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The influence of commission-based pay in sales departments on job motivation and job satisfaction: a cross-country comparison of the Netherlands and Mexico

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Abstract (English)

Keeping employees motivated and satisfied at their jobs in today's fast-paced, challenging and complex work environment is more difficult than ever for employers. High turnover rates speak for increased stress levels and demotivated employees in a variety of industries. Especially salesforce employees are exposed to growing customer demands and identifying the right motivational incentives can be crucial for the success of a company. In addition, incentive systems often reflect western management and cultural standards, neglecting the fact that the workforce in a globalized world is made up of people from around the world. In this experimental research, the goal was to uncover whether a commission-based payment system influences motivation and satisfaction levels, for sales employees from collectivistic versus individualistic countries; Mexico and the Netherlands served as exemplary countries in this survey. Contradicting the hypotheses, the research revealed a positive relationship between commission-based pay and motivation and satisfaction levels. When accounting for country as a moderating variable, however, only the interaction effect was statistically significant in this relationship, meaning that responses differed significantly for Mexican and Dutch participants when looking at effects on motivation and satisfaction combined. Even though results were different than expected, they confirm the supposition that employees' cultural backgrounds play a crucial role in the effectiveness of commission-based pay as a monetary-based incentive strategy. Theoretical as well as managerial implications are discussed.

Abstract (Deutsch)

In der heutigen schnelllebigen, anspruchsvollen und komplexen Arbeitswelt ist es für Arbeitgeber schwieriger denn je, ihre Mitarbeiter zu motivieren und zufriedenzustellen. Hohe Fluktuationsraten sprechen für ein erhöhtes Stressniveau und demotivierte Mitarbeiter in einer Vielzahl von Branchen. Insbesondere Vertriebsmitarbeiter sind wachsenden Kundenanforderungen ausgesetzt, und die Identifizierung der richtigen Motivationsanreize kann entscheidend für den Erfolg eines Unternehmens sein. Darüber hinaus spiegeln Anreizsysteme häufig westliche Management- und Kulturstandards wider und vernachlässigen die Tatsache, dass sich die Belegschaft in einer globalisierten Welt aus Menschen aus aller Welt zusammensetzt. In dieser experimentellen Untersuchung sollte herausgefunden werden, ob ein provisionsbasiertes Vergütungssystem die Motivation und Zufriedenheit von Vertriebsmitarbeitern aus kollektivistischen und individualistischen Ländern beeinflusst; Mexiko und die Niederlande dienten dabei als Beispielländer. Entgegen der Hypothesen ergab die Untersuchung eine positive Beziehung zwischen der provisionsbasierten Vergütung und dem Motivations- und Zufriedenheitsniveau. Bei Berücksichtigung des Landes als moderierende Variable war der Interaktionseffekt in dieser Beziehung statistisch signifikant, was bedeutet, dass sich die Antworten der mexikanischen und der niederländischen Teilnehmer signifikant unterschieden, jedoch nur, wenn man die Auswirkungen auf Motivation und Zufriedenheit zusammen betrachtete. Auch wenn die Ergebnisse anders ausfielen als erwartet, bestätigen sie die Vermutung, dass der kulturelle Hintergrund der Mitarbeiter eine entscheidende Rolle für die Effektivität der provisionsbasierten Vergütung als monetäre Anreizstrategie spielt. Es werden sowohl theoretische als auch betriebswirtschaftliche Implikationen diskutiert.

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List of Acronyms

EM	External motivation
IM	Internal motivation
JM	Job motivation
JS	Job satisfaction
ET	Expectancy theory
SDT	Self-determination theory
CET	Cognitive evaluation theory
PFP	Pay-for-performance
IND/COL	Individualism/Collectivism
FEM/ MASC	Femininity/ Masculinity
UA	Uncertainty avoidance
NL	Netherlands
MEX	Mexico
IV	Independent variable
DV	Dependent variable
MV	Moderator variable

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem and Objectives

Today's work environment and the circumstances under which employees in any industry execute their daily tasks is characterized by rapid changes, new developments of technological, interpersonal or even ethical nature, and different external as well as internal challenges (Speier & Venkatesh, 2002; Jones, Brown, Zoltners & Weitz, 2005; Anderson & Huang, 2006). Salespeople specifically are directly exposed to increasing customer demands, growing task complexity and more-than-ever customer relationship management requirements. A company's salesforce is exposed to a wide variety of external demands that change according to personal preferences on part of the customers as well as internal demands which change on part of the employer or on part of technological advancements (Brown, Evans, Mantrala & Challagalla, 2005). Thus, employees working in sales are facing an ambiguous work environment that provides them with ever new challenges. How to keep salesforce employees motivated under these difficult circumstances has been a matter of research since decades, for which Deci (1972) laid the motivation research foundation. Efforts have resulted in a wide variety of valuable insights, first and foremost the crucial distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) provide us with a concise overview of the research advancements and relevant definitions. According to them, external motivation can be defined as "[...] a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome" (p. 60), meaning that motivation to act is solely based on external factors, such as receiving money in return or avoiding a sanction in case of negligence of one's duties. The authors continue to define that people's actions have an *external perceived locus of causality*. In contrast, intrinsic motivation can be defined as "[...] the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (p. 56). In this case, people's motivation to work on a task stems from an inner willingness or internal desire that requires satisfaction. Ryan and Deci (2000) call this the *internal perceived locus of causality*. The notion of perceived locus of causality can first be found in a paper written by Christopher deCharms in 1968. The author has delivered a crucial distinction between a human's two main sources of motivation and has initiated the development of an entire field of research which proves to be of utter

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relevance to this day. deCharms' (1968) research and its implications will be further unraveled in the theoretical background of this paper.

For a long time, research has mainly focused on investigating single components of motivation strategies and its effects on employee motivation. Brown, Evans, Mantrala and Challagalla (2005) provide a very important literature review, putting together the different pieces of control systems, compensation and salesforce motivation. The accumulated findings prove, that compensation plays a very important role in employee motivation, however, its effect on salesforce motivation specifically, especially in relation to potential cultural differences, has not yet been studied sufficiently to be able to draw meaningful conclusions.

Which motivational factors are relevant for an individual can heavily depend on the culture one grew up in. Igusi (2009) for example, found strong dissimilarities of motivational factors used in different countries, proving that there should not be one management standard which is solely based on western management practices, that companies around the globe ought to follow. Rather, applying those standards can be counter-productive, which eventually leads to demotivated employees and increasing turnover rates, due to there being no overlap between the cultural values and the company management style, as Igusi (2009) revealed in his research.

Even though these findings were alarming, yet not surprising at all, to the best of my knowledge, motivation research to date has mostly failed to take into consideration the unique values of very different cultures, if at all, often comparing countries which show very similar cultural patterns and values (see Küster & Canales, 2011). This might be due to the difficulty of comparing countries which are far away, making them seem more abstract. This is a phenomenon known as the 'psychic distance' bias, leading to ethnocentric research as well as business decisions, due to culturally different countries being excluded from in-depth investigations or managerial choices (Håkanson & Ambos, 2010).

Due to the fact that research on the effect of different types of compensation on salespeople motivation and satisfaction has not yet extended to cross-country comparison attempts sufficiently in order to provide employees with the right incentives based on their culture, the goal of this paper is to answer the following research question:

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RQ: How does commission-based pay influence job motivation and job satisfaction for salesforce employees from individualistic versus collectivistic countries?

The research findings could not only contribute theoretically to the existing body of research, adding more fine-grained levels to the much-needed reappraisal of the role of cultural values in employee motivation and satisfaction research. The results could also hold substantial managerial value in that painting a clearer picture on compensation preferences for different countries might be crucial in identifying unique employee satisfaction- and retention strategies for salesforce staff, leading to decreasing turnover rates and higher satisfaction levels on the long run (Iguisi, 2009).

For time constraint reasons, only two countries will be compared based on Geert Hofstede's famous cultural dimensions (1980), which will be explained in much further detail at a later point of this paper. The countries compared will be the Netherlands and Mexico, due to their evident cultural differences, especially on the individualism versus collectivism dimension.

1.2 Structure of the paper

This research paper is structured into eight consecutive chapters which serve to aid ease of reading by dividing the topic at hand into meaningful sub-chapters. Firstly, the introduction initializes a first brief overview of the research topic and the resulting research questions, including the topics' relevance and potential theoretical as well as managerial contributions. Secondly, the literature review dives deeper into the research background of the topic, eventually connecting relevant findings with the overarching Expectancy Theory, which serves as an anchor for the entirety of this work. In the third chapter, the hypotheses are developed based on a quick summary of the most important aspects of the literature review. The methodology follows in chapter four, shedding light on the actual experimental processes of this quantitative research. In chapter five, the results of the analyses are presented, whilst in the discussion of chapter six, those results together with its implications are explained in greater detail. Furthermore, in the seventh chapter of this work the entire research is rounded off with a conclusion, whilst in the eighth and last chapter, a reflection of the research results serves as a possible outlook for further research. Details on the survey questionnaire can be found in the Appendix at the very end of this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The history of motivation research

In the fast-paced and highly competitive environment of today, one of the major challenges for firms is to attract and retain competent employees and to increase overall workforce productivity (Emery & Oertel, 2006). One way to do this is by implementing strategies and incentives to motivate the workforce externally as well as, in an ideal case, internally. Historically, motivation research had its genesis in the 1930s, nowhere else than here in Vienna. Paul F. Lazarsfeld was born in 1901 in Austria's capital city and lived here with his mother, Sofie Lazarsfeld, a known psychoanalyst (Patterson & Harbham, 2016). After studying mathematics at the University of Vienna, he opened the "Institute of Economic Psychology" in 1927, with his research focus on topics such as unemployment or consumer purchase decision, making him the father of behavioral economics (Jeřábek, 2001). He later tutored Herta Herzog and Ernest Dichter, two pioneers in their respective fields of social psychology and market psychology who also researched in the field of motivation (Patterson & Harbham, 2016). After convincing his two students to leave Austria and to emigrate to the United States in 1933, Lazarsfeld's career in motivation research took off with his publications "The Psychological Aspects of Market Research" in 1934 and "The Art of Asking Why in Market Research" in 1935, the former of which lay the foundation for motivation research as we know it (Fullerton, 2015). In the 1940s, motivation research was still limited to the analysis and identification of marketing issues only, until, in the 1950s, the perspective shifted, and the focus moved more and more towards the behavioral science *behind* marketing decisions. This is when motivation research became entrenched and was brought to light by many different research journals, such as the *Harvard Business Review* (Fullerton, 2015). Sometime later, Christopher deCharms lay the first stone of what was to become an enormous field of research in 1968, by fully shifting away from the consumer marketing discipline (Fullerton, 2013). In his book "Personal causation: the internal affective determinants of behavior", deCharms identifies what he calls the *internal/ external perceived locus of causality*, defining it as an individual's subjective understanding of the degree to which certain tasks or actions are assignable to external forces or to the self, thus affecting behavioral patterns (deCharms, 1968). The underlying theory he formulated is the *personal causation theory* which says that "man is the origin of his behavior" (deCharms, 1968, p. 272), meaning that individuals are conscious of their capabilities of whether they

