison between the manager interview and the promoter focus group study

This section examines the relationships between [a] the four management and motivational factors identified from the managers' perspective and explained in section 4.4, and [b] the six types of recalled motivation incidents and eight preferred motivation categories voiced by the promoters and explained in section 4.5.

There was no logical contradiction between concepts found from the managers' or promoters' perspectives. Figure 4-19 showed the inferred grouping of motivational factors regardless of their sources. This grouping enriched the definitions of categories.

Figure 4-19: Grouping of the managers' and promoters perspectives on motivational factors



The inherent job-related factors refers to all acts that come with the job including the job requirement to deal with people, the challenge and mastery of

Putonghua needed to perform the job, and the training that was provided by the companies.

The remuneration refers to the rewards designed as incentive for doing the job well, and includes the components of the remuneration structure - basic salary, commission and bonus, and the performance evaluation and appraisal system that may lead to pay rises and job promotion.

The non-financial rewards are induced, in contrast to inherent, factors in perceived effective management and motivation. They include [a] non-cash rewards as symbols of recognition, sense of belonging, promotion, management attention, care and praise, training; [b] sales achievement and satisfaction arising from returning customers, winning competitions, and exceeding the quota; [c] praise as recognition; [d] gatherings for enhanced communication; and [e] referring promoters' friends as new hires.

The stricter control is not considered as a motivational factor as it does not influence workers to act voluntarily. The managers had clarified that it included, perhaps effective ways, such as pressurizing the promoter, tightening the recruitment criteria and use sophisticated remuneration scheme.

The equity concept relates to a transparent motivation system and to the opposite of promoters' grievance about having to request that their employers pay them on time. While mentioned by the promoters, the employers did not raise the issue of equity.

The company support refers to the need for company resources for the standalone promoter in the battlefield. Again, the employers did not mention this as a motivational factor.

#### 4.7 Findings from promoters' individual in-depth interviews

This section presents findings from promoters in individual in-depth interviews.

Thirteen promoters were interviewed under the in-depth interview schedule. These interviews were analyzed in five batches. The sequence of batches for analysis was arranged as per their potency in discovery, and according to the year of experience of the promoter. The implications were that most of the meaningful codes were unveiled earlier, thus subsequent analyses were more capable to offer support to the earlier findings. The no-new-code situation at later analyses also signifies data saturation more obviously. The particulars of the batches are shown below:

Figure 4-20: Sequence of analyzing promoter in-depth interviews

	<b>N</b>	<b>Year of Experience</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Product</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> batch	2	3-5	2 x university graduate [1 just graduated]	2 x Apple computer, PDA & MP3 player
2 <sup>nd</sup> batch	4	3-4	2 x university undergraduate 2 x post-secondary student	2 x computer  1 x computer, projector, printer & PDA  1 x computer & printer
3 <sup>rd</sup> batch	4	2	4 x post-secondary student	1 x computer  1 x PDA  2 x printer

4 <sup>th</sup> batch	3	1	1 x university undergraduate 1 x post-secondary student 1 x full-time promoter	1 x computer 1 x printer 1 x Telecom service
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#### 4.7.1 Potential to grow

Promoters grew when they were directly exposed to business demands, and when connected to networks which gave them access to different people in different trades. They were open to learning from experience, for the purpose of a better future. They learned various skills from their day-to-day work, from other promoters, and from training courses: such as communication skills, customer handling skills, managing sales presentations, analytical skills, vicariously training skills, product knowledge, speaking better English and Putonghua, and dealing with different people.

*// First is the people communications skill // {Ryan ln. 494}*

*// Meeting people and talking to people and now I have improved a lot in people relationships ... Say for working in the shop meeting with customers ... There are many customers and it could be up 50 to 60 customers every hours. It is impossible to entertain all and how to retain them one after the other and introduce the machines to them individually need to use some old tricks //*  
*{Linus ln. 324-332}*

*//When I talk I have to know which part is more important and which part can be briefly brought out, and how to handle when there is not much time left //*  
*{Linus ln. 472-474}*

*// Some time ago another brand entered into the market and I felt that there were some issues with the machine. I used up all I know from my entire life and found out the machine's weaknesses // {Linus ln. 566-569}*

*// Maybe I can learn how to deliver training. Say if I work longer, I am not staying in this trade, I have to train other people. // {Ray ln. 361-362}*

*// It is natural that we can handle it. IBM briefly touches on it but at HP they don't mention it at all. When you are sent to the shop for one month or two and when you get acquaintance to the shop then naturally you will know. It does not need to be trained. // {Yen ln. 290-293}*

*// After working this job, I have seen a lot of things and discovered they [promoters] can face different people; they can talk and deal with all sorts people. Now I am not afraid to talk to strangers. // {Lea ln. 290-292}*

#### 4.7.2 Job meaningfulness through job crafting

In contrast to the Telecom promoters, the IT promoters liked their job, which they perceived as interesting and enjoyable because of the contact with people:

*// Basically this job is dealing with people and is more interesting // {Wafer ln. 367}*

*// The other fun part is that I can talk to people. // {Sam ln. 105}*

Although there was no written description of the job, it was self-evident that the IT promoter job required incumbents to sell and promote the products to customers. Beyond this, promoters crafted their jobs, taking it upon themselves to shoulder many other responsibilities: to behave professionally, to handle post-sales customer services, and to acquire extensive knowledge about the products in order to be better equipped to close sales:

*// In my mind of course it is about promoting but after a while it is like shop keeping. First I have been working in the shop for quite a long time so I know // {Yen ln. 97-100}*

*// We are representing the product. We are representing the company. We are not just ourselves but we are representing the company, so we should not say anything inappropriate // {Tony ln. 168-169}*

*// Other than selling the machines and sometimes after the sales customers may have problems in using them then they come back // {Ryan ln. 98-99}*

*// If this is within my knowledge then I can resolve them. I need to provide this service, whether or not I am a promoter, and I ought to offer some help // {Ryan ln. 114-116}*

This showed that promoters were shaping their job to enhance its meaningfulness and advantageousness.

#### 4.7.3 Financial reward

Promoters mentioned that they worked harder in order to get better remuneration:

*// Sometimes there is a bonus then I work harder // {Ryan ln. 459}*

*// I think it may be the bonus. If the employer can think of some products they want to push more and give us the bonus we will be more than happy to sell for them // {Rice ln. 428-430}*

They reported that they could work extra time in order to get more order. They also indicated that monetary incentives motivated them:

*// It doesn't matter. Maybe I work the little longer and can sell one more machines // {Ryan ln. 150-151}*

*// Sometimes I have to work overtime for half an hour // It is possible to sell one more machine with additional money for one more meal // {Linus ln. 120-121 & 125-126}*

Of note was that although both Apple promoters received no monetary incentives, one of them indicated that she would work harder if incentives to do so were to be provided:

*// With incentive certainly I will work harder and maybe pitch more // {Lea ln. 496}*



#### 4.7.4 Affirmative feedback [positive reinforcement]

Affirmative feedback provides energy for promoters to work. Promoters reported that they felt good when they received affirmative feedback. Such feedback could come from customers, shop managers and vendors. It could be conveyed verbally and directly or symbolically and indirectly, implied through actions. Verbal feedback was expressed in conversations and included expressions of praise and encouragement. Symbolic feedback included signs that implied compliments, including a crowd forming around the both, and returning customers, especially those bringing in another customer.

(a) Praise from vendors:

*// Encouragement ... Yes they do. When the sales number is good they praise us // {Wafer ln. 579-580}*

*// I was spot-checked by Apple's senior management. Afterwards, he told my boss that the promoter, it's me but he did not know my name, had explained everything // {Gavin ln. 292-295}*

(b) Praise from shop manager:

*// I worked very hard and after work the shop manager made the compliment to me and asked me to stay for long. I was really surprised.*

*// The shop manager retained me // Thereafter the days were quite happy and I kept working. It was the unhappy moment and after it passed I felt the real happiness. I really felt what was unhappy and I treasured the happy things more. During the couple of days I felt that I had completely changed from an unappreciated promoter bearing complaints to, only after one day, a promoter praised by a 'Broadway' shop manager who kept me in his shop. // {Linus ln. 521-522, 524 & 528-533}*

(c) A returning customer:

*// The customer comes back means he has confidence on the promoter.  
It is good. // {Gavin ln. 183-184}*

(d) A customer brings another customer:

*// He came back to me and brought his friends to buy from me. The happiest thing is that we were exchanging our tips of use. I felt very happy when he bought to use and came back and when seeing me told me it was very good. He also said it was so good that he invited his friend // {Lea ln. 433-437}*

(e) A crowd of enthusiastic customers:

*// If there are many people surrounding the booth then I am very active  
// {Lea ln. 476-477}*

On the contrary, harsh words from the shop, and bad-mouthing and finger-pointing by peers were annoyances that made promoters feel bad about the job, and obstructed the progress:

*// I achieved a good sales number and people were jealous about me. Even if I did not make it, people could still made up stories about me too // But there were people who were jealous about other's success // people bad mouth at the back. I had thought about quitting the job // {Bowie ln. 711-712, 720 & 728-729}*

#### 4.7.5 Sales achievement

Promoters indicated that successful sales led to satisfaction especially when winning over competition,

*// The happiest moment was that the customer was originally looking at another brand. I have explained to the customers and made some comparisons. After a while, the customer came back to buy from me. // {Carrie ln. 364-367}*

*// when I successfully sell a customer from he knows nothing and listens to my presentation then makes a immediate decision to buy the machine, I feel happy.  
// {Gavin ln. 116-119}*

Conversely, unsuccessful sales experiences could lead to depression:

*On the contrary, there are times that we are depressed. I have no idea of when I work harder but I can definitely feel the depression. When experienced one after the other that 4 or 5 customers cannot be led to the topics and cannot sell, I feel very depressed. // {Gavin ln. 556-559}*

#### 4.7.6 Self-efficacy

Many promoters were comfortable and confident about the selling role. Substantial confidence and self-appreciation made it easier for promoters to find sufficient energy to try to make sales.