can and want to commit to a task successfully. Only four years later in 1972, Deci took his idea one step further and identified extrinsic motivation (EM) and intrinsic motivation (IM) as cognitive systems that humans rely on in their everyday actions and decisions. Specifically, EM describes the usage of rewards, bonuses, verbal reinforcement or, in short, any other type of external compensation, usually with one individual's objective to motivate another individual. On the other hand, IM describes a person's internal desire to perform well at a certain task, be it due a sense of contributing meaningfully, passion or any other form of inner stimulation that a person finds within him or her, independently of any external motivational factors (Deci, 1972). Sometime later, in 1985, Deci together with Ryan published a book called "Self-Determination Theory: Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development and Wellness", in which they unfold the far-fetching implications of the self-determination theory (SDT), which concerns itself with human behavior and the role their innate determination or motivation plays (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Specifically, the goal of the SDT is to unveil individual's decision-making behavior in the absence of external motivational factors as well as any kind of interferences. The researchers Deci and Ryan therefore lay the basis for a variety of other theories, so-called mini-theories in the motivation research field. One of those mini-theories is the famous cognitive evaluation theory (CET) (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec & Soenens, 2010). Here, a variety of investigations in the 1970's and 80's have led to the conclusion that people's internal motivation is a delicate thing, in that it is easily underminable by controlling external events (Deci, 1971; Pittman, Emery & Boggiano, 1982). As the CET theory is of utter relevance for motivation research in general, but of no further relevance for the research at hand, one crucial aspect of their, in the researchers book presented finding, will be pointed out: they found, that people showed less and less commitment to a task they were formerly internally motivated to do, if they were offered extrinsic motivational rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2008). After the discovery of the needed distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in their book they revealed this paradox psychological behavior of humans of which the implications were and still are highly significant to this day. It shows that external motivational measures can, in fact, destroy people's motivation and proves the complex but also abstract value of internal motivation. Later research picked up this finding and therefore helped in developing a more fine-grained understanding of the complex roles of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and the resulting performance consequences (Hidi, 2000; Tremblay et al., 2009; Hennessey, Moran, Altringer, & Amabile, 2015). Researchers have focused mostly on the effects of reward-

and control strategies on intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1972; Jordan, 1986) or on salesforce productivity (Naidu, Satyanarayana, 2018): rewards which are perceived as controlling negatively impact internal motivation (IM), whereas rewards that are perceived to be informational in nature have a positive effect on internal motivation (Ryan, Mims & Koestner, 1983). Furthermore, rewards that are contingent with performance have a negative impact on IM, whilst non-contingent rewards increase it (Jordan, 1986).

Before his meaningful research with Ryan, Deci researched together with Vroom already in 1970 about – as they call it – “piece-rate payments” (p. 217). They found this performance-based reward system to be an effective external motivator for employees to increase their unit of production, giving them the incentive to directly influence and therefore increase their wages (Vroom & Deci, 1970). Criticism regarding the concept of commission-based payment systems arose later in time, when researchers found controversial results concerning whether performance pay had a positive effect on employee motivation or an effect at all, for that matter (Chiang & Jang, 2008; Bowman, 2010; Küster & Canales, 2011). Two decades later, Chonko, Tanner and Weeks (1992) revealed interesting findings in their research, after recognizing that conventional salesforce compensation plans failed to meet individual reward preferences by generalizing and therefore oversimplifying the motivational environment of salespeople. They therefore went on to create a more fine-grained understanding of the under-investigated individual reward preferences of sales employees by comparing five different known and well-established types of motivators. Their findings revealed surprisingly strong desires for pay raises, contradicting the common belief as well as the results of Tyagi (1985) that employees are at least in part dependent on verbal recognition and feedback and that non-monetary rewards such as recognition were crucial in motivating salespeople. With this study, the researchers paved the way for this field of research moving into a more specific direction, aiming to uncover which strategies can be applied in order to increase salespeople’s motivation and satisfaction. At that point in time, research about the influence of commission-based payment systems picked up, however, findings varied substantially. In 2006, Lopez, Hopkins and Raymond found similar results as Chonko et al. (1992), indicating that monetary incentives such as increased commission rates or higher pay were more motivating than recognition or promotion. The same counts for the research of Harrison, Virick and William (1996), where a three-year quantitative observation proved their contingent reward theory, indicating that salespeople showed a substantially higher performance-turnover

correlation when their pay was fully dependent on commission rates, as compared to having a fixed pay with more modest reward rates. However, in her compensation survey, Galea (2005) found that non-cash prizes were chosen as the highest motivator, such as trips, recognition, or position advancement. Also, the results of Anderson and Huang's (2006) literature review underline the importance of employee empowerment and the effect of such empowerment on employee motivation. The contradictory findings of the – mostly fairly outdated – research leave substantial room for further investigation of the matter. On the following pages, the goal is to provide a clear picture of the different variables that are subject to investigation in this research project.

2.2 The history of job satisfaction research

Job satisfaction is one of the most studied phenomena in modern organizational research, as most companies have come to understand that in this fast-paced and turnover intensive work environment of today, loyal, happy and long-term employees represent an invaluable asset (Judge, Zhang & Glerum, 2020; Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Just like the field of job motivation, research on the topic of employee satisfaction too commenced in the 1930s, as a direct consequence of the great depression and its resulting employment crisis. Simultaneously, during this time some breakthroughs regarding the possibilities of the measurement of attitudes could be noted, led especially by the development of the Thurstone scale invented by Louis Leon Thurstone in 1928 and the invention of the Likert scale only four years later by Rensis Likert in 1932 (Paschal & Srivastav, 2022). Both of these measurement options are widely known and used to this day in social science research, customer opinion surveys and many other fields and situations where a collection of quantifiable data about people's behaviors, opinions or attitudes is desired. In the years 1924 to 1933, Elton Mayo was one of the first to conduct a series of larger studies on job satisfaction, today still widely known as the Hawthorne studies. The research itself, was concerned with the change of lighting conditions, however, its setting and therefore its effects on worker productivity was rather uncontrolled. Its findings cannot be considered representative of real-life conditions: worker's productivity increased, irrespective of whether the lighting increased or decreased substantially or whether the employees were told that this day's lightbulbs were brighter while they were actually the same. Nevertheless, the underlying meaning of the findings was very relevant since only two factors as the crucial element that influenced

productivity were left as possible explanations: the first being the fact that the subjects knew that they were observed by researchers and therefore adapting their behavior accordingly and secondly, their belief in the change of the lighting situation because they were told so (Gale, 2004). Mayo's management theory relates considerably to the later common belief as well as a number of studies (as shown in the previous subchapter) in that he hypothesized that employees' main motivation stems from companionship among the work force or feeling heard and understood by the employer whilst money or other outside factors such as the working conditions could only play a secondary role. His findings mostly confirmed what he had suspected: worker productivity was affected by the surrounding conditions such as lighting, by the employer's management style as well as payment; however, workplace culture was found to play the most crucial role when it came to worker productivity (Peek, 2023). These findings influenced contemporary motivation theories in that the consideration of non-tangible factors played a more important role and helped in discovering the aforementioned "internal perceived locus of causality" (deCharms, 1968). This helped in distinguishing a variety of factors that could help or, contrastingly, prevent employees from feeling satisfied at their job, which in turn lead to evaluative forms as well as their post-data collection analyses being more holistic in their approaches (Moorman, 1993). As of the 1960s, satisfaction research experienced a kind of boom, with many social scientists establishing theories, contributing to research and establishing practices which gave the field the ground and the fine-grained understanding it relies on to this day (Paschal & Srivastav, 2022).

One example is the *value-percept theory* of Locke (1976), which resulted from a critique of Herzberg's famous two-factor theory and assumes that an employee's job satisfaction is heavily influenced by the person's individual values (Tietjen & Myers, 1998). The researcher went even further and came up with the *range of affect theory*, where he pays tribute to the fact that satisfaction is dependent on a variety of factors and to what degree these factors are valued individually: our expectations are formed based on our values and the smaller the discrepancy between what is expected and what is actually given, the more satisfied we are with our job. How much perceived value a certain expectation has is a subjective measure and therefore can result in employees who work under the same conditions scoring very differently on job satisfaction assessments (Dugguh & Ayaga, 2014). To this day, this is arguably one of the most known job satisfaction theories.

In 1996, Weiss and Cropanzano looked at the topic of job satisfaction from yet another angle. In their *affective event theory*, the two authors looked more specifically at how the

mood, or the emotions felt by an employee impact job satisfaction. According to the researchers, the external environment, which in this case, usually is the workplace, is heavily influenced by a person's mental state, emotions or cognitive understanding of the surrounding and therefore influences productivity, company loyalty and consequently, job satisfaction (Wegge, Dick, Fisher, West & Dawson, 2006). In their theory, Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) take into consideration the factors of time and the multidimensionality of affect and of affective events, which distinguishes their theory from others. In their quantitative research, Wegge et al. (2006) validate the overall assumptions of the affective event theory, confirming it to be a reliable framework for organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of certain management strategies and its influence on employee attitudes as well as a general estimate of worker's satisfaction levels at the job.

During the past decades, research has picked up on job satisfaction and especially on any factors impacting it. Sypniewska (2014) conducted a quantitative analysis across industries and identified the atmosphere at the workplace, the stability of employment and good relationships with co-workers as the three most influential factors regarding employee's job satisfaction assessments. In another study, Waqas et al. (2014) found a positive relationship between job satisfaction and loyalty towards the company, with the three factors of reward, recognition and work environment identified as the most decisive aspects for feeling satisfied with their job.

Literature like this shows many times over, how important it should be for organizations in any industry to prioritize and work diligently towards providing their employees with the needed motivating environment in order to assure to the highest degree that they can for satisfied employees.

2.3 Employee Motivation and Satisfaction

As indicated above, this research focuses on people's motivation as well as satisfaction levels regarding their job as sales employees and the influence that commission-based pay may or may not have on this, which will be delved into at a later point of this chapter. Following the history of motivation and satisfaction research, the goal of this subchapter is to establish a common understanding of what the two concepts entail.

2.3.1 Motivation

The word motivation has its origins in the old Latin term “movere”, which means to move (Neta & Haas, 2019). Mitchell (1982) therefore defines motivation as a “psychological process that cause[s] the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal oriented” (p.81), suggesting that motivation stems from within a person by bringing an inner need into motion that will only be satisfied once this need is met. However, the author also mentions that there are varying definitions, depending on the perspective from which this complex term is looked at. The understanding of a layperson differs from the definition given by a dictionary, which in turn covers different aspects than the definition of an expert, who in this case, would be a social scientist. What unites those differing points of view is that all understand motivation to be an inner, dynamic and active state that allows humans to work towards and commit to a certain goal. Mitchell (1982) continues to point out that motivation is unique to everyone, which is reflected in almost all respective theories by implementing features such as needs, values, attitudes etc. to their models, which allow for individualized distinctions. Also, theorists are in agreement that even though motivation is a non-static and individual process, two components in the theory behind this concept are indispensable and therefore unify all people who experience motivation, namely the elements of activation and of choice, intending to anticipate behavior. Important to keep in mind here is that whilst motivation, behavior and performance are interrelated, the former allowing for prediction of the two latter, they still are three distinct concepts and must not be confused with each other nor may they be lumped together (Mitchell, 1982).

Uka and Prendi (2021) for example researched whether employee motivation could serve as an indicator of their productivity and performance and found positive correlations between motivation on the one hand and performance or output of the respective employee on the other. The authors also mention that high levels of motivation not only lead to increased production levels, it also positively affects the employees' organizational commitment, therefore decreasing overall turnover rates. This goes hand in hand with other research findings which confirmed the increase in performance, productivity and a resulting decrease in company turnover when employees indicated higher levels of motivation and satisfaction with the job (Ek & Mukuru, 2013; Shahzadi et al., 2014). Also, the cross-sectional study of Dysvik and Kuvaas (2010) that was conducted with subjects working in a multitude of organizations and different industries

confirms specifically, that employee turnover intention was strongly anticipatable by their intrinsic motivational levels.

In a literature review conducted by Khusainova et al. (2018), the authors even go so far as to say that salesperson motivation is “one of the most enduringly popular topics in all of sales research” (p.2) and yet, it remains one of the most ambiguous bodies of research as well, due to an array of contradictory findings over long periods of time. Consequently, the ability to serve with hands-on managerial advice is limited and not possible without doubt. The aforementioned studies serve to point out the importance of employee motivation for any organization and how prioritized it should be for companies to create a motivating and upbuilding environment for their employees in order to keep potential turnover at the lowest possible rates. Simultaneously, it becomes clear that doing just that proves difficult for sales managers, as recommendations as to which are the best strategies to motivate their sales staff vary substantially.

2.3.2 Satisfaction

As Tietjen and Myers already recognized in 1998: “The instilling of satisfaction within workers is a crucial task of management. Satisfaction creates confidence, loyalty and ultimately improved quality in the output of the employed. “ (p.226). Throughout the emergence of satisfaction as a much-studied field of which the results had and still have far-fetching consequences for managers and organizations as a whole, many researchers have defined the term in their very own way. See Churchill et al. (1974), Locke (1976), Moorman (1993) or Weiss (2002), to name but a few of the most famous scientists in the field. To assure for a general understanding of the term, two definitions will be named here. Firstly, Locke (1976), who is one of the most relevant researchers to this day, defined job satisfaction as: “[...] a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p.1300). Building on this very known definition and over the course of quite some research, distinctions were made between affection and cognition. As Moorman (1993) pointed out: “Specifically, recent work has suggested that job satisfaction measures may differ in the extent to which they tap more of an affective satisfaction or a cognitive satisfaction.” (p.762) He then goes on to define affective satisfaction as an appraisal, but non-cognitive or positive emotional assessment of the job, whereas cognitive satisfaction is based on a rational and conscious judgement of the job and everything it entails. This distinction is widely accepted.

In 2003, Vilares and Coelho developed a model, *the European customer satisfaction index (ECSI)* model, which they tested in their quantitative research and found, that when the customers perceived employee satisfaction to be high, it had a significant positive impact on the customer's perception of the service as well as the perceived product quality, which in turn lead to an increase in customer satisfaction and loyalty. In another quantitative study by Balouch and Hassan (2014), a significant negative relationship was unveiled between JS and employee turnover intention, indicating that the higher perceived satisfaction levels were among workers, the lower the specified turnover intentions. These findings are very relevant, since they speak of the far fetching effects of employee satisfaction at their job and the consequences it can have on the organization's overall perceived image, which therefore may have a direct impact on its turnover rates.

Considering all of the aforementioned facets of job motivation as well as job satisfaction, the two concepts can thus be understood as a mixture of employee's attitude towards and expectations of the job as well as the individual's values within (Dugguh & Ayaga, 2014). Even though motivation and satisfaction might be related, the two are not the same so that both concepts require attention. Motivation is concerned with a person's goal-oriented behavior, whilst satisfaction with and at the workplace is related to the more non-cognitive, emotional side of the employee (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

2.4 Commission-based payment systems

The concept of motivating employees through cash bonuses in the form of commissions is older than one might think. Starting in the advertising industry, already in the first half of the 19th century, agents working for newspapers and publishers received up to 15% commission for selling ad space in those newspapers, depending on how much space they were able to sell. Towards the 1880s, agents switched sides, now working for the local businesses and buying ad space in newspapers on their behalf – still receiving those commission rates, however, now from the firms they represented. Since then, the concept of merit pay, performance-based compensation, commission rates, performance-contingent rewards or however else this payment system has been called across industries and times, it has become a fairly common practice used by employers in order to assure for a certain minimum level of output of their employees (Sussman, 2021). Settel and Kurland (1998) critically define performance-based compensation systems as “Those

who create incentives that are designed to encourage employees to generate revenues for the firm, while simultaneously making money for themselves [...]” (p. 33). These systems are most commonly used in the real estate, the pharmaceutical, the consulting and the automotive industry, although, what unites those business branches is that typically, it is employees from the respective sales departments which are subject to reward-based payment systems (Settel & Kurland, 1998). Various studies have shown that commission-based pay can serve as an incentive for employees to perform better or put in more effort (Pullins, 2001). However, Bohnet and Oberholzer-Gee (2002), found, that monetary incentives can lead to less eligible employees trying to carry out whatever is asked of them in order to receive the bonus, which diminishes the output efficiency intention behind this incentive structure. In another study, Mallin and Pullins (2009) reveal how salespeople’s intrinsic motivation is determined by their performance contingent commission rates and how this relationship is moderated by the employee’s perception of whether the organizations’ control system that is put in place is controlling or performative. This goes hand in hand with the aforementioned Cognitive Evaluation Theory which constitutes one of the main pillars of motivation research. Lastly, in the research of Pullins (2001), who worked with interviews of people from a variety of different industries, it is pointed out that changes can be observed regarding trends in the compensation systems concerning sales employees. According to the interviewees, there is an observable increase in commission standards, while at the same time companies move more towards a fixed-salary-and-bonus concept and away from payment solely based on commission.

Interestingly, Larkin and Pierce (2015) also argue that the fixed-base component of a commission-based salary which is usually put in place for employees working in a firm’s sales department and which serves to attract and retain risk-averse salespersons by offering a non-performance-based income, tends to foster extreme risk-taking behavior. This is due to the fact that the predetermined salary serves as an insurance against monetary instability, as no major negative consequences can be suffered in the case of a sales loss; on the contrary, only positive consequences can be expected if the high risk, taken by the sales employee, pays off. This is in line with the aforementioned trend of companies moving towards a fixed-salary-and-bonus concept and away from a commission-only structure (Pullins, 2001).

2.4.1 The double moral standard of commission-based payment systems

As has been stated earlier, there is a considerable disagreement gap in research to this day, when it comes to the effectiveness and the value of output-related pay used as an instrument in order to keep salespeople motivated and satisfied. Another factor that needs to be taken into account is the controversy that revolves around this specific payment method. As Settlet and Kurland (1998) point out, having a – sometimes substantial – part of the wage depend on personal and quantifiable performance indicators, this often leads to employees making use of unethical practices in order to increase their personal share. Be it the overcharge of car repair customers in the automobile industry, the use of unethical selling techniques in the insurance industry or the provision of misleading or lacking information in brokerage firms with the aim of being able to close a deal rather sooner than later. All these scandals and many more in the past decades were related to salespeople who were tempted to make use of unethical selling and customer retention strategies so as to increase their own personal share of the cake through commissions. However, as Settlet and Kurland put it: “One can’t lay the responsibility for doing the right thing solely upon the shoulders of the salesperson while there is placed before him or her a reward system, designed by sales management, that is fraught with conflicts-of-interest temptations. “(p. 38). Thus, it is crucial here to recognize the role that the management plays in this dilemma which many salespeople encounter themselves in. The duality of being held accountable for the own performance with direct monetary consequences attached whilst simultaneously being expected to act honestly, ethically and transparently towards the customer seems rather difficult, if not impossible to bring under one roof and forces sales employees to take a decision for the one and against the other option (Settlet & Kurland, 1998). The paper of Larkin and Pierce (2015) points to the fact that all compensation systems which are based on performance lead to some type of misconduct, ranging from unethical or counterproductive behavior to clearly illegal actions. Luckily, Settlet and Kurland (1998) not only point to this difficult double standard that many sales employees see themselves confronted with; they also offer hands-on strategies to forego this dilemma, which, in theory at least, are fairly easy to implement. If salespeople are rewarded for short-term deals and high client activity, these standards need to be adapted towards a compensation system which is just as supportive of continuous customer retention management as it is of new customer acquisitions. Giving bigger bonuses for newly sealed deals must inevitably lead to a sales attitude characterized by unsustainable, short-visioned and unethical deal-making. Additionally,

rewarding a salesperson's recommendation to not move the clients' portfolio would need to be normalized, cancelling the famous tradition-by-transaction reward system. These, among other strategic recommendations by the authors would allow for a more transparent and motivating salesperson compensation system where employees would suffer less from double moral standards. As mentioned, the attitude employees have towards commission or performance-contingent reward systems is complex and leaves substantial room for further research. In the following section, an attempt is made to connect the different variables relevant to this study by looking at the subject through a common lens: the expectancy theory.

2.5 The Expectancy Theory

For the purposes of this study, a well-known theory in the realm of motivation research was identified and will serve as the conceptual foundation for the research conducted at hand: the expectancy theory (ET), conceptualized by Victor Vroom in 1964. Already in 1957, the foundations for this theory were put forward in a research paper about productivity from a psychological perspective by Georgopoulos, Mahoney and Jones, however, it was not until seven years later that Vroom formulated the theory as we know it. According to this popular process motivation theory, people take conscious decisions among many alternatives, whereby these decisions are made based on each person's individual "motivational force" (Vroom, 1964). This motivational force is composed of three factors complementing each other: expectancy, instrumentality and valence. The first one, expectancy, is the person's perception of the probability of his or her ability to successfully carry out a certain task. Instrumentality is the person's belief that accomplishing this task will lead to a certain (desired) outcome, whereby it is subjective what kind of outcome is perceived to be desirable. Lastly, valence represents the weight or the value which the individual assesses this outcome to have, which again is based on subjective interpretation and thus varies greatly among people. Together these three factors make up the motivation potential, which proves critical regarding a person's decision whether to do or to not do a particular task (Emery & Oertel, 2006). In simple terms, it means that people are willing to put in more effort or are likely to do more work, when they expect some type of reward in return. As can be seen in the prior chapter, the theory used in the research at hand contradicts to a great extent the research findings of Kuvaas, Buch, Gagné, Dysvik & Forest (2016) as well as the model introduced by Gagné

and Forest (2008), both of which are based on the self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985). By looking at the research topic through a different theory, the goal is to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the effect of commission-based pay on employees, including different and contradicting perspectives. Ideally, a comprehensive conception of this complex subject can be created.

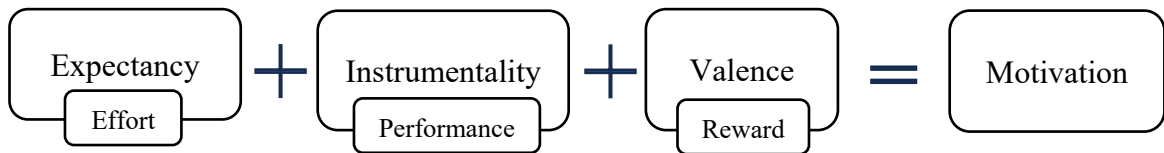


Figure 1: *The Expectancy Theory*

In his research, Mathibe (2008) investigated the role that ET played in motivating employees and found interesting results. Extrinsic rewards such as performance-contingent payments were indicated to be an important motivator which enhanced enthusiasm and performance, generally confirming expectancy theory's predictions. However, respondents also suggested that there was a lack of intrinsic motivation due to the absence of an incentive program which is based on appreciation and recognition of productivity. In a research based on the 2010 Merit Principle Survey (MPS), Lee (2019) found that those with higher IM were less motivated by performance-contingent human resource management, which is according to the general belief of the different motivational effects. Nonetheless, contrary to common understanding, also those with a high indicated job autonomy and adequate organizational resources had weaker motivational effects based on merit pay. These unexpected results were confirmed by Dysvik and Kuvaas (2011), who found that the relationship between job autonomy and self-reported performance was positively moderated by intrinsic motivation, contrasting the expectancy theory and its implications. Even earlier on, shortly after the ET was introduced, Lawler and Suttle (1973) also found mixed results regarding the model's effects. In their research, only the variables' ability and role perception showed an increase in job performance when combined with the expectancy measures. For the other variables, intrinsic reward factors related more to increased performance. Lastly, Chiang and Jang (2008) found that an altered version of the expectancy theory, using five more refined factors (expectancy, extrinsic instrumentality, intrinsic instrumentality, extrinsic

valence, and intrinsic valence) instead of the known three ones could offer the most accurate explanation on how employees in the hotel industry can be motivated.