*// When the sales number is good I will work even harder trying to sell as many as possible. // {Yen ln. 225-226}*

*// First, I have seen a lot of people and I am not afraid to meet with new people. I have been selling on the street. You know it is in the Mongkok and on the street I am not afraid at all to sell on the street .Ehh ... It is also possible to work as a salesperson as we are now familiar with them. // {Sam ln. 345-349}*

One source of self-efficacy derived from vicarious experience. For example, during gathering activities, promoters met other promoters and learned how they did the job.

*// This gives us an environment that I can meet with some more experienced full-timer ... another mode of communications // {Linus ln. 201-203}*

This category appeared in some way to be the opposite of external forces/pressure and is described next.

#### 4.7.7 External forces/pressure

Some promoters reported having to respond to pressure in order to secure their job and/or fight for their places and not be replaced by others. Such pressure came from vendors and shops, as well as performance feedback in the form of sales numbers. It could also arise when promoters compared their own performance with others, became concerned to avoid falling behind, and exerted extra effort to reach the commonly achieved sales volume:

*// When the work is there then I do it. I am not doing it for more but I do not do it, I will be eliminated // If I do not do well then I can accept that they place another promoter // {Linus ln. 99-100 & 603-604}*

#### 4.7.8 Company support

Promoters mentioned that they had been motivated when the company had provided support. This included: provision of a smart costume to attract customers; product information; technical support; sales promotion programs; including discounts or premiums to the customer for closing sales, and sales and technical training:

*// But at closing and when they [shop sales people] see me have talked so much, they may take out a promotion coupon or a small premium to help me close the deal // {Gavin ln. 258-260}*

#### 4.7.9 Instrumental relationships

Promoters indicated that, for practical reasons, they needed to be connected to and associated with the shop and shop sales people, the employment agents, the vendors and other promoters. Some vendors arranged promoter gathering activities to enable the promoters to improve the relatedness. In the case of a relatively more loyal Apple promoter, he indicated that he felt he had a good relationship with the vendor as he was able to contact the vendor directly; this appears to be exceptional since most vendors did not provide access to promoters. This connection need was based on the practical concerns to know more about the products of the brand they

represented, and more about the supporting personnel, and to learn from other promoters:

*// Sometimes at training we chat to each other. But it is not possible to know all. If there are activities then we can know each other. // {Sam ln. 311-312}*

*// This gives us an environment that I can meet with some more experienced full-timer I partnered before. It is another mode of communications // {Linus ln. 201-203}*

#### 4.7.10 Sense of belonging

Some promoters also mentioned that they enjoyed participating in gathering activities, communicating with each other, received recognition from the vendor and felt the sense of belonging:

*// Just then we are talking about bonus and activities. I think to organize more activities is O.K. because like last time I feel a stronger sense of belonging. // {Rice ln. 438-440}*

*// This gives us an environment that I can meet with some more experienced full-timer I partnered before. It is another mode of communications and we also played happily. // {Linus ln. 201-204}*

*// I feel this was more like a celebration ceremony. They arranged it like recognition and they said that we have rendered them so much effort, the results showed and they thank us. As it is impossible to give bonus to part-timers so therefore the money allocated was spent in a different way for food and entertainment and there were prizes. // {Linus ln. 211-215}*

#### 4.7.11 Conscientiousness

Many promoters were ego-driven; they would take initiative and gave themselves self-direction to push for more sales.

*// I want to perform better and do not want to fail in front of other people // {Bowie ln. 796-797}*

Some worked to their conscience and integrity, and were committed not to use tactics or tricks to make sales, and were guided instead by ethical and moral principles, that is, heart, and would seek only to sell the most appropriate products to the customers:

*// I will not step down on competition // {Gloria ln. 149}*

*// I am, as a promoter, more focusing on promoting my own brand. Of course, if a customer is pointing at a different brand and I cannot force him // {Linus ln. 56-58}*

*// put your heart at work // {Gavin ln. 212}*

*// I will not cover up and say that the machine is a good computer and push for a sale // {Lea ln. 253-255}*

#### 4.7.12 Clear objectives

Some promoters mentioned that unclear and conflicting goals [guidelines and directions] impaired their work.

*// better if there are clearer guidelines and directions. When the shop's, Max Market's [employment agency] and HP's [vendor] positions are not clear then we do not know what to do. At such position we may have ceased working or do not know what to do and feeling confused. //{Rice ln. 431-433}*

Among the Telecom promoters, job objectives were narrowly targeted at sales:

*// Yes. It is fixed. Every day there is a minimum of 12 orders. The team leader asks us to at least hand in 8 orders but the company's quota is 12 orders. // {Yoyo ln. 112-114}*

Among the PC promoters, most, by contrast, crafted their own jobs in order to make these more meaningful [see also 4.7.2] and yield clear job objectives, which, in turn, motivated them. For example, the Apple promoters mentioned that they

worked hard even though there were no sales commissions or monetary incentives for them, as they had worked out a clear understanding of the purpose of their jobs.

*// We are not sucking money from their pocket if they approach us. If this fulfills them then they are paying the money happily. This is very important and the most important in a promotion. If you buy something this should be a happy instance. If I were the customer, even if I buy a cosmetic product the sales keep saying this is a very good one but after I put on it the first time at home I don't feel this is fitting me well then it will be spared in the corner. Cosmetics are only 100 and something is small money but a computer costs several thousand dollars. I know there are some people with a lot of money to spend and don't care but the majority of people are not. // {Lea ln. 362-371}*

The non-Apple PC promoters were all paid by commission, and for them, selling was a primary objective:

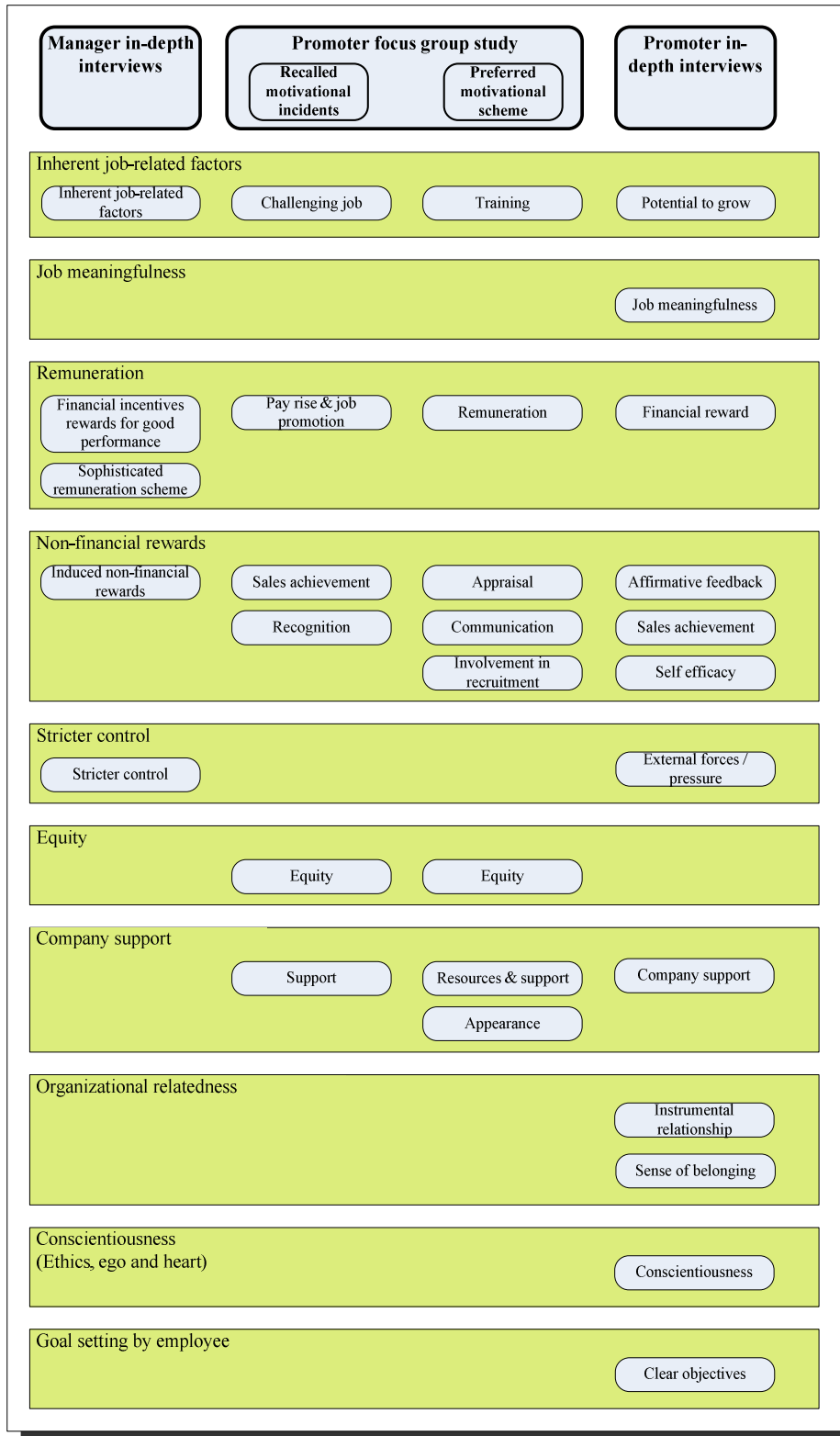
*// I looked for the meanings of my existence after working all day long. Say if worked for the whole day and could not sell one single machine, someone may not care about the money, but to me it would be meaningless to my existence. So I tell myself I must sell the machine every day. This is my driving force. // {Carrie ln. 527-531}*

Thus having clear objectives was not the same as having clear written descriptions of promoter functions.