As can be seen on the results of the abovementioned researches, the expectancy theory has been and still is a much discussed theory where findings tend to only partially confirm the theory's accurateness in real-world settings. Since early on, the ET has been subject to a variety of critique, making it a well-researched and analyzed theory. The majority of the theory's critique followed shortly after its initial release in 1964, by Lawler and Porter (1967) and Porter and Lawler (1968), among others. Mainly, other researchers criticized the straightforwardness and the resulting lack of potentially relevant factors in the model, affecting both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. According to Porter and Lawler's (1968) expansion, the relation between employee productivity and satisfaction levels, personal competencies or the effect of past experiences or relationships on the expectancy variable should have been considered in Vroom's theory. Furthermore, from the point of view of the two researchers, a distinction of two separate types of expectancies would have accounted for the different effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on performance and expectations.

On a more recent note, Lloyd & Mertens (2018) point out, that in today's intercultural and collaborative working environment, there is an urgent need to start considering the social environment's influence on employee motivation as well in Vroom's expectancy theory. According to the researchers, an employees' motivational force is not only influenced by their individual expectancy, instrumentality and valence, but also by their relationship with fellow employees as well as his or her perception of the colleagues' respective relationships. They continue to argue that the overall social environment plays a pivotal role in the development, maintenance and intensity of those social relationships and in turn also influences an employees' motivation. Based on their argumentation, they call for the inclusion of a social context variable:

“The interrelation of the workers should be represented as a valid premise in determining workplace motivation as the full context of motivation could not be understood or explained without its inclusion. [...] The new variable representing the social context would be an algebraic summation of all internal relationships (and the individual's perceptions thereof) plus the impact of the external social environment.” (p. 37).

Mahajan and Benson (2013) confirm this postulation by underlining the relationship between employee motivation and social relationships within the firm. In their research, they found that the social environment clearly positively influences motivation. Before, Adler and Kwon (2002) developed a framework called the intra-organizational social capital (IOSC), which served to explain the connection between social collective activities and influences on overall organizational performance.

One of the main take-aways from the ET is that an understanding of the employee's underlying motivational force can be a crucial factor in offering the right incentives and to increase or at least to keep a standard productivity level among the work force. A way to do this is by learning about the employee's goals and communicating clearly how these goals, which, based on the workplace usually have to do with some kind of promotion, monetary reward or increased freedom of action, can be achieved. Furthermore, it is essential that employees understand their individual value for the accomplishment of the company's common goals and tasks that are according to their position within the firm (Jones, Brown, Zoltners & Weitz, 2005). An organization's human capital is its most valuable asset and heavily contributes to the company's overall accomplishments. Satisfied and motivated workers lead to sustainable human resource management, improved work environments as well as increased productivity (Uka & Prendi, 2021).

2.6 The Role of Culture in Motivation Research

When delving into the existing literature, one aspect becomes obvious: research to date has failed to focus on the effect commission-based pay can have on employees from different cultures. One of the few attempts to compare their research findings with that of other countries was conducted by Küster and Canales (2011) with the help of a cluster analysis to unveil the effect of fixed pay versus commission-based pay on the effectiveness and performance of salespeople from Valencia, Spain. The findings of their quantitative cluster analysis are very relevant: generally, significant results proved their assumption that a salesperson's performance to a high degree is dependent on the compensation system put in place by the respective firm. Also, the overall sales organization efficiency is significantly impacted by the payment schemes put in place for their employees. Specifically, the researchers found that salespeople whose payment system was based to a larger proportion on fixed salary were shown to perform better and to be more effective than their colleagues whose compensation was mainly based on merit

pay systems. Furthermore, findings suggest that firms who rely on fixed salary compensation systems were more likely to use behavior control whereas companies who use performance-based payment systems tend to use outcome control. The latter of the two control schemes is determined by a salesperson's output and the number of sales achieved, thus, representing a more unbiased – but also a more rigid – way of overseeing salespeople's performance. Behavior control in turn, uses the subjective supervisor's assessment of each individual salesperson's performance and therefore allows for a more fine-grained, but also a more time-intensive evaluation (Marshall & Mowen, 1993; Küster & Canales, 2011). Their findings shed some light on this highly ambiguous topic where prior findings were rather controversial: Anderson and Oliver (1987) found that outcome control and merit-pay have a positive influence on salespeople's performance, suggesting that the pressure to perform well in order to boost the individual monetary reward was more effective than fixed payment schemes and behavior control. Cravens, Ingram, Laforge & Young (1993) found opposing results, indicating that salespeople's performance improves when employees are remunerated on the base of a fixed salary system.

Küster and Canales (2011) were one of the few researchers to compare their findings with studies who had investigated the same in other countries, namely Cravens, Grant, Ingram, LaForge, & Young (1992) who researched in Australian sales organizations, Barker (1997) who conducted analyses with Canadian sales executives and Piercy, Cravens & Morgan (1998) who investigated field managers in the US. No significant differences could be found. This comes to no surprise, as the four countries that were compared here all have very similar scores on Hofstede's individualism dimension, ranging from 60-73 points, identifying them as nations with related perceptions concerning their understanding of the self, the group and these two concepts in relation to each other. The topic about an individual's understanding of their role within a culture will be more thoroughly discussed in the following sub-chapter of this article.

2.7 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Due to the aforementioned general lack of research regarding the effects of commission-based payment systems on employee motivation and satisfaction in different cultures and within highly divergent cultures specifically, this study's research aim is to compare two countries that show very distinct social, behavioral as well as traditional patterns. The

“otherness” of these two countries will be based on Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. It is important to note here, that Hofstede’s understanding of the rather ambiguous and broad concept of culture is based on the nationality of people, automatically excluding the possibility of them belonging to other nations by being a member of a certain one. Moreover, he understands national culture as an imperatively shared value among members of one nation (Franke, Hofstede & Bond, 1991). In his most famous work, Hofstede compares the concept of culture to a mental programming that is implicit, but passed on to each individual of each nation, uniting the members of one nation (Hofstede, 1980). The social psychologist’s famous big-scale research over the course of six years (1967-1973) regarding the connection between national and organizational cultures with IBM employees from 72 countries and approximately 116.000 survey questionnaires answered gave way for a ground-breaking, entirely new understanding of the need for consideration of employee’s cultural background in order to respond to absolutely different expectations of and needs for a functioning work environment, on a variety of levels. His revolutionary research proved that the employees shape and influence a firm’s codes, behavioral patterns and ultimately, its success (Wittwer, 2019). Based on his findings, Hofstede wrote a very influential and famous paper in 1980, where he conceptualized his findings, creating four so-called cultural dimensions that allowed for meaningful schematization of the – for the moment – only 40 largest countries he had investigated a decade earlier (Hofstede, 1980). Sometime after the release of his famous research, Hofstede added a fifth and even later together with other researchers, a sixth dimension to the existing four. Later, ten more countries were added to the country comparison schematization, expanding it to 50 and until 2001, 76 countries and regions became part of Hofstede’s conceptualization of cultural dimensions with the help of reproductions of the IBM study to more cultures. The Website *The Culture Factor Group* (2025) and the advertising company Oy and Mediacom, under the guidance of Dr. Minkov, expanded the list of countries that could be analyzed through the dimensions to 102 countries, all of which can be found and compared on the aforementioned website. Hofstede’s six dimensions are high/ low power distance, high/ low uncertainty avoidance, individualism/ collectivism, masculinity/ femininity, long/ short term orientation and lastly, indulgence/ restraint. Only three of these six, namely individualism/ collectivism (IND/COL), uncertainty avoidance (UA) and femininity/ masculinity (FEM/MASC) are relevant to the study at hand. These three will be further explained in the following chapter, together with the according scores of the two countries studied here, so as to

assure a thorough understanding of the respective concepts. For an overview of all six dimensions as well as its implied meanings, *The Culture Factor Group* (2025) and its country comparison tool offer a simple, yet concise overview of all dimensions and give scores for any country inserted in the search bar.

In spite of the important work of Hofstede regarding the substantial effects of national culture on organizational culture, there has been quite some critique regarding his work as well (Shaiq, Khalid, Akram & Ali, 2011). Many scholars argue that the data of his work is not up to date anymore, as the main part of his data was collected in the 60s and 70s, now approximately half a century ago. Critics use the obvious argument of outdatedness to point to the fact that cultures are moving, changing and developing all the time, rather than being mere static and quantifiable constructs (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). Another aspect coming into play here is the changing political and economic landscape as well as major powershifts among countries as a whole that have happened since the social psychologist's data collection (Søndergaard, 1994). Furthermore, other researchers argue that Geert Hofstede's approach is too linear, interpreting a culture's belonging to one dimension as mutually exclusive, thus negating the possibility that at times and depending on the situation, a culture could belong to both extremes of a dimension and in that way acknowledging the fact that cultures need to be considered a fluid and rather complex concept (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). Another aspect that was frequently critiqued by other researchers is Hofstede's methodological approach used in his famous study. As data collection took place among employees working for solely one big firm in different countries, Hofstede's conclusions about whole nations and their respective relation to an organizational culture are highly doubted in terms of validity as well as reliability. Furthermore, many fellow researchers doubted if the social scientist's data collection method of using attitude-related questions in his survey would allow for meaningful derivation of a whole nation's underlying beliefs and values based of which most behavioral patterns could be explained. For many, this methodology seemed to be too simplified and too big of a stretch to make confident judgements about external validity, to the degree that Hofstede did (Søndergaard, 1994). McSweeney (2002) for example, fully rejects Hofstede's dimensions and deems nationality an impossible tool to systematically grasp and consequently explain behavioral patterns. In his critical examination of Hofstede's cultural IBM research from which he drew his conclusions about cultural dimensions, McSweeney (2002) particularly criticizes the social psychologist's assumptions about the similarity of

national as well as organizational culture and the resulting methodological approach, arguing that none of these assumptions were truly met. For a more detailed overview of other researcher's critique regarding Hofstede's research, McSweeney offers a concise overview of the main weaknesses in his 2002 work.

Regarding the abovementioned rather straightforward conceptualization by Hofstede of what culture means and how it can be defined, for simplicity as well as time and resource constraint reasons, in this research too, the fluid term 'culture' will be understood in terms of people's nationality. Even though Hofstede's research and resulting theory regarding the cultural dimensions can be considered one of the most critiqued works of our time, it is also one of the most influential and most cited researches ever done. His attempt of an operationalization of culture has helped substantially in shaping an understanding of the role of nationality in organizational cultures, its patterns and values and has given managers around the world a tool with which to at least grasp and ideally individualize to a certain degree the work environment depending on employee's cultural backgrounds. Even if working with his dimensions is too controversial for some, it surely serves to build a necessary understanding of the various roles of cultures and/or nationalities. Luckily, other researchers as for example Dr. Minkov from *The Culture Factor Group* (2025) have renewed the data about existing countries and its respective dimension scores and have continued to develop data for not-yet investigated countries. In the paper at hand, three of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions will be used to operationalize the role of culture in the very specific context of sales employees' attitude towards commission-based payment schemes, looking at employee motivation and satisfaction specifically.