4.8 Synthesis of findings from the managers' interviews, the promoters' focus group study and the promoters' in-depth interview

Figure 4-21 summarizes all the motivational factors identified through the various methods adopted in this study.

Figure 4-21: Grouping of the managers' and promoters' perspectives on motivation factors from the manager in-depth interviews, promoter focus group study, and promoter in-depth interviews





#### 4.9 Conclusion to data to data comparison and furthering the analysis

This chapter has presented the initial findings from three methods of data collection: in-depth interviews with managers, a focus group study with promoters, and in-depth interviews with promoters. Eventually, all findings were grouped under ten categories. Chapter 5, the relationships between the items within each of the ten categories will be further explained, with reference also to extant theories of motivation.

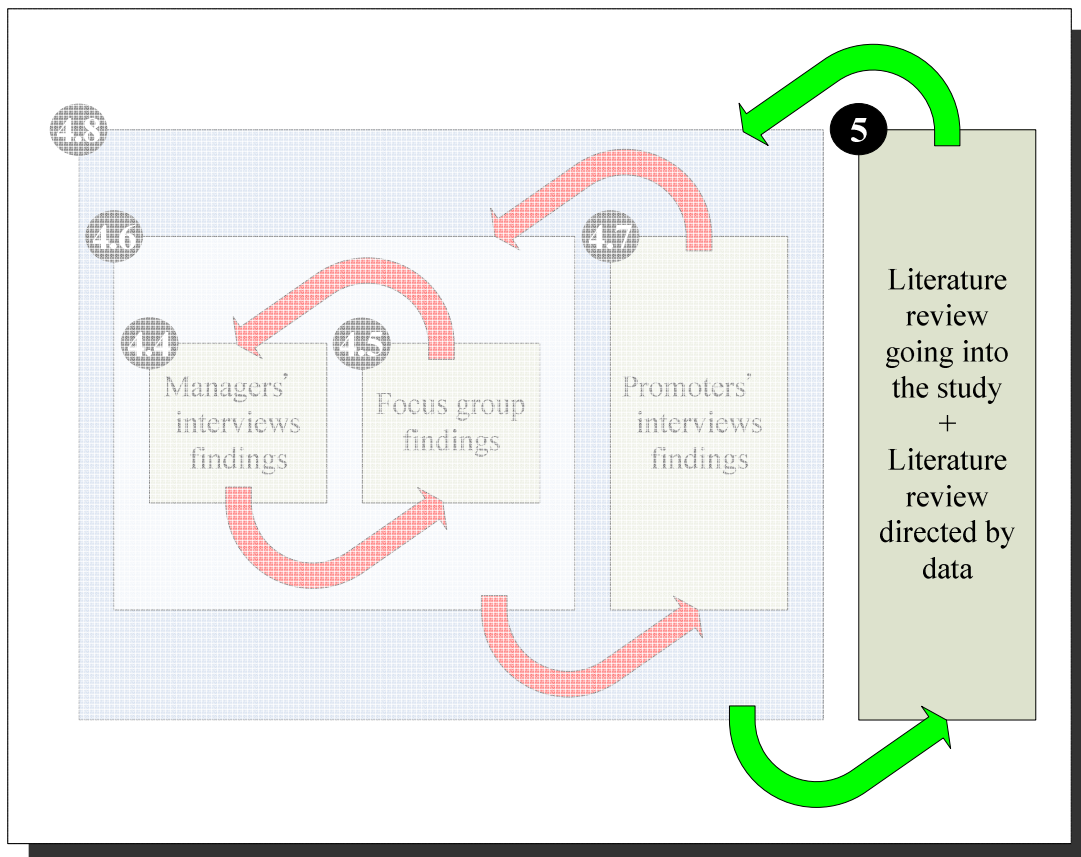
## 5. Further analysis and discussion

Although this was a small, exploratory study the insights gained are strong enough to inform a broader study, using the ‘theories’ of respondents as a firm basis. Figure 5-2 shows the results of analysis in a conceptual framework. This chapter discusses the rendering of the conceptual framework and the implications.

### 5.1 Introduction to further analysis

Figure 5-1 illustrates the method and process adopted in this final round of analysis. Based on the findings in chapter four, the literature review going into this study is reexamined and further literature is reviewed as directed by data.

Figure 5-1: The final round of analysis - literature review going into the study and as directed by data



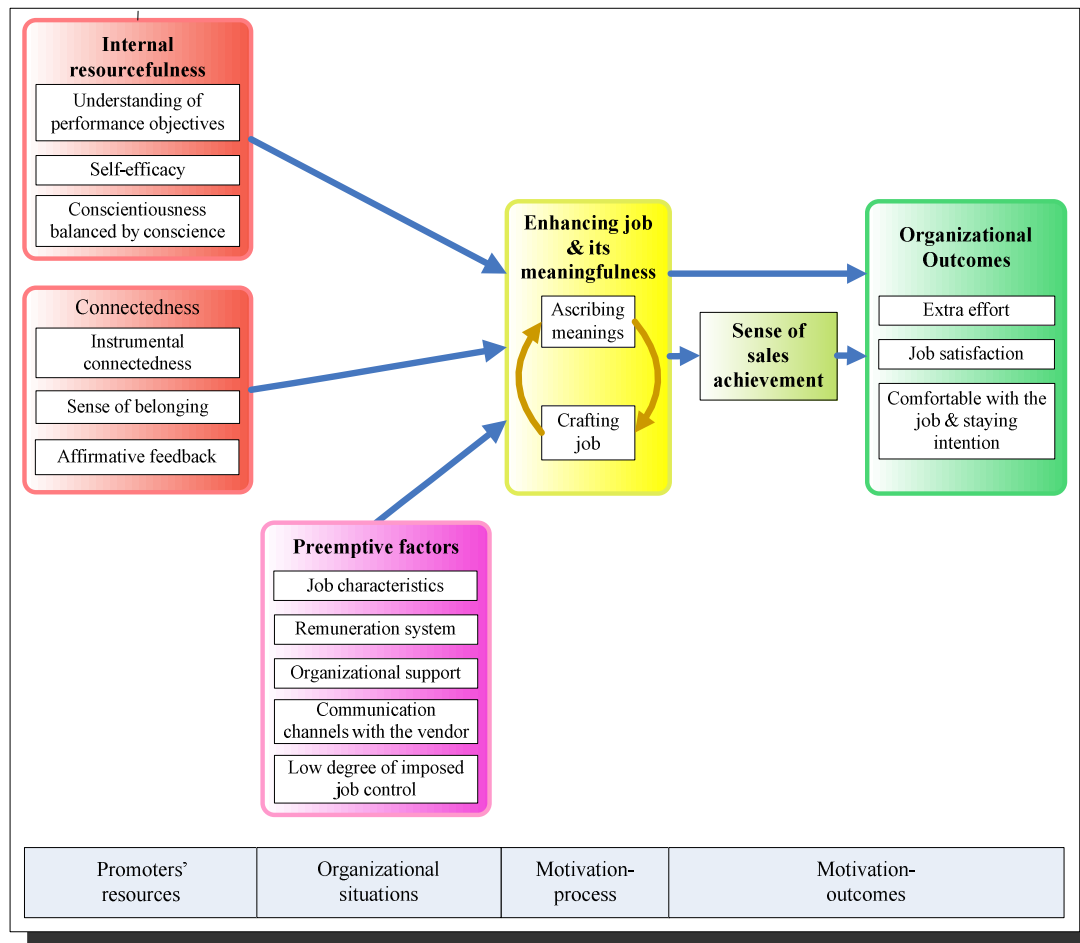
This chapter presents and discusses the results of the final round of analysis. This beginning section 5.1 introduces the purposes of all sections in this chapter.

Section 5.2 reexamines all the data categories from an integrative prospective, with literature review going into the data analysis and as directed by data, attempting to make sense of and to explain motivation as described by promoters and their managers. Section 5.3 discusses the key differentiations of this research result comparing to the job characteristics model. Section 5.4 discusses the implications for practical motivational schemes for promoters. Section 5.5 discusses the further research opportunities. Section 5.6 discusses the limitations of the study.

## 5.2 An integrative analysis of IT promoter motivation

This section describes the researcher, at this final stage of analysis, consolidating all findings, and interpreting data categories and their relationships from the comprehension of literature into a conceptualized framework around the central theme of motivation. The result of analysis is shown in a conceptual framework as depicted in Figure 5-2: The composition of the IT promoter motivation in Hong Kong. The model brings together the various issues mentioned by the part-time promoters and therefore integrates relevant factors within their social space. Although the model focuses on part-timers it may incidentally also be relevant to full-time workers. However, this possibility was not explored in the research.

Figure 5-2: The composition of IT promoter motivation in Hong Kong



The framework encompasses four main categories. The first category is the promoters' resources, consisting of the internal resourcefulness and connectedness of promoters. The promoters' internal resourcefulness comprises their understanding of performance objectives, self-efficacy and conscientiousness balanced by conscience. The promoters' connectedness comprises the promoters' instrumental connectedness, sense of belonging and affirmative feedback.

The second category is the preemptive factors related to organizational situations, and it comprises the job characteristics, remuneration system, organizational support, communication channels with the vendor and low degree of imposed job control.

The third category is the promoters' internal process of enhancing the job and its meaningfulness through job crafting by ascribing meaning and significance to their jobs.

The fourth category is the outcome of motivation, intervened by the sense of sales achievement, manifested as the promoters' job satisfaction, extra effort, staying intention and being comfortable with the job.

These four categories have been incorporated into a tentative conceptual framework of IT promoter motivation. The framework comprises the promoters' resources and preemptive factors of organizational situations fueling the meaning-ascription job-crafting motivation-process, leading to a sense of sales achievement, and to motivational outcomes. Should these proposed categories and their inter-relationships be supported by more studies, it is envisaged here that the task of motivating promoters would be greatly enhanced.

Although the data gave some support to the claim by Moorhead and Griffin (1998) that the primary task of a manager is to motivate employees to perform to the best of their ability, this was not so clear cut in this study. Promoters, the temporary sales people at the centre of the study, were not as accessible to management attention as they would have been as full time personnel. Therefore, as the data suggest, promoters had to draw on several resources other than continued management attention. These resources included internal resources, networking and, sometimes creative ways of filling the gaps that arise from not being closely supervised. It is proposed here that McShane and Von Glinow's (2004) comment that motivation has become more challenging resonates with the data in this study but not necessarily for the three sets of reasons given in their paper. McShane and Von Glinow (2004) argued that: [a] "numerous forms of corporate restructuring and downsizing" have changed the jobs that people perform; [b] "direct supervision is incompatible with the values of today's educated workforce" and "businesses have not discovered other ways to motivate employees"; and [c] "employee needs are changing" and the "workforce diversity and globalization have added to this complexity because diverse employees typically have diverse values".

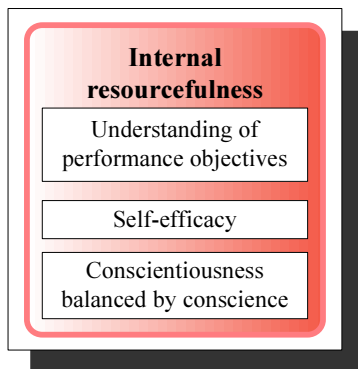
Rather, and this will be discussed later in the chapter, the promoters were challenged to develop their own motivation processes and found support for this when acquiring clear objectives, receiving affirmative feedback, securing and retaining interconnectedness with the organization, and feeling a sense of belonging. Such resources give the promoters in the study a sense of meaningfulness in the job.

## 5.2.1 Promoters' resources

Revealed and interpreted from data, promoters' resources comprise internal resourcefulness and connectedness. These, along with the preemptive factors of organizational situations, fuel, drive and enable the promoters' motivation-process.

### 5.2.1.1 Internal resourcefulness

Figure 5-3: Internal resourcefulness subcategories



Motivated promoters are internally resourceful [see Figure 5-3]. The traditional career avenues that permanent staff members enjoy are typically not available to promoters. Driven from within, promoters have developed the competence to find ways to cope with the situations they face by developing an understanding of their performance objectives, self-efficacy, and conscientiousness balanced by conscience.

#### [a] Understanding of performance objectives

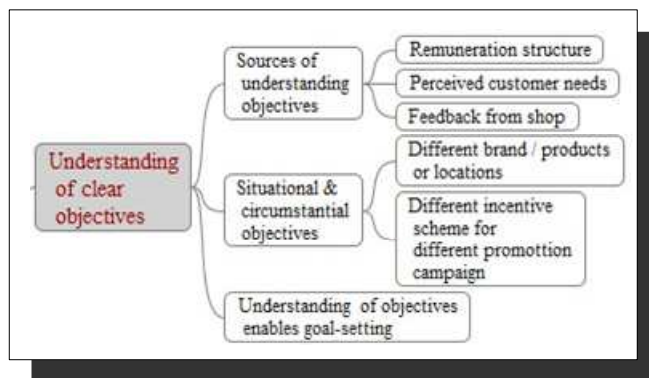
*// better if there are clearer guidelines and directions. When the shop's, Max Market's [employment agency] and HP's [vendor] positions are not clear then we do not know what to do. At such position we may have ceased working or do not know what to do and feeling confused.  
// {Rice ln. 431-433 quoted in section 4.7.12}*

The quotation above contrasts with Management by Objectives [MBO] - a system of defining objectives in an organization so that management and employees agree to them. This prescriptive theory was popularized by

Drucker (1954) and Odiorne (1965). Drucker (1954) argued that managers and other employees could only work effectively if their performance was guided by clear and explicit objectives that had been agreed upon by themselves and their superiors. The essence of MBO is participative goal setting, freeing employees to choose courses of action and make ad hoc decisions to achieve the agreed-upon goals. According to the theory, if promoters have been involved in goal setting and are free to choose the course of action to be followed by in order to meet the goals, they are more likely to achieve those goals.

The application of such guidance to the work of promotion was not readily achieved since most promoters did not have a single reporting line to a particular superior. It appeared that a common challenge faced by promoters was the absence of a clear set of explicit and agreed-upon objectives. Figure 5-4 depicts promoters' understanding of performance objectives. Promoters reported also that there were occasions when messages about sales objectives from different sources, such as employment agents, shop management, vendor sales representatives and promotion flyers, were diverse and even contradictory. They reported that when they received contradictory and or conflicting messages about objectives from different sources, before initiating new action they would clarify their objectives through inquiry across their network.

Figure 5-4: Understanding of performance objectives elements



On the basis of the incentive reward structure, perceived customer needs and feedback from the shop, promoters derived and inferred their own

sales and non-sales objectives, including meeting particular sales targets, engaging in product and brand promotion, and providing pre- and post-sales services.

House (1996) introduced the idea of path-goal theory, arguing that a leader's behavior is contingent to the satisfaction, motivation and performance of her or his subordinates. The theory claims that it is the leader's job to assist followers in attaining goals and to provide the direction and support needed to ensure that their goals are compatible with the organization's goals. According to the theory, managers should guide promoters to choose the best paths to reach their own goals, as well as those of the organization. From this point of view, managers would help and support employees towards achievement of objectives. However, this state of affair did not appear to exist, and the promoters appeared to be left alone to generate their own motivation.

Understanding of their objectives and the commitment to achieve them were important sources of motivational force for the promoters. The internally resourceful promoters managed to develop a clear understanding of their performance objectives.

(i) Sources of [clues for] understanding objectives

One clue for the promoters in ascertaining their objectives came from the remuneration structure. Most of the promoters in the study earned sales commission in addition to their basic wage. For many of them, the high commission rate yielded significantly higher total income than just the basic wage, making sales performance unambiguously an important objective. Based on their target income and contemplated other environmental factors, such promoters worked out achievable and challenging sales objectives from the commission scheme. Apple promoters in the study, although they did not have a commission scheme from which to derive sales targets, referred to the sales results to gauge their performance and the success of the promotional campaigns in which they were involved.



The second source of understanding was inference from perceived customer needs. Apple promoters emphasized non-sales objectives were, as they did not have a commission scheme, important elements from which to derive sales objectives. Non-Apple promoters ascribed additional meanings and significance to their jobs. They crafted and aligned objectives of product and brand promotion, as well as pre- and post-sales face-to-face customer services.

The third source was derived from the feedback from shop management. Promoters are usually hired by vendors directly or indirectly to work in the retail environment. When the shop sales were short of meeting shop targets, retail shop managers gave feedback to promoters, applying pressure and instructing them to take more initiative as well as to push customers for instant sales closure. In the absence of close supervision from the legitimate employer, promoters accepted the need to adapt to this feedback and to make the associated adjustments to daily sales targets.

(ii) Promoters' objectives are situational and circumstantial

The promoters' objectives vary from one situation to another. In different situations, promoters set different objectives. Vendors may have different sales expectations for different promotion campaigns and at different locations. Vendors may adjust the promotion tactics and give a special commission scheme or give additional sales incentives for a particular promotion campaign, thereby exerting situational influence on the promoter's sales objectives.

Promoters work for various brands, in various shops or in temporary promotion kiosks in various locations. For example, in a big sales campaign, offering large discounts with lower commission rates, promoters raise the sales target. In the absence of close supervision and job control, promoters become more adventurous and the motivation stems from their engagement in identifying and exploiting sales opportunities.

(iii) Clear understanding of objectives enables goal-setting

Clear understanding of objectives provides conceptual support for promoters in setting their own goals. Goal setting is effective when ensuring that promoters are clearly aware of what is expected from them, in order that objectives are to be achieved. The process of setting goals allows promoters to decide on, then commit towards their own objectives (Locke & Latham, 2002).

This is different from the typical situations assumed by mainstream motivation theorists. In such situations, managers would play the role of situational leaders, helping and supporting promoters to set their own objectives in various situations and circumstances, depending on the task, job or function that needs to be accomplished (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

Unlike such situations, without leaders to guide them, promoters set their own goals on the basis of inferring the expectations of vendors, customers and shop managers. This active and cue-seeking role in goal setting supports the view of Locke (Locke, 1968, 1977, 1991, 1996, 1997). It explains that when promoters are exerting effort to achieve the objectives, they must be clearly aware of what is expected from them. Setting their own goals commits promoters to achieving the goals, and they attach themselves psychologically to the associated brands, products and locations. They display positive attitudes and behaviors, exert extra effort, and take initiatives. Thus, promoters motivate themselves to accomplish their goals through their own work efforts. They establish performance targets and set goals to stretch the intensity and persistence of their effort. With specific and self-clarified objectives, promoters engage in activities to improve their work performance. This goal setting is a self-regulatory mechanism but is nonetheless an important tool for managers to invoke.