2.8 Mexico and the Netherlands in Light of Three Hofstede Dimensions

Towards the late 1990s and early 2000s, researchers began to recognize the importance of considering cultural differences in understanding salesforce employees in order to design appropriate motivational strategies. In other words, motivational factors are not the same among different cultures. Iguisi (2009) found that typically, western standards with regards to the management style are implemented around the world and concluded that applying a one-size-fits-all scheme in the corporate world leads to dissatisfied and demotivated employees. He continued to state that Nigeria for example, has a higher collective interest compared to the other countries he studied, among which, the Netherlands. In the paper at hand, Geert Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions will serve

as a conceptual framework regarding the cultures that will be investigated, namely the Netherlands and Mexico.

Hofstede identified six dimensions by which cultural characteristics can be identified and put into numbers, so as to allow for meaningful comparisons related to values, norms and overall behavior, especially in a corporate context (Mathur, Zhang & Neelankavil, 2001). Of these six dimensions, three are of relevance to this study. Based on the culturally very different countries that are subject to comparison at the study at hand, individualism versus collectivism, high versus low uncertainty avoidance and femininity versus masculinity were chosen to be useful for this investigation for the following reason: according to the Hofstede Insights Website (*The Culture Factor Group*, 2025) which regularly reinvestigates the specific country scores for all dimensions so as to keep its assertions as recent and accurate as possible, interesting discrepancies for the subject countries are evident. Hence, where on the spectrum of the analyzed dimensions Mexico and the Netherlands can be found and the specific scores that are mentioned are retrieved from *The Culture Group's* so-called "country comparison tool" website. According to Hofstede's theory (1980), people from individualistic countries take decisions based on what is best for themselves, perceiving to have little responsibility for their extended social network, only considering immediate family (Ralston et al., 2012). Furthermore, in a firm-related context, high individualism is associated with promotions based on independent performance only (*The Culture Factor Group*, 2025). Contrastingly, people from collectivistic cultures identify heavily in terms of their surroundings, including their extended network, thus taking decisions based on what they perceive to be the best option for the group; in a business context, this means that human resource management considers a person's in-group identification in its decisions (Westwood & Posner, 1997). The Netherlands score a maximum of 100 points on the individualism dimension, making it one of the most individualistic countries in the world, according to the country comparison tool. Contrastingly, Mexico scores merely 34 points, depicting it clearly as a collectivistic society (*The Culture Factor Group*, 2025).

In accordance with this, Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension underlines these country-specific character traits further. High uncertainty avoidance is defined by the degree to which people from these respective countries develop a feeling of uneasiness and discomfort when they find themselves in unknown or unconventional situations. They have an internal need to work a lot and feel motivated by a feeling of security at the job (Emery & Oertel, 2006). Mexico has a substantially higher score on this dimension;

with 82 points it can be considered a highly uncertainty avoidant country, whereas the Netherlands, although with 53 points also slightly on the avoidant side of things, definitely shows less need for circumventing ambiguous situations and at the same time appear to have more sovereignty while dealing with unknown behaviors, values or traditions. With regards to commission-based payment systems, Mexicans with their much higher need for avoiding uncertainty, can be expected to dislike non-fixed payment more than Dutch people, making it likely that in accordance with their collectivist understanding of themselves as well as their surroundings, they would prefer fixed payment to a much higher degree as compared to merit pay schemes.

Lastly, Hofstede's femininity versus masculinity dimension will form the basis for a contrary theoretical assumption, as the country scores given by the culture factor group's country comparison tool (2025) would suggest opposing behavior. The last dimension that is relevant to this research concerns itself with a country's attitude towards work, success, achievement and winning; countries scoring high on this regard, are considered masculine cultures. For them, it is less about liking the work but rather about being the best at it, no matter the time and effort it takes. Success is defined by winning and in the corporate world, this means that people tend to "live in order to work" (*The Culture Factor Group*, 2025). This can be seen in people's tendency to embrace competition and to identify strongly with the performance they delivered at any point in time. Contrarily, feminine cultures "work in order to live", thus striving for a work-life balance where it is considered more important to have a good social life rather than being the best at the job or achieving the highest goals. In the corporate world, this translates to managers in feminine cultures being expected to include their employees in decision-making processes, as equality and consensus is highly appreciated. Thus, what motivates people differs fundamentally depending on their cultural background with respect to this dimension (Westwood & Posner, 1997). Mexico is considered a masculine culture with a score of 69 points and is thus defined by an achiever-mentality in the corporate world, where competitiveness serves as a form of motivation. In contrast, the Netherlands is considered a highly feminine culture, scoring only 14 points on this dimension. The corporate life of Dutch people is therefore characterized by prioritizing a good work-life balance, a need for long, including discussions and a sense of equality.

Recalling the high score on the individualism dimension and the much lesser need for avoiding uncertainty, the feminine quality of the Netherlands does not really fit the picture with respect to how Dutch people consider competition or how one would predict them

to feel towards commission-based payment systems. Their individualist nature which speaks for a feeling of responsibility and priority only towards the self would suggest a positive attitude towards performance pay, where the amount of reward is equivalent to the unit of output of each individual worker. Even though Dutch people have a slight tendency to avoid uncertainty, they score much lower on this dimension which translates into a more sovereign and confident handling of the unknown, including a performance-contingent payment system, as compared to Mexican people. However, their feminine work ethic which is characterized by a preference for equality and not competition among coworkers somewhat contradicts the aforementioned predictions. The same counts for Mexico; its collectivistic nature suggests a need for community, a sense of responsibility for their immediate as well as extended surroundings and low competition at the workplace and therefore leads to the assumption that performance pay would represent an unwelcomed payment system that is associated with a sense of unfairness towards their coworkers, including an unwanted pressure to perform better than the others. Their uncertainty avoidant nature supports this expectation and suggests an aversion towards non-fixed payment systems as well. The high score on the masculinity dimension, however, would indicate an inherent need to constantly perform better at the job than the coworkers and thus to be more successful by accomplishing more than the rest. Below, an overview of Mexico's and the Netherlands' scores according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions is depicted to provide a visual overview for ease of understanding.

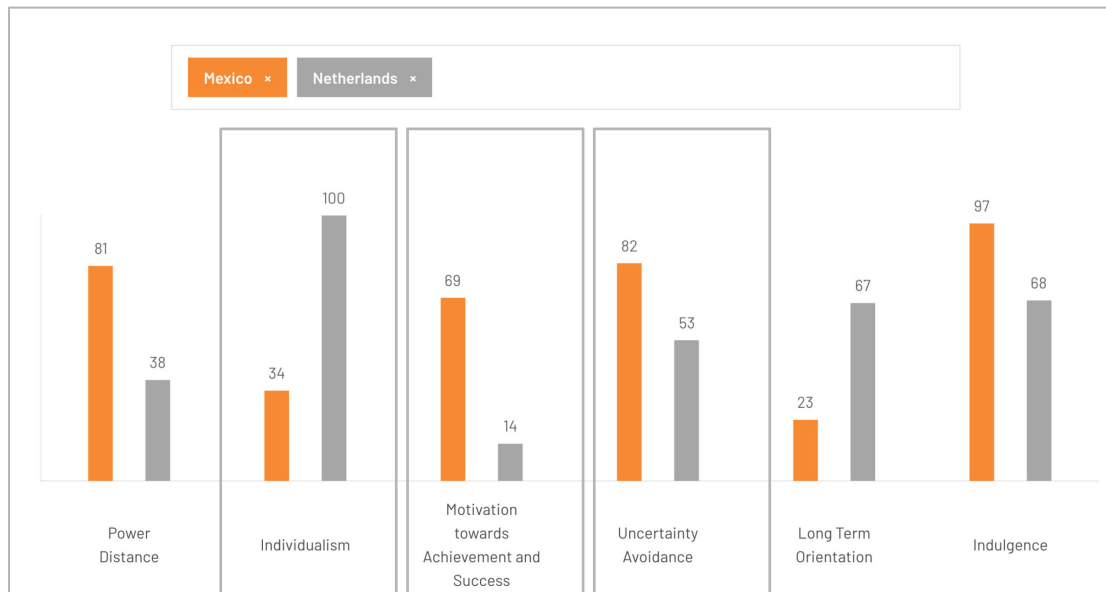


Figure 2: *Mexico and the Netherlands in “the Country Comparison Tool” by the Culture Factor Group (2025), Based on Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions*

3. Hypothesis Development

In this chapter, the goal is to summarize and meaningfully assemble the literature review's different parts as well as its most important findings in order to be able to formulate the necessary hypotheses which will be pivotal for the data collection and analysis processes.

3.1 Commission-based payment systems and their implications for employee motivation and satisfaction

In spite of the well-known negative effects that any type of commission-based payment system that is put in place for the sales departments of companies across the majority of all industries might have on the employees as well as the customers, to this day, it is one of the most widely used incentive strategies in the corporate world. In the United States alone, one third of all employees are paid with an output-measuring reward scheme of some sort (Lemieux, MacLeod, Parent & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007). With this in mind, it becomes obvious how crucial it is for employees and especially for the employers to study thoroughly the far-reaching effects of this specific payment method and the consequences this may or may not have on employees' motivation and satisfaction levels. In a longitudinal investigation in a Norwegian insurance company, Kuvaas et al. (2016) tested for the effects of performance-based compensation on employees' self-reported work efforts and turnover intentions. The researchers tested with different instrumentalities for the dependent variable compensation, namely annual- or quarterly pay-for-performance (PFP) and base pay. To the best of my knowledge, the authors were the first to control for a mediating effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the predicted relationships. They found clear results in that there was a positive relationship between the base pay amount and work effort as well as a negative relation with turnover intentions. Furthermore, the results indicate that pay-for-performance was related to both an increase in self-reported work effort as well as in turnover intentions. The results they found regarding the mediating role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are also of great relevance, especially with regard to the effect of the PFP variable on self-reported work effort. Firstly, intrinsic motivation – or as the authors call it *autonomous motivation* – reportedly decreased with an annual PFP, whilst extrinsic motivation – or as called in their research *controlled motivation* – increased. Interestingly, the increase in

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intrinsic motivation had a negative mediating role regarding changes in work efforts, whereas extrinsic motivation had a positive mediating role in that regard. The quarterly PFP was positively influenced by extrinsic motivation only, mediating an increase in self-reported work efforts. Despite this relationship, the authors point out that the relationship was much stronger between intrinsic motivation and reported work efforts than it was between extrinsic motivation and the same variable, highlighting the importance for the employer to create a constructive and uplifting work environment (Kuvaas et al., 2016). The results show that contrary to the common belief, performance contingent payment schedules can negatively influence an employees' performance by decreasing intrinsic motivation. Lastly, the pay-for-performance variable (both annually and quarterly) were mediated by an increase in perceived extrinsic motivation, which in turn led to an increase in reported turnover intentions. Only the base pay variable was related to a decrease in turnover intention, which again contrasts the common belief of sales managers that performance contingent rewards lead to an increased motivation and willingness to stay (Gerhart & Fang, 2014). The findings of the aforementioned research of Harrison et al. (1996) confirm that turnover levels tend to rise for commission-based jobs, due to additional exposure to pressure and stress. In an attempt to summarize the findings of forty year's worth of motivation research, Cerasoli, Nicklin & Ford (2014) encapsulated that autonomous (or intrinsic) motivation was related to better performance in a variety of different domains, quality- as well as quantity wise. Performance-related compensation, fueling extrinsic motivation, could only be connected to an increase in performance quantity, not quality. However, as Kuvaas et al. (2016) point out in their paper, the employees' gain in extrinsic motivation and its effects on performance tends to be neutralized by the reduction in intrinsic motivation: "In effect, the increase in work effort obtained via controlled motivation cancels out due to the decrease in work effort because of a decrease in autonomous work motivation." (p. 675). Another important research capturing the complexity of the topic at hand was written by Gagné and Forest (2008). The authors looked at the concept of performance-based incentive systems using the perspective provided by the previously mentioned self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985). In the model they proposed, they took into account the variability of the performance-contingent pay as well as its ratio to fixed paid amounts and proposed that this varying ratio indeed influenced employee motivation substantially. Specifically, based on previous research, for example conducted by Harrison et al. (1996), they hypothesized that the higher the proportion of the variable pay in comparison to the fixed

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pay, the stronger the effect on an increase in turnover intention. In other words, intrinsic motivation was predicted to decrease simultaneously to the increase in extrinsic motivation, relating to the increased amount of performance-contingent payment. The authors explain this by arguing that the higher variable amount that the employees need to reach certain targets for, the lesser their perceived autonomy at the workplace. This operationalization of Gagné and Forest (2008), trying to capture the relationship between recompensations and performance, was proved by various authors, including the abovementioned researchers.