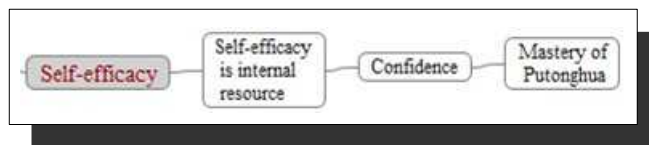
Data indicated that some promoters were able to motivate themselves to invest extra time and effort through goal setting, thereby using this technique tacitly as an internal resource

[b] Self-efficacy

*// First, I have seen a lot of people and I am not afraid to meet with new people. I have been selling on the street. You know it is in the Mong Kok and on the street I am not afraid at all to sell on the street. Ehh ... It is also possible to work as a salesperson as we are now familiar with them. // {Sam ln. 345-349 quoted in section 4.7.6}*

*// Sold to mainland customers, using Putonghua // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A10 quoted in section 4.5.4 e}*

Figure 5-5: Self-efficacy elements



Some promoters appeared to be especially internally resourceful and exhibited strong beliefs in their capabilities for accomplishing their objectives [see Figure 5-5]. Such promoters believed that they had the skills and competencies that were required to perform well. They reported that they were comfortable with and confident about selling. During the interviews, some promoters expressed pride about their rapid mastery of Putonghua. They also were confident about their ability to manage various prospective situations. These espousals suggest the concept of self-efficacy of Bandura (1969, 1977, 1995, 1997) which is a person's belief in one's competence to perform to a certain manner to attain certain goals. Promoters were working in open spaces, and they could build their confidence by observing others in the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences.

It appeared that substantial confidence and self-appreciation enabled some promoters to maintain sufficient energy, proactively to canvass

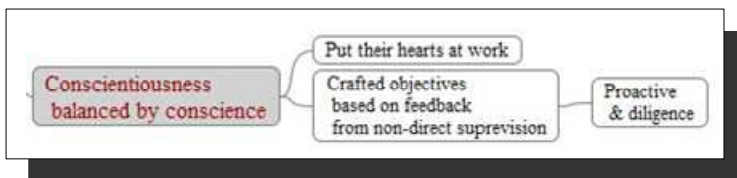
customers and make sales. Promoters built their self-efficacy based on their past experiences of achieving sales expectations as well as learning Putonghua. In accordance with theories of self-efficacy by Bandura (1977) and Schunk (1990), promoters with high self-efficacy devoted strong and persistent effort. Promoters with high self-efficacy believed that they were capable of achieving demanding self-set objectives and drove themselves from within to become more resourceful. It follows from Bandura (1988) that promoters with high self-efficacy would be more likely to regard difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than to be avoided, and, unlike those with low self-efficacy, would approach difficult tasks by making extra effort and persisting longer.

Accounts suggested that receiving praise could enhance self-efficacy. Managers who praised more often were perceived to have created the environment [e.g. organizing gatherings] that enabled praise to be delivered and the effect of such praise to be amplified. Accounts suggested also that it was beneficial to all concerned if managers could also set a clear sales target and remuneration system, so that promoters could rationalize and believe in themselves within the selling.

[c] Conscientiousness balanced by conscience

*// put your heart at work // {Gavin ln. 212 quoted in section 4.7.11}*

Figure 5-6: Conscientiousness balanced by conscience elements



Internally resourceful promoters were conscientious, put their heart into their work, and strove for achievement [see Figure 5-6]. They were charged with energy and determination, self-driven to put in extra effort to make more sales. Their job required them to sell to strangers and they looked out for and seized opportunities to close sales with passers-by. Conscientious

promoters were motivated to sell and to sell more when they saw the delight on the faces of customers when customers bought products that could solve a problem or enhance their lives. According to Maslow (1943; 1954), there are social needs of human involving feelings of love and belongingness. Berl, Williamson and Powell (1984) attribute the amount of liking and respect from boss, peers and customers to the sources of belongingness. Thus, conscientious promoters: sell well; delight managers, retail shop and customers; and feel the sense of belongingness and fulfill their own social needs.

In order to be successful, promoters must complete the selling cycle within a specific time frame when there are potential customers entering into their booth or responsible area. Such requirements and constraints create pressure that inclines promoters to be aggressive and pushy, both to themselves and to customers. This is where the virtue of integrity plays its part.

Virtue ethics reflect philosophies of Aristotle from Greek civilization and Confucius from Chinese civilization. Both philosophies seek the middle way between the vice of deficiency and the vice of excess (Fisher & Lovell, 2009). In the research, promoters' descriptions suggested that in the context of selling, the virtue of conscientiousness is the middle way between the vice of indolence and the vice of excessive diligence. Conscience circumscribes conscientiousness, ensuring that the promoters take sufficient action to address performance objectives while also ensuring the promoters do not intrude upon the personal space or rights of consumers. Promoters mentioned not too close or too far away - go too close and the consumer goes away.

It may be the case that managers believe that successful sales people are aggressive and pushy, but it appeared that promoters with integrity were alert to and applied their conscience in refraining from overselling. They followed socially accepted norms and acted in accordance with conventional morality, that is, they were polite and respectful, they avoided telling lies and they corrected customers' misconceptions if these become apparent. The

promoters' efforts and initiatives were thus driven by their conscientiousness but balanced by their conscience.

This description of conscientious promoters corresponds with the analysis by Snell and Wong (2007, p. 889) that a conscientious worker is careful at work, dependable, punctual, is willing to take on new ideas, and adheres to company rules. The data also indicates the need for at least four of the facets of conscientiousness: competence, dutifulness, achievement-striving, and self-discipline (Costa, McCrea, & Psychological Assessment Resources Inc., 1992; Goldberg, 1993; Piedmont, 1998; Russell, Karol, & Institute for Personality and Ability Testing., 2002; Weiner & Greene, 2008). People with high competence believe that they have the intelligence and common sense, drive and self-control necessary for achieving success. Promoters showed that they were in need of competence, self-efficacy or confidence. They indicated their sense of moral duty and obligation. They needed achievement and they indicated their drive to be recognized as successful, thus keeping them on track toward their goals. They expressed self-discipline and willpower to persist and follow through tasks that they wanted very much to complete.

Interviews nonetheless did not reveal any critical incidents that highlighted the need for the orderliness and deliberation facets of conscientiousness. Conscientious promoters tended to be reliable and hard working while less conscientious ones were laid back, less goal oriented, and less driven by success.

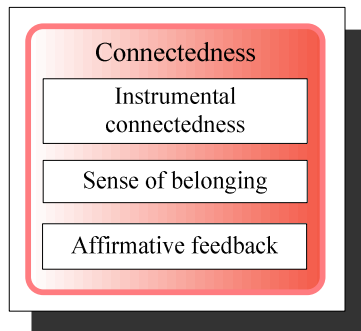
This conscientious approach guides promoters to fit into the larger environment. They act like managers as described by Freeman (2004) in stakeholder theory that balance the needs and requirements of various interest groups (Hickenlooper et al., 2007). Promoters follow objectives of customers, shops and vendors, to excel beyond official requirements.

The stakeholder theory is a theory of organizational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organization (Freeman, 1994; Phillips, 2003). The stakeholder approach identifies

stakeholders of a corporation, describes and recommends methods by which management can give due regard to the interests of those groups. It attempts to address who or what really matters. Therefore, managers may focus on promoter effectiveness in terms of addressing the need of the stakeholders.

#### 5.2.1.2 Connectedness

Figure 5-7: Connected subcategories



Motivated promoters exhibited a sense of connectedness [see Figure 5-7]. Centered on the brand, the connectedness was an important motivational factor, arising from the belief held by promoters that the vendor managers, and shop co-workers, as well as the customers care about and support their work. Promoters with solid social relationships seemed to thrive. This finding supports the social relationship view of management (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). Social support is grounded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to the theory, relatedness, competence and autonomy are three innate needs, if satisfied, drive optimal function and growth. With regard to relatedness from Ryan and Deci (2000), one has innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation. He or she sees the meaningful cultural norms and internalizes them, and then feels attached or related to the reference group. Similarly, a network of close relationships is essential to promoters. Practically, this network allows the promoters to secure soliciting resources [e.g. promotion materials]. Emotionally, it serves as a reference group. All these suggest that the promoters' connectedness adds to their resources and fuels the motivation-process.

The connectedness of promoters comprises instrumental connectedness, sense of belonging and affirmative feedback. Instrumental connectedness reflects the

informational relationships necessary to provide promoters with sufficient support for their performance. Promoters derive a sense of acceptance and belonging by engaging themselves actively in organizational activities. Finally, the sense of connectedness can also be built up when promoters receive affirmative feedback.

(a) Instrumental connectedness

*// Sometimes at training we chat to each other. But it is not possible to know all. If there are activities then we can know each other. // {Sam ln. 311-312 quoted in section 4.7.9}*

Promoters become motivated when they are connected or engaged with various stakeholders, including vendor managers and sales representatives, shop managers and sales people, employment agents, other promoters and customers, in a manner that enables these stakeholders to share information or promotional material with them that is practically instrumental to the success of the promoter job. Instrumental connectedness thus helps promoters to achieve their desired ends by providing resources and support to fulfill customers' needs. Instrumental connectedness reinforces the intrinsic motivation.

Within a networked society, connectedness can be instrumental (Castells, 1996). Just as students connect to school and agents connect to an agency, promoters are connected to their brands and to people with stakes in these brands. Connectedness allows promoters to get information as well as to connect to resources to solicit support for effective selling. In some cases, managers enabled promoters to build key relationship by creating the environment for promoters to develop closer and deeper relationships with each other and with other organizational personnel.

A psychological contract represents the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between an employer and an employee, and defines practically the exact tasks to be done (Conway & Briner, 2005). It is distinguishable from the formal written employment contract which only identifies mutual duties and responsibilities. In the case of a well-managed



psychological contract, the employers and employees will develop mutual trust, linked to matching objectives and commitments of the organization to their employees. Conversely, in a negative psychological contract, disenchanted employees feel de-motivated and resentful of authority in the organization. In the absence of a detailed employment contract and in the lacking of close supervision, promoters formed a single sided psychological contract from their expectation. Such relationships were fragile and vulnerable. Organizations that sought carefully to manage the psychological contract and promoter expectations might run more effectively the promoter operations.

(b) Sense of belonging

*// I think this sense of belonging is important to them - this is from the feedback of my other colleagues and during short conversations with the sale force the little information I collected // {Vendor in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 50-52 quoted in section 4.7.10}*

Promoters work in some isolation at retail places. Other people surrounding the promoters in their place of work are competitors' promoters or shop sales people. Nonetheless, promoters all had opportunities to enjoy informal gatherings or training events organized by the vendor, which appeared to foster a sense of belonging. The distributor manager and the vendor manager mentioned how they attempted to develop promoters' sense of belonging in order to get promoters more engaged in their work. They hoped that through a sense of belonging promoters would sustain a positive attitude to the work, despite their relative isolation.

A sense of belonging has been cited in Maslow's (1943; 1954) work as the third most important on his hierarchy of human needs, after physiological and safety needs. According to the theory, the sense may include feeling secure, recognized, suitable, and able to participate. When a promoter has a sense of belonging he or she is referred to having the feeling of being connected, accepted and being viewed as part of the brand's group.

Promoters were working remotely from the vendor's office and were often alone, without any co-worker from the same brand. A sense of belonging could positively influence promoters' feeling of identity and how much they wanted to represent the brand, and appeared therefore to be an important source of motivational force. That the promoters all felt some sense of belonging, based on interrelations with others who also had connections to the vendor, appeared to motivate them to persevere in their work. The data therefore supported Maslow's (1943, 1954) claim that an emotionally based social relationship with people at work builds a sense of belonging and acceptance that reduces loneliness and provide motivation.

(c) Affirmative feedback

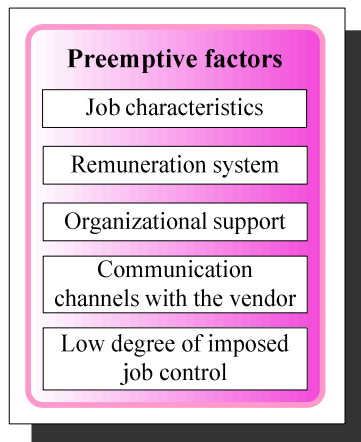
*// There are familiar customers and fans come in for me // {Focus group study p. 10, ln. 13-14}*

A source of motivation for promoters was to receive affirmative feedback, such as encouragement and praise in appraisal interviews, or from customers, vendor managers, retail shop managers, senior sales people, or employment agents. Affirmative feedback could be delivered verbally or non-verbally, or through gestures or symbols, and provided direct and positive reinforcement for the desirable attitudes and behaviors of promoters, thereby enhancing their resourcefulness. This view matches ideas about the importance of Herzberg's (1959) satisfier-motivator, Maslow's (1943, 1954) need of self-actualization and McClelland's (1987) need for achievement.

Herzberg (Herzberg, 1968, 1987; Herzberg et al., 1959), Maslow (1943, 1954) and McClelland (1987) all agree that there is a higher level of satisfaction, where self-achievement or self-actualization acts as a motivator. For promoters, such an internal sense of being valued by themselves as well as others appeared to be their primary drivers at work. These driving forces were sustained and validated externally by praise and recognition. These external validations constituted affirmative feedback, as they helped to fulfill the internal sense of value, demonstrated interest, and reinforced desirable behaviors (Skinner, 1953).

## 5.2.2 Preemptive factors

Figure 5-8: Preemptive factors subcategories



There are factors relating to organizational management which are considered to be situational givens [see Figure 5-8]. They are external to the promoter but may affect the promoters' consequential effort and lead to the ascription of meaning and crafting of the job. They include the job nature, remuneration system, company support, communication channels and job control.

### 5.2.2.1 Job characteristics

The categories of job characteristics referred to in the model correspond to some that derive from job design theory. Job design involves the systematic assignment of tasks by management to a job. Job design and job redesign can be traced back to the time-motion management in the period of scientific management by Taylor (1911), to job enrichment by Herzberg (1987) and Hackman and Oldham (1975, 1976, 1980). Although promoters' jobs may not have been designed by management in a systematic manner, job characteristics are nonetheless highly relevant to this study, because they comprise three main job elements that may affect promoters' job satisfaction and motivation. The promoters' jobs were found to be challenging, offering potential for growth, and requiring promoters to deal with people. These inherent job-related factors [see Figure 5-9] were extrinsic forces that actuated, directed and maintained the resourcefulness of promoter behaviors, as reported by managers and promoters.

Figure 5-9: Job characteristics elements



The job of promoters required high skills variety, as promoters were dealing both with people and with short life cycle technological products. The selling nature of the job identified various tasks to be done. The task of getting sales was clearly significant to the business. The lack of direct and close supervision constituted autonomy for promoters. Quantitatively, the sales results and qualitatively the responses from shop people, competitor promoters and customers were sources of immediate and genuine feedback. An implication of the theorizing of Hackman, Oldham, Janson and Purdy (1975) would be that, given these job factors, together with the potential to grow, promoters are likely to find the work meaningful, assume responsibility for the results of the work, and be guided by knowledge of the actual results, resulting in job satisfaction and motivation. This appeared to be confirmed by the promoters' accounts of their experiences. There may nonetheless be scope for managers to use techniques such as job enlargement and job enrichment to further enhance promoters' satisfaction and motivation.

(a) Challenging job

*// Sold to mainland customers, using Putonghua // {Focus group study Group A notes item no. A10 quoted in section 4.5.4 e}*

*// When I talk I have to know which part is more important and which part can be briefly brought out, and how to handle when there is not much time left // {Linus ln. 472-474}*

*// First, I have seen a lot of people and I am not afraid to meet with new people. I have been selling on the street. You know it is in the Mongkok and on the street I am not afraid at all to sell on the street .Ehh ... It is also possible to work as a salesperson as we are now familiar with them. // {Sam ln. 345-349}*

Speaking Putonghua, selling under time pressure and selling to strangers on the street are challenging to promoters and they only learned them on the job. More satisfaction and motivation were generated when promoters were taking up challenging tasks. A challenging job has been found to be one of the important job characteristic factors. According to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1967), the presence of a highly challenging job increases the value of the outcomes, and thus reinforces the valence of doing the job. Moreover, fulfilling a challenging job generates more satisfaction and achievement (McClelland, 1987). Therefore, when promoters are taking up challenges, this affirms the value of their existence, and meeting challenges confirms their own expectancies (Vroom, 1967) and reinforces the valence of doing the job, and the promoters' need for achievement (McClelland, 1987).

The pursuit of satisfaction drove the promoters to continue exerting effort in their work. For promoters, envisaging and taking up challenges was a satisfaction-seeking process. For example, promoters reported that they felt proud and satisfied when they mastered using Putonghua in conjunction with their selling skills.

Vroom's (1967) expectancy theory suggests that organizations should relate rewards directly to performance and ensure that the rewards are those deserved and wanted. Managers can carefully choose the rewards to reinforce the valence to the organizational outcome. Promoters take up a challenging job, look up to the rewards, and match expectations to work persistently towards the goal.

Murray (Murray & Harvard University. Harvard Psychological Clinic., 1938) and McClelland (1965a) refer to the need for achievement as an individual's desire for accomplishment, mastering of skills, gaining control, or attaining high standards. Some promoters expressed strong desire for success. They felt proud when mastering the language skills and the selling skills and when meeting high sales quotas. Such expressions spelt out clearly their need for achievement. The strength of desire for success varied from promoter to promoter and perhaps was lower when the job was either relatively less challenging or too challenging. Applying McClelland's (1965a)

need for achievement theory, if promoters are high in nACH they are characterized by a tendency to seek challenges and a high degree of independence. Applying Vroom's (1967) expectancy theory, the reward must be carefully designed and chosen such that the potential value of outcome can be realized in practice. To run an effective promoter team, managers could recruit high nACH promoters then give them satisfying rewards in recognition of their achievement.

(b) Potential for growth

*// ... I have improved a lot in people relationships ... // {Linus ln. 324 quoted in section 4.7.1}*

According to Maslow (1943; 1954) people have basic needs to develop and realize all of their potential talents and capabilities. Similarly, for Herzberg et al. (1959), motivation stems upon from personal growth and base on an innate need to grow. That is, these theorists assume that people, who work on interesting, challenging and significant tasks can find satisfaction, and that the desire to fulfill the potential drives people to seek growth and provides the incentive to achieve. However, not everyone may have high growth need strength. In the job characteristics model (Hackman et al., 1975) growth-need strength is measured as the moderating effect to the work outcome. The growth-need strength has been proved to be an important situational characteristic to determine satisfaction (Loher et al., 1985), thence effecting motivation.