Based on the findings of the above-mentioned researchers, extrinsic motivation can be said to play a rather difficult role in an organizational environment, often standing in a negative relationship with intrinsic motivation; the higher the one, the lower the other. To the best of my knowledge, research to date has found little proof that extrinsically motivating strategies work better in incentivizing employees to perform better, especially in the long term, than strategies addressing intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

H1: Commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job motivation.

H2: Commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job satisfaction.

3.2 Positioning the Expectancy Theory and Cultures

So far, a review of relevant literature has shown a rather complex relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors for employees in and of itself, with different compensation methods adding to the diverse shades and angles of the topic. However, some aspects are left to consider in this discussion.

The findings of most of the investigations mentioned before, contradict the predictions of Vroom's expectancy theory. One of ETs' main takeaways is that extrinsically motivating factors work best to get employees to perform the best they can. According to the theory at hand, the effort they put into their work heavily depends on their expectations of what the results (or rewards) may be. Simply put, the higher the expected rewards, the harder people are willing to work (Vroom, 1964). However, as we have learned above, most research points to the extrinsic motivations' negative effects on employees as a whole as well as on overall turnover intentions specifically. The critical examination of the topic of commission-based payment systems and its effects on employees is key to the

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understanding of varying perspectives as well as to the analysis of results of the study at hand. As Gagné and Forest (2008) point out, not all research came to the same conclusion. For example, Gerhart & Milkovich (1990) found a positive relationship between organizational returns on assets and the respective proportion of bonus and fixed payment. Also, Hackman and Porter (1968) indicate that previous findings were negative or non-significant, because most studies relied on self-assessment as well as attitude evaluations. When searching for studies which support the expectancy theory's predictions, two aspects stand out: firstly, most of the literature which supports ET is very outdated (Hackman & Porter, 1968; Matsui, Ikeda, 1976; Ilgen, Nebeker & Pritchard 1981), and secondly, none of the research that was found looking for ETs' support included cultural differences as a potential influencing factor.

The question arises, how more up-to-date research findings using different data collection techniques might vary from results from the 60s, 70s, 80s or 90s. Furthermore, in the past decades, a consciousness has arisen for the importance of the consideration of different cultural backgrounds in any research field. Knowing what we know today and including this knowledge in replicating research from a while ago might lead to substantially different results.

Hofstede's big scale IBM research was the first one to uncover the crucial necessity for making cultural distinctions in work culture contexts. The resulting cultural dimensions served as proof, that employees from different countries indeed consider very different norms, values, work standards and beliefs, with each country reaching a unique combination of scores on the existing cultural scales. The country's respective scores might explain to a great extent the often non-significant results of studies which did cross-country comparisons with their results when it came to the possible effects of different payment schemes on employee performance or effectiveness, as for example Küster and Canales (2011) did. Comparing their findings from Spain to findings from Australia (Cravens et al., 1992), Canada (Barker, 1997) and the U.S. (Piercy et al., 1998), no significant differences could be found. However, when comparing these countries on Hofstede's dimensional scales, it becomes clear that all four score fairly similar on dimensions such as individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity or long-term orientation. This indicates that countries with similar cultural norms and values also show similar work behaviors. Therefore, countries that score high on the MASC dimension for example, might be way more resistant to stress and value an outstanding performance at work more than a good work-life balance, thus showing lower levels of turnover

intentions when exposed to performance-contingent payment methods than would employees from feminine countries. Additionally, high indications on the IND as well as low scores on the UA dimension would also translate to more resilient work ethics, meaning that people pertaining to these cultures prioritize the individual performance over that of the team and have the ability to handle ambiguous situations with fierceness and confidence.

Based on the aforementioned interconnections, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

H3: Commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job motivation, even more so for people from collectivistic, highly uncertainty avoidant and feminine cultures.

H4: Commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job satisfaction, even more so for people from collectivistic, highly uncertainty avoidant and feminine cultures.

For the ease of understanding, a conceptual model was created, representing the variables and relationships under investigation.

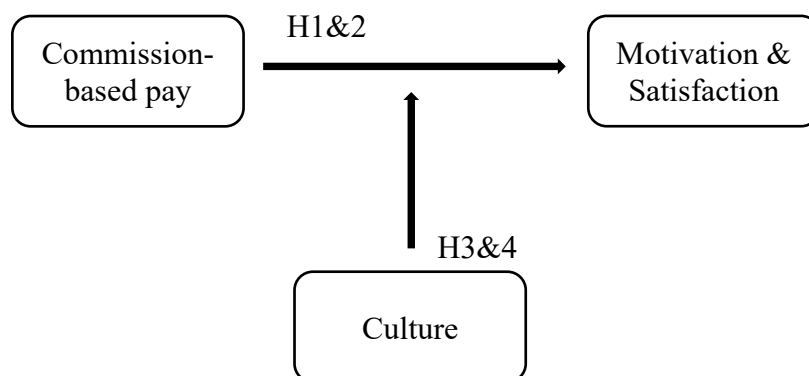


Figure 3: *Conceptual Model of Hypotheses*

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The goal of this thesis is to uncover the relationship between commission-based pay and its influence on sales employees' job motivation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, two culturally very different countries are compared in order to be able to make conclusions about the possible influence of cultural perceptions, norms and values on the aforementioned relationship.

In order to unveil whether the hypotheses posed earlier can be confirmed or disproved, an experimental design with a manipulation of the IV was employed using samples of Mexico and the Netherlands. In the following sub-sections, the methodological processes put in place to gather and analyze the needed data will be explained in detail.

4.1 Research Design and Philosophy

The research at hand is based on a quantitative questionnaire. The implemented research design accounted for two different scenarios for both nationalities under investigation, making it an experimental survey. A quantitative research approach was chosen, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the research philosophy of the study at hand is based on the positivist view, which states that knowledge should always be quantifiable and objectively measurable. Deducing information means testing pre-defined hypotheses through experimentation and unveiling knowledge through the establishment of causal relationships (Park, Konge & Artino Jr., 2020), which is the goal of this research. Secondly, even though quantitative measures do not allow as much of an in-depth approach as would a qualitative research method such as interviews for example, with the help of a survey questionnaire a significantly larger sample can be tested, and thus more data can be generated. Furthermore, a survey questionnaire is less time consuming and does not require as many resources with regards to money or personnel (Rahman, 2016). Due to the experimental and comparative character of this specific research where the aim was to grasp the opinions of two entirely different nations, a quantitative approach seemed more sensible. Last but not least, owing to the time and resource constraints of this work, a quantitative research design seemed more manageable as well.

The experimental design of the study is a 2x2 factorial design with four experimental conditions, based on the two levels of the independent variable commission-based pay (yes or no) and the two levels of the moderating variable country (the Netherlands or

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Mexico), which in statistical tests was treated as an IV. Cultural differences were measured based on three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1980), which were explained in more detail in a prior sub-chapter. Furthermore, there are two dependent variables (job motivation and job satisfaction), based upon which the effects of the IV and the moderator variable were tested. The matrix is showcased in table 1.

Table 1: *The Experimental Design*

	Job Motivation	Job satisfaction
Commission-based pay	Experimental Condition 1	Experimental Condition 2
Country	Experimental Condition 2	Experimental Condition 1

4.2 Variables and Study Stimuli

The independent variable (IV) used in this research is commission-based pay and the dependent variables (DV's) are employee job motivation as well as employee job satisfaction. Subjects were categorized based on the total scores of each question category, making both DV's measurable at the scale (continuous) level. Furthermore, there is the cross-country element of the research at hand. It was tested whether the country of origin had a moderating effect on the relationship of the IV on the DV's, using Mexico and the Netherlands as example countries.

For the questionnaire, two stimuli were created in order to be able to test the effect of different payment methods on employee motivation and satisfaction. Participants were randomly assigned to either one of the two scenarios. In the first framing, participants were asked to imagine that the company would offer commission-based bonuses, while in the second frame, participants were asked to imagine, that their company does not offer commission-based bonuses. Both scenarios were worded in the exact same way except the framing effect, excluding the possibility that any other part of the wording would have an influence on the answers and attitudes given by the participants. The two stimulus materials can be found in Appendix A at the end of this paper.

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4.3 Subjects

The subjects were from the Netherlands and from Mexico. As the goal of this research was to unveil whether people with culturally very different upbringings, perceptions and behaviors are influenced in a different way by commission-based payment methods, the analysis of the demographic data served as a very insightful tool to analyze more in-depth which other factors within cultures might play their part. Due to the limited scope of this research, responses were not collected from real salespeople. Rather, participants were exposed to a scenario which told them to imagine that they worked a sales job and answering the questions out of this certain perspective. Therefore, there were no further conditions for taking part in the survey other than being from Mexico or the Netherlands, increasing the chance of response collection within the given limits of time and resources. For the Netherlands, a total of 143 responses were gathered, out of which 93 were complete. Therefore, all calculations were conducted with N=93 respondents. Of the Dutch group, 55 respondents were female (59.1%), 37 were male (39.8%) and one identified as diverse (1.1%). Furthermore, slightly more people were in the age range of 26-35 (37.6%) than in the age range of 18-25 (35.5%). In the range of 36-45 were 10 people (10.8%), in the range of 46-55 were five people (5.4%), seven people (7.5%) were between 55-65 and three people were older than 66 (3.2%). Most respondents had completed a bachelor's degree, namely 41 people (44.1%), followed by 35 subjects who completed a master's degree (37.6%). 11 respondents finished high school (11.8%), four people had a PhD (4.3%) and two people indicated "other" (2.2%).

For Mexico, 154 respondents in total and 101 completed surveys were returned. All calculations were conducted with N=101 respondents. 51 respondents were female (50.5%) and 45 were male (44.6%), while five identified as diverse (5.0%), making the Mexican sample slightly more balanced as compared to the Dutch sample. Moreover, most respondents were between the ages of 26-35 as well, namely 55 (54.7%), while 29 people (28.7%) were in the age range of 18-25. Nine subjects (8.9%) were between 36-44 and five (5.0%) were in the range of 46-55. Lastly, three respondents (3.0%) were between 56-65 and no one was older than 65. Regarding their education, the vast majority, namely 66 people (65.3%) held a bachelor's degree, while 17 respondents (16.8%) had a master's degree. Eight (7.9%) finished high school, five (5.0%) had a PhD and five (5.0%) indicated "other". The age-related as well as the educational percentages show a fairly similar, skewed distribution of respondents between the Netherlands and Mexico, both

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countries being represented mainly by subjects between the ages of 18 to 35 who hold either a bachelor's or a master's degree.