Promoters with high growth need strength pursue learning opportunities through the work itself. This is one factor that attracts such promoters to the job and keeps them in it. Promoters who remain happily in the job are growing psychologically while they are learning. Although the promoter's job is considered as a transitional engagement, it enables the promoters to experience growth and motivation while learning many skills and items of knowledge that they perceive as qualifications to enter other professions. That the job offers the potential for the promoter to grow provides motivation (Herzberg, 1987; Herzberg et al., 1959) for those with high growth-need strength, as in the JCM (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976).

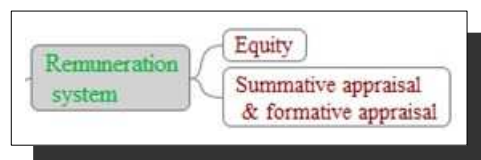
[c] Dealing with people

*// I have one sales assistant who has been working for me for four years and he is still working for me as an assistant. I think he is doing this more for his interest and may be in here he feels good; may be his full-time work is very boring. In here he can work by chatting with people that is interesting // {Retail chain store in-depth interview p. 5, ln. 23-27 quoted in section 4.4.4 a}*

The job offers opportunities for promoters to get to know customers and to help them. Promoters and managers in the study reported that as promoters they felt comfortable with people, liked dealing with them, and thus derived satisfaction in the job from social interaction with people. The requirement to deal with people, and the associated need to exercise people skills satisfied and motivated the promoters.

5.2.2.2 Remuneration system

Figure 5-10: Remuneration system elements



*// Have direction, low basic wage with high commission rate // Set sales target based on the shop location // Progressive commission rates // Have travel allowance to attend meetings // Staff discount // Bonus // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C01, C02, C05, C08, C10 & C13 quoted in section 4.5.5 a}*

The remuneration system was another factor that appeared to influence promoters' performance, satisfaction and motivation [see Figure 5-10]. It is generally desirable for there to be an effective compensation strategy and structure, in order to attract, engage, and retain critical employees, and this is also the case with promoters. The remuneration

elements that were especially appreciated by promoters were being assigned to better locations, a form of upgrading, and receiving enhanced pay.

“Banjoko (1996) states that many managers use money to reward or punish workers. This is done through the process of rewarding employees for higher productivity by instilling fear of loss of job [e.g., premature retirement due to poor performance]. The desire to be promoted and earn enhanced pay may also motivate employees” (Grey & Wiersma, 1995, pp. 3-4). However, Deci (1971, 1975) found that when money was used as an external reward, intrinsic motivation tended to decrease and when verbal reinforcement and positive feedback were used as rewards, intrinsic motivation tended to increase. Remuneration systems may work better if an appraisal system is in place as a source of evaluation and control. Among practitioners, there is still the assertion that money remains the most significant motivational strategy. Theoretically, this view can be dated back to the scientific management movement when Frederick Taylor (1911) advocated the use of financial incentives to motivate industrial workers. Money has two facets of motivational influence. Money itself is a key material factor but it also symbolizes intangible and higher level objectives such as security, power, social status, a feeling of success, and a sense of achievement (Spector, 2003). The dualistic characteristic of money as satisfier or dissatisfier was argued by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959).

For promoters, money, as extrinsic reward (Union Action May 2001, 2001), motivates. Promoters sought financial rewards in order to fulfill their material needs. According to the self-actualization theorists, such as Maslow, when these material needs are realized money becomes symbolic and fulfills promoters' higher level of psychological needs such as recognition, learning and growth, self worth and self esteem, social status and self actualization.

With the exception of the Apple promoters, promoters were subject to compensation schemes, with low basic hourly rates and relatively high-weighted commission rates. Promoters also mentioned that there were additional incentives and bonuses. Both managers and promoters preferred a remuneration structure consisting of a low-weighted basic wage and a



relatively high-weighted commission rate scheme. However, there was an associated risk of losing good promoters when business did not yield good levels of commission. Promoters wished that there could be higher commission rates in less favorable locations to compensate for there being fewer sales opportunities. Managers thought differently and considered seconding high performing promoters to premier locations or flagship shops but did not adjust the commission scheme.

(a) Summative appraisal and formative appraisal

*// Must have performance evaluation // Must get feedback from the shop // Have regular field visit performance evaluation // Praise // {Focus group study Group C notes item no. C03, C04, C09 & C12 quoted in section 4.5.5 b}*

An appraisal system can contribute to the success of remuneration strategies. An appraisal allows promoters to solicit performance feedback and a formative appraisal facilitates learning through coaching and guidance. Summative appraisal judges performance and if favorable supports a sense of self-worth. In formative appraisal, managers provide instruction, coaching and guidance. Thus, both appraisal and formative appraisal may instill motivation. Promoters called for there to be a performance appraisal system. This is understandable as most promoters are post-secondary students with little prior work experience, and while there is little relatively formal training for the job, their work requires continuous learning. From this perspective, promoters may become more resourceful if they have appraisals that yield feedback that can guide and direct their work behavior and attitudes toward success.

(b) Equity

According to Adams (1963), the rewards used to motivate employees must be perceived as being equitable and fair. When employees perceive there to be under-reward treatments, they may adjust themselves towards a more negative attitude and sluggish behavior (Adams, 1963). Remuneration

systems are more likely to be effective if they perceived as equitable. Promoters are equity-sensitive and asked for transparent remuneration schemes and for equitable treatment. It appeared that ambiguous or inequitable treatment such as untimely pay or different processing of sales results of different promoters would be potential de-motivators with adverse impacts on work attitudes and behavior.

#### 5.2.2.3 Company support

Promoters appreciate company support in the form of technical and marketing information, gift premiums and uniforms. In terms of technical solutions and marketing information, a product development roadmap can help them answer technical queries and advise customers on the adoption of technology. Gift premiums assisted promoters in resolving customer hesitation, by removing barriers to purchasing and closing sales. Moreover, the availability of the technical information brought peace of mind to promoters and made them feel comfortable in responding to customer inquiries.

Some promoters asked, in the interviews or focus group, for a smart costume or uniform. Thus they called on managers for help in packaging and presenting themselves to be more attractive to potential customers.

#### 5.2.2.4 Communication channels with the vendor

In the focus group, promoters called for communication channels with the vendor as part of their ideal motivational scheme, as a means for clarifying goals and for obtaining brand promotional material and other resources. Possible channels of communication include social gatherings, field appraisals, and meeting and training sessions. According to comments by the promoters, positive perceptions of company communications raised motivation levels among promoters and fostered promoter advocacy, ultimately resulting in a strengthened promoter brand. Promoter brand refers to the positive emotional connection between promoters and their company through the brand, and the extension of the brand experience to customers.

##### (a) Gatherings

Gatherings were welcomed by promoters. They offered communication opportunities. They drew promoters to the vendor, enhancing the sense of belonging. Those promoters, who had these opportunities felt a sense of acceptance by the larger group, their feelings of importance increased (Maslow, 1964) and they accordingly felt a sense of belonging.. While having fun, promoters could make connections to and build relationships with other promoters, vendor management, vendor sales representatives and technical engineers.

(b) Formal training events

The distributor managers and promoters mentioned training as an element of the promoter motivation scheme. The opportunity to continue to grow and develop through training and development was an important factor in salesperson motivation. Formal training enables promoters to acquire knowledge from vendors.

Although the formal training component may not be so useful for experienced promoters, training events were another type of vendor-created environment that allowed promoters, whether experienced or not, to connect to various people from the management and to promoters from other locations. When performing their work, promoters are dispatched throughout the territory singly and promoters of the same brand seldom work together. Training events provided a channel for informal communication. They enabled promoters to meet and build relationships with other promoters, vendor sales representatives and technical engineers and to discuss issues and techniques with them. Thus the informal discussions with other people at such events are motivational and are sources of further insights.

5.2.2.5 Low degree of imposed job control

Imposed job control entails management effort and systems to design, redesign and adjust, that is, add, change, and delete tasks and monitor how they are being carried out. The distributor manager mentioned the need for stricter imposed job control as a means to manage promoters but the promoters expressed a different

view. Low or absent imposed job control was an important preemptive situational factor, allowing promoters to craft and shape their jobs. Promoters were seconded and dispatched all over the territory but did not have direct supervisors. This absence of job control allowed flexibility for promoters and was an important determinant of their expectations about being able to seize opportunities and cultivate favorable situations. Job crafting is only possible under a low degree of imposed job control.

### 5.2.3 Motivation-process: Enhancing the job and its meaningfulness

Particular organizational situations facing promoters, who are internally resourceful individuals with a strong sense of connectedness, fuel the engine of motivation, resulting in the ascription of meaning to the job and enhancement of it.

Promoters solicited and synthesized information from various sources to develop a clear understanding of their performance objectives and put their heart into their work in order to fulfill them. This effort enabled promoters to improve their essential skills, increase their opportunities, enhance their job and increase their self-confidence and motivation.

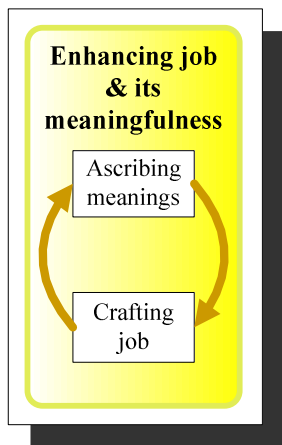
Promoters drew on affirmative feedback to craft meaningful aspects of their work. The stronger the sense of belongingness and connectedness that promoters experienced, the more they felt a sense of responsibility and accountability at work, which in turn constituted meaningfulness of work.

Preemptive organizational situations influenced how promoters acted to enhance their job and its meaningfulness. The job characteristics were challenging and fostered growth. The low-basic-high-commission schemes that applied to most promoters drove them to take initiatives to get more sales. The availability of company support, the existence of communications channels and the absence of job control facilitated the job enhancement process.

Lacking formal job specifications, job descriptions, and close supervision by vendor managers, in practice, promoters possessed autonomy in shaping their job, which in combination with the factors mentioned above, fostered their motivation process. Managers may focus on promoters' sales performance, but promoters perceived a much wider scope of the job, which included non-sales objectives such as

pre- and post-sales support services. Promoters added, reduced and changed tasks as they crafted their jobs. While crafting their job, promoters assessed how they were performing in it. As a result, they ascribed and justified meanings to their tasks [see Figure 5-11], thereby enhancing its meaningfulness.

Figure 5-11: Subcategories of enhancing the job & its meaningfulness



#### 5.2.3.1 Crafting the job

Promoters, it is argued, need to create new value for themselves in the job. Job crafting is a process, through which promoters ascribed meanings to the job by identifying and reconstructing their own identities. Job crafting reflects redesigning of jobs to foster engagement, resilience, and thriving at work (Wrzesniewski, Berg, & Dutton, 2010), and ultimately job satisfaction. This study reveals that promoters' discretion at work, in the absence of close supervision, enables job crafting behaviors.

#### 5.2.3.2 Ascribing meaning

Promoters find personal significance by ascribing meaning to their jobs. This coping and shaping behavior is steered by promoters' needs and desires for job satisfaction (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2005; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Sarri & Latham, 1982) and from handling relatively more difficult jobs (Sarri & Judge, 2004). These factors, in turn, affect the promoters' ability to initiate and guide consistent goal directed behavior, self-regulation and self-management (Latham, 2004; Latham & Locke, 2007; Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007). This coping behavior

of promoters could be further understood by looking at the person-organization fit and needs-supplies fit perceptions of promoters (Cable & Derue, 2002).

Promoters attempted to sustain their self-portrayed images and identities by engaging in meaningful work. To this end, some expressed their willingness to get involved in recommending, selecting and recruiting new promoters, and probably training them.

#### 5.2.4 Motivation-outcomes

The motivation-manifestations reflect attitudes and behaviors of promoters that are manifested as motivation-outcomes, including the exertion of extra effort, the feelings of comfort in doing and performing the promoter job, intention to stay, job satisfaction, and sales achievement.

##### 5.2.4.1 Sense of sales achievement

Promoters attained sales achievement when they exceeded the sales quota, won out against competition, or received returned customers. A sense of sales achievement provided immediate motivation and feedback to promoters.

Motivation is a result of an interaction between a promoter and a particular situation. Promoters regard the promoters' resources as personal drives and organizational situations as external factors that stimulate a need for achievement, with rivalry as a competitive driver for them to meet excellent performance standards. These reported narrations coincide with the concept from Murray (1938), McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953, 1976), and McClelland (1961) of achievement motivation, which is conceptualized as the need for success and the attainment of excellence. It can be explained that promoters are satisfying their needs through different means, and are driven to succeed for varying reasons both internal and external.

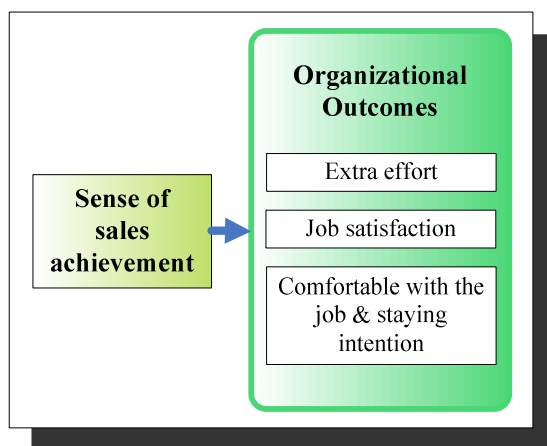
Exerting extra effort creates expectations about the performance results in addition to financial rewards. When extra efforts were paid back, promoters felt a sense of achievement. Promoters felt that they had achieved something when they met and exceeded the quota or won a deal in competition with rivals. The return of

customers signaled immediate feedback on some job that had been well done in the past. Promoters appeared to regard the informal gatherings as a reward to repay their hard work. During these events, promoters may get public recognition if they receive sales awards from the vendor.

#### 5.2.4.2 Motivation-manifestations: Organizational outcomes

Promoters in the study reported motivation-outcomes, manifested as extra effort, attraction to the job, staying intention, job satisfaction and comfort with doing the promoter job. However, managers in the study admitted the difficulties of and their inadequacies in managing promoters. The consequences were higher turnover, absenteeism and lateness among part-time, temporary promoters than among full-time promoters. Promoters felt that the managers' desire for control would generate too much pressure and would erode their motivation. The implication appeared to be that there is a great deal of selection-socialization among promoters. Those who can adapt to the conditions by crafting the job appropriately and who can ascribe meaning to their work are likely to report motivation outcomes. Others may exit rapidly.

Figure 5-12: Sense of sales achievement and organizational outcomes subcategories



(a) Extra effort

Promoters mentioned they may put in extra effort and extra time [see Figure 5-12]. They did not resist working overtime and accepted it naturally, for example, on a poor business day when the shop manager would typically be getting anxious

and worried about the sales results, promoters would likely work long hours until the shop closed down, and would also be more proactive in touting for customers. Promoters also stated that in such circumstances they might even pay for the extra costs of photocopying brochures and product specifications.

(b) Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects how content promoters are with the job. It has been assumed that the happier people are within their job, the more satisfied they are said to be (Luthans, 1995). In this research, promoters were asked to report incidents when they felt happy and satisfied. Although job satisfaction is not the same as motivation, they are clearly linked (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg et al., 1959), with job satisfaction being enhanced through job crafting and meaning ascription by promoters.

(c) Comfortable with the job and staying intention

Promoters were attracted to the job at first largely due to the potential monetary rewards. They also mentioned that they liked the high pay, challenges, learning and growth and autonomy offered by the job. It has been assumed that the happier and more satisfied people are with their job, the more likely they are to indicate staying intention. Promoters were proud of the mastery of selling (Bandura, 1977, 1986) as well as the technical skills. Selling as a loner in the retail field is difficult and challenging, especially when little support can be obtained from the vendor. Yet this did not erode promoters' passion; many were enduring survivors, even if some who still liked the job branched out into another full-time career.

### 5.3 Differentiating from the job characteristics model [JCM]

Targeting to redesign jobs to enhance motivation, and based on prior studies of job characteristics and job satisfaction, JCM (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976) theorizes that employee job satisfaction, intrinsic work motivation, and productivity are a function of the characteristics of a job. The authors portray a three-stage motivation-process that is fueled by five job characteristics, producing three psychological states and resulting in positive outcomes (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976). The job characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance,



autonomy and feedback. The psychological states are experienced meaningfulness of work, responsibility for work outcomes and knowledge of results. The job outcomes are internal work motivation, job satisfaction, growth satisfaction, low absenteeism and high quality performance.

In the JCM (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976), the employee attitudes and performance are moderated by the employee's need for growth, that is, employees with low growth need strength are less responsive to job characteristics than employees with high growth need strength. Interestingly, in this study, promoters fostered their own task identity and task significance. They valued autonomy and skill variety and found personal ways to self-design these into promotional activities. Similarly, they had more dispersed avenues of feedback that may have been the case for permanent employees.

In this research, the understanding of promoter motivation was developed from the data. The motivation-process was analyzed on the basis of how promoters' resources interact with the various organizational situations. Striking insights into the motivation-process emerged when comparing the promoters' and managers' expectations. The main gap in expectations was found to be that promoters craft jobs and ascribe meanings to them, whereas management lament their own lack of control and thus ability to dictate external meaning.

The driving forces for promoter motivation derive from the promoters' resources, consisting of promoters' resourcefulness and promoters' connectedness and the organizational situations.

#### 5.4 Implications for practical motivational schemes for promoters

The research has developed a tentative motivational framework to help managers and promoters to understand the content and processes of what motivates promoters. The research also indicates how managers may attract potential promoters to the job. There are various benefits and attractions associated with the promoter job. Although many promoters do the job initially for financial reasons and remain in the job only for a short period prior to their formal career, the job experience may make an important contribution to the continual self-learning, growth and development of

promoters. Although this was a small-scope study, in developing the framework, many concepts from goal setting and cognitive theories were drawn upon, and may have broader theoretical implications.

### 5.5 Further research opportunities

Action research may build on the results of this research. The motivational framework developed in this study may be applied to the two industries as motivational systems. These may take the form of ‘hands-off’ organizational structures to allow for responsibility, accountability, and job crafting, as well as the reward system training workshops for promoters and managers, to enhance the satisfaction of promoters in the retail setting.

Other directions for further development include more generalization of the framework to other cultures and contexts, which will require more studies of literature and integrating other concepts.

Furthermore, based on this tentative conceptual framework, a survey questionnaire could be developed for validation for use in further studies.

### 5.6 Limitations of the study

The results are limited to the discovery of motivational factors and processes for promoters rather than the strength of each factor.

Because of the choice of methodology, this current study is limited by the small sample size, although the design has compensated for this by using triangulation of data collection methods.

The young and inexperienced promoters may not have been able to express their feelings and ideas precisely and they may have been influenced by the opinions of more senior peers and other leading promoters. However, in reflecting views from the community of practice this may have enhanced rather than limited the research.

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