With regards to the distribution of subjects from both countries among the manipulated independent variable, the random assignment of subjects to either the commission-based frame or the non-commission-based frame led to an evenly distributed sample among both stimuli, for both nationalities. The exact distributions can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: *Country * Commission Crosstabulation*

Country	Yes Commission	No Commission	Total
Netherlands	47 (50.5%)	46 (49.5%)	93
Mexico	47 (46.5%)	54 (53.5%)	101
Total	94 (48.5%)	100 (51.5%)	194

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within each country.

4.3.1 Translation

The questionnaire was translated into Spanish using the back-and-forth translation method, to ensure that no crucial information was lost in the process. The decision to use a Spanish version of the questionnaire for the Mexican participants was based on the fact that the proficiency level of English as a second language was shown to be rather low in Mexico. Compared to the rest of Latin America, Mexico reached the lowest score with a total of 459 points out of 700, which is equivalent to a “low” English level, according to the EF English Proficiency Index (2023).

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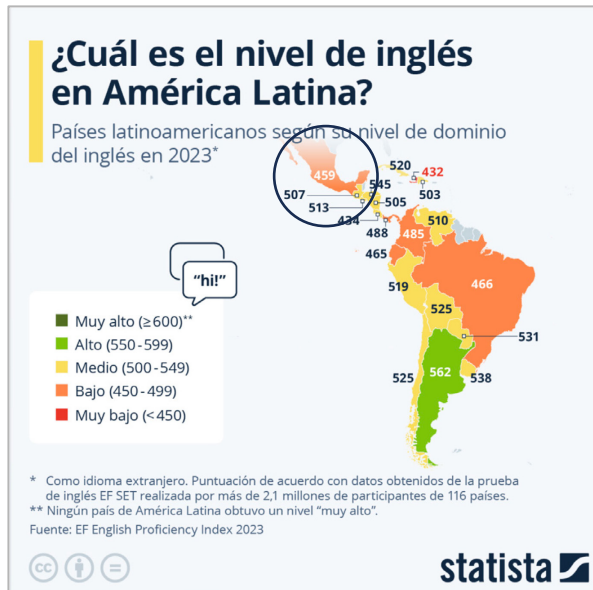


Figure 4: *EF English Proficiency Index 2023: What is the English level in Latin America?*

In comparison, the Netherlands reached the highest score for the fourth year in a row of the European countries when it came to English as a second language proficiency, according to the EF English Proficiency Index (2023). The Netherlands scored 636 points out of 700, which is equivalent to a “very high” English proficiency level.

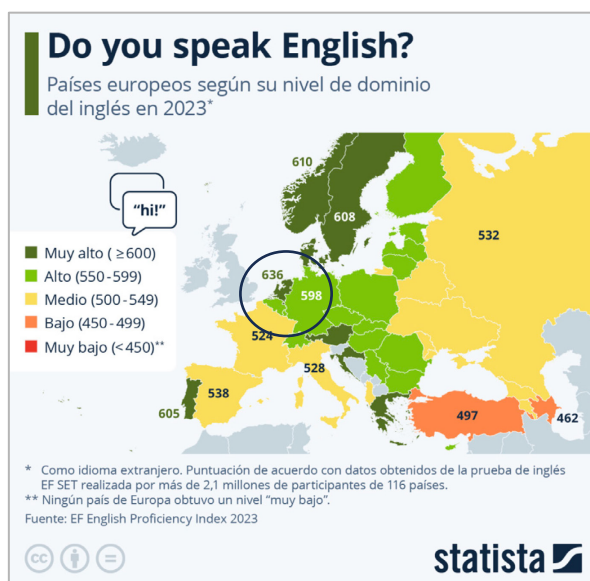


Figure 5: *EF English Proficiency Index (2023): Do you speak English?*

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Because of the respective English proficiency scores for Mexico and the Netherlands, it was decided that in order to assure for a good understanding of the scenarios as well as the questions of the survey, it was necessary to provide the Mexican participants with a Spanish version. However, the high English proficiency score of the Netherlands made it clear that answering the survey in English should not pose a problem to the Dutch participants.

4.4 Procedure

The research was conducted from the 5th of February to the 10th of March 2025. Survey distribution took place through a variety of ways: in a first step, the questionnaire was sent to personal contacts of Mexico and the Netherlands. These contacts in turn distributed the survey to people they knew and those again distributed it further. In a second step, the survey was posted in different according Facebook groups and when the sample sizes still showed to be too small, the survey exchange platform SurveySwap was used to get to the goal of approximately 80 to 100 participants per country. The combined sampling approach used here, namely simple random as well as snowball sampling, are both of random and of non-random nature, making representativeness and external validity more difficult. However, because of extensive networks in both the Netherlands and in Mexico, the snowball sampling method proved to be quite helpful in reaching approximately 70% of the needed participants and was therefore included in the data collection process.

Before starting the questionnaire, the subjects were welcomed to the survey and were clarified about the anonymity with which their answers were treated as well as the option to step back from participation at all times. They were introduced to the aim of this research as well as the time that filling out the questionnaire would approximately take. In the following, four demographic questions were posed, out of which the question about the participants' nationality was the most important one, serving as an excluding mechanism for anyone who was of other origin than Dutch or Mexican. Then followed an explanatory briefing regarding the next chapter of the survey, which started with the framed scenario. Specifically, subjects were told that in the following, they will be asked to indicate their motivation and satisfaction levels taking the perspective of the scenario they were provided with and especially with their particularly indicated payment system. In the second part of the survey, the respondents were asked 18 questions in total

regarding job motivation and job satisfaction. Lastly, twelve questions were asked to unveil the subjects' specific understanding of their own culture, based on the three Hofstede dimensions which played an important part in the study. A thank you note regarding the subject's participation was added at the end of the survey.

To adhere to ethical guidelines, no deception was used in the survey considering what was said to be the research aim. Rather, people were not informed that a cross-country comparison was done in order to assure for respondents to answer as truthfully and unbiased as possible, especially regarding the questions about their culture. For a detailed overview of the questionnaire including the sources used in this research, please see the Appendix B.

4.5 Instruments

The questions regarding the job motivation and job satisfaction part of the survey were based on previously used and validated research questions from the Minnesota job satisfaction questionnaire (MSQ) by Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist (1967), the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) by Gagné et al. (2015) and the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Spector (1985) adapted to the specific context of this investigation. The questions concerned with Hofstede's cultural dimensions were based on the famous GLOBE studies of House et al. (2004). This was done, because the original questionnaires used by Hofstede are not publicly available. The GLOBE project reflects various of Hofstede's dimensions and served the purpose to uncover which influence cultures have on organizational as well as managerial perceptions and practices (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004).

All questions except the demographic ones were asked using the 7-point Likert scale. The reason why in this research the anchors of most questions were based on the 7-point Likert scale and not the 5-point Likert scale is because research has shown that a slightly bigger range of options increases the reliability of responses to a great extent: "The 7 point scale provides more varieties of options which in turn increase the probability of meeting the objective reality of people." (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015, p. 398).

5. Results

5.1 Statistical Treatment

All statistical analyses were done with version 30.0 the IBM SPSS statistics software. In order to answer the research question and hypotheses, a variety of statistical tests and data-related preparatory steps were conducted. First of all, incomplete survey responses that caused missing values were deleted, minimizing the initial 154 responses from Mexican participants to 101 and the initial 143 responses from Dutch participants to 93. In a second step, frequencies were calculated, exhibiting the specific percentages pertaining to the demographic information of the Mexican and the Dutch group.

In order to assure for a good internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha tests were conducted to test scale reliability. The test was conducted only on the employee motivation and satisfaction parts of the questionnaire, as the cultural part can be considered too subjective of a topic for Cronbach's Alpha to make reliable indications. Furthermore, a correlation matrix was conducted to see how closely answers on both variables are related for each country.

Firstly, an independent samples t-test was run in order to get a first understanding of the distinct relationship between the experimental condition on the one hand and the two separate dependent variables on the other. A MANOVA test was run for the employee motivation and satisfaction dependent variables. Also, for the MANOVA test, the two separate datasets of Mexico and the Netherlands were merged so that the total number of participants analyzed was 194. The variable 'country' was added, so as to be able to test whether the subjects' origin had a moderating effect on the relationship of commission-based pay and employee motivation and satisfaction. Lastly, after merging all nine items for motivation and all nine items for satisfaction to create a total score based on the mean value of all 18 items, the total scores of the dependent variables motivation and satisfaction were calculated, turning them into continuous (scale) variables instead of ordinal variables. In order to assure that all assumptions were met for the MANOVA tests, a variety of pre-tests were conducted; a linear regression and a scatter plot were done to verify linearity, a Shapiro-Wilk test was run to assure for multivariate normality for both the dependent variables, and to test for the assumption of no multi co-linearity, a Pearson's correlation test was conducted. A non-significant Box's test of equality of covariance matrices showed that the covariance matrices of the DVs were equal across groups. The one-way MANOVA was executed even though the Shapiro-Wilk test was

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significant, indicating non-normality, because the sample size was large enough and therefore robust to normality violations. Also, multivariate normality is rarely given in real world data. All other tests confirmed the needed assumptions. The same was done for the two-way MANOVA and here too, all except the multivariate normality assumption were met, so that the test could be executed, after a round of t-tests, this time for each of the two countries separately. Lastly, to further explore the significant multivariate interaction between commission-based pay and country, two separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted for the Netherlands and Mexico respectively.

5.2 Cronbach's Alpha and Correlation Matrix

At first, consistency tests were run for the scales used, with the help of Cronbach's Alpha. They were conducted on employee motivation and employee satisfaction scales simultaneously and were found to be excellent for the Dutch respondents who received the "yes-commission" frame ($\alpha = .95$) and also excellent for Dutch respondents who received the "no-commission" frame ($\alpha = .94$). Similarly high alpha scores were found for the Mexican respondents who were shown the "yes-commission" frame ($\alpha = .95$) as well as the ones who were exposed to the "no-commission" frame ($\alpha = .96$). The high Alpha scores indicate a very good internal consistency of the scales.

Furthermore, a correlation matrix was conducted for both nationalities separately, to see if employee motivation and satisfaction related with each other.

Table 3: *Pearson's Correlation Matrix*

Country	Variable	M	SD	1. Motivation	2. Satisfaction
Netherlands	1. Motivation	4.54	1.42	—	.89**
	2. Satisfaction	4.42	1.37		—
Mexico	1. Motivation	4.74	1.36	—	.91**
	2. Satisfaction	4.53	1.43		—

Note. N (Netherlands) = 93, N (Mexico) = 101. $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

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As shown in Table 3, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between job motivation and job satisfaction both for the Netherlands $r(192) = .886, p < .001$, and for Mexico $r(192) = .913, p > .001$. These results suggest that for both samples, participants who reported higher motivation also tended to report higher satisfaction.

5.3 Testing of Hypotheses 1 and 2

For the following analyses, the Dutch and the Mexican dataset were merged based on the cases, allowing for a direct comparison of both nationalities. Of the entire sample, 94 subjects were exposed to the commission-based scenario whilst 100 participants were shown the non-commission-based scenario.

An independent samples t-test was conducted with the merged dataset, in order to see how the general relationship between the experimental condition and the two dependent variables was unfolding, for both DV's separately. The first statistical tests were run to verify the first two hypotheses, which propose a negative relationship between commission-based pay and sales employee job motivation and job satisfaction respectively. As can be seen in Table 4, there is an evident difference in perception between the two groups, however, not as expected.

Table 4: *Independent Samples t-Tests Comparing Motivation and Satisfaction Between Commission and No-Commission Conditions*

Variable	Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (192)	<i>p</i>
Motivation	Commission-Based	5.06	1.28	4.24	< .001
	No-Commission	4.25	1.38		
Satisfaction	Commission-Based	4.96	1.29	4.95	< .001
	No-Commission	4.02	1.34		

Firstly, the independent samples t-test showed that motivation was significantly higher for the entire sample, when exposed to the commission-based scenario ($M = 5.06, SD =$

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1.28), as compared to the no-commission based scenario ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.38$), $t(192) = 4.24$, $p = <.001$, $d = .61$, 95% CI [.32, .89]. This was also the case for the second independent variable satisfaction, where the independent samples t-test showed that satisfaction was significantly higher for the sample irrespective of their country of origin in the commission-based scenario ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.29$) as compared to the no-commission-based scenario ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(192) = 4.95$, $p = <.001$, $d = .71$, 95% CI [.42, 1.01].

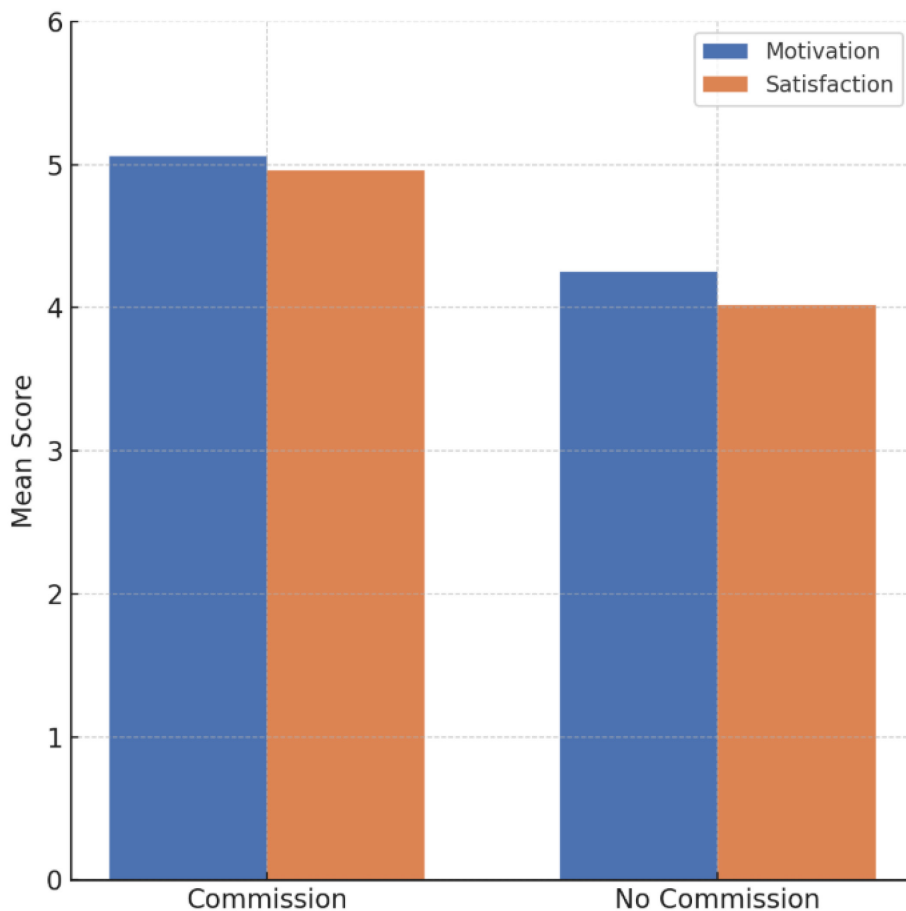


Figure 6: Mean Scores for Commission Group and Control Group

Figure 6 visualizes the reported statistics, presenting the histogram of the two experimental conditions' mean scores next to each other, clarifying the explicit relationship which the first t-test revealed.

To analyze further whether the independent variable commission-based pay had a significant effect on employee motivation and satisfaction irrespective of the country, a

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one-way MANOVA test was conducted, which allows for simultaneous effect-testing. An overview of the relevant results is given in Table 5.

Table 5: *Multivariate Test for the Effect of Commission-Based Pay on Motivation and Satisfaction*

Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	η^2p
Commission-Based Pay	Pillai's Trace	.11	12.25	2	191	.001	.11

The statistical significance of the Pillai's Trace test $V = .11$, $F(2, 191) = 12.25$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2p = .11$) suggested a significant difference across the two levels of the IV on a linear combination of the DVs, without indicating where exactly this statistically significant difference could be found. In other words, there was a multivariate effect between the independent variable commission-based pay and the two dependent variables, employee motivation and employee satisfaction, irrespective of the samples' country of origin. The partial eta-squared showed that 11% of the variance within the DVs could be explained by the IV. Furthermore, Levene's test for equality of variances was non-significant for the dependent variables motivation ($F(1, 192) = 1.25$, $p = .26$) and satisfaction ($F(1, 192) = .05$, $p = .83$), indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

Since the multivariate test only showed if there was a significant difference of the IV on the DV's at all, a test of between-subjects effects was needed, to verify where exactly the significant difference could be found. In other, words, univariate tests need to be conducted.

Table 6: *Univariate Tests for Motivation and Satisfaction by Commission-Based Pay*

Dependent Variable	F	df (1, 192)	p	η^2p
Motivation	17.98	(1, 192)	.001	.09
Satisfaction	24.51	(1, 192)	.001	.11

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Table 6 shows the univariate test results of between-subjects effects. Now analyzing the IVs' effect on both DV's separately, the test showed that commission-based pay significantly influenced both job motivation ($F(1, 192) = 17.98, p = .001, \eta^2 = .09$) and job satisfaction ($F(1, 192) = 24.51, p = .001, \eta^2 = .11$). The statistically significant results of the between-subjects effects test in combination with the descriptive statistics of the one-way MANOVA suggested that commission-based pay positively impacted both employee motivation and satisfaction for both countries. Since hypothesis 1 predicted that commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job motivation, and hypothesis 2 predicted that commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job satisfaction, both hypotheses were not supported and can therefore be rejected.

Due to the fact that the IV has only two levels, post hoc tests could not be conducted.

5.4 Testing of Hypotheses 3 and 4

For further hypotheses testing, two separate t-tests and a two-way MANOVA were conducted, in order to analyze the between-countries effect of commission-based pay on job motivation and job satisfaction. This was done because the goal was to uncover, which moderating role the participants' culture played in the relationship analyzed above. Specifically, the second set of hypotheses predicted a negative relationship between the IV for collectivistic and highly uncertainty avoidant cultures on the one hand (Mexico) and feminine cultures on the other (the Netherlands), both for sales employee job motivation and job satisfaction.

Table 7: *Independent Samples t-Test: Commission vs. No-Commission (Mexico)*

Variable	Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (99)	<i>p</i>
Motivation	Commission-Based	5.08	1.26	2.33	.022
	No-Commission	4.46	1.39		
Satisfaction	Commission-Based	5.06	1.24	3.67	< .001
	No-Commission	4.07	1.43		

Results

The first independent samples t-test was conducted for the Mexican sample and showed that of the 101 Mexican respondents, 47 were shown the commission-based scenario while 54 were exposed to the control condition, receiving no commission in their scenario. The t-test revealed, that in the Mexican sample, motivation was significantly higher in the commission-based scenario ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.26$) as compared to the no-commission scenario ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.39$), $t(99) = 2.33$, $p = .022$, $d = .46$, 95% CI [.07, .86]. For satisfaction too, indicated attitudes were significantly higher in the commission-based scenario ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.24$) as in the no-commission-based scenario ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.43$), $t(99) = 3.67$, $p = <.001$, $d = .73$, 95% CI [.33, 1.14].

Table 8: *Independent Samples t-Test: Commission vs. No-Commission (Netherlands)*

Variable	Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (91)	<i>p</i>
Motivation	Commission-Based	5.05	1.31	3.78	< .001
	No-Commission	4.01	1.34		
Satisfaction	Commission-Based	4.86	1.35	3.33	.001
	No-Commission	3.97	1.24		

Now looking at the second independent samples t-test which was conducted with the Dutch sample. Here, of 93 participants in total, 47 received the commission-based frame and 46 received the control frame.

The t-test showed that in this sample too, indicated motivation was significantly higher in the commission scenario ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.31$) than in the no-commission scenario ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(91) = 3.78$, $p = <.001$, $d = .78$, 95% CI [.36, 1.21]. Regarding satisfaction, the given values were significantly higher in the commission frame ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.35$) than in the no commission frame ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.24$), $t(91) = 3.33$, $p = .001$, $d = .69$, 95% CI [.27, 1.11].

Results

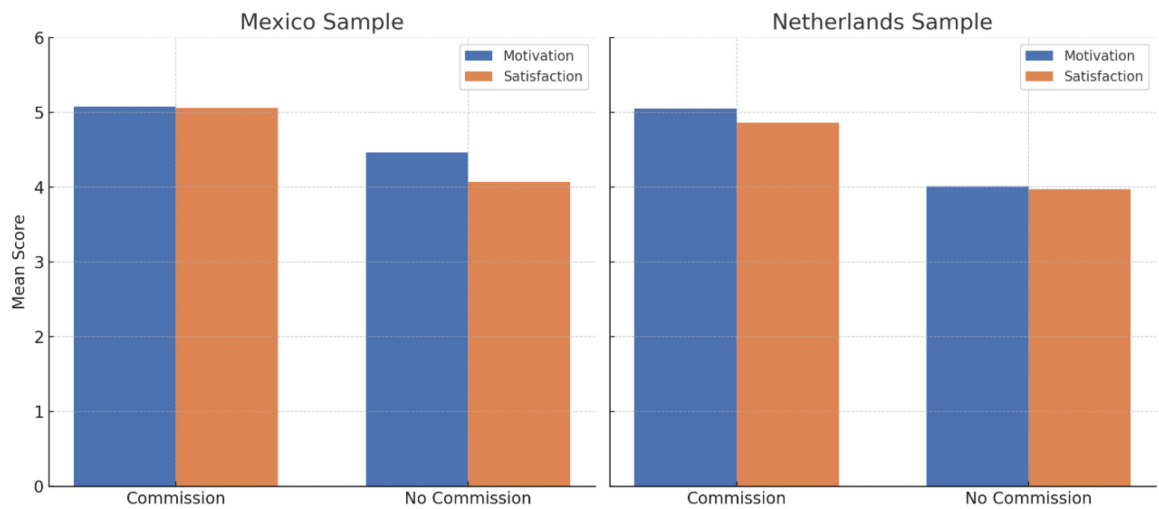


Figure 7: *Mean Scores for Motivation and Satisfaction by Pay Condition and Country*

Figure 7 helps to clarify the relationship between Mexico and the Netherlands and shows that for the commission-based scenario, the Dutch sample showed fairly similar motivation levels as compared to the motivation levels of the Mexican sample. The difference was slightly more visible with regards to the satisfaction levels, where the Dutch sample showed slightly lower satisfaction than the Mexican sample.

When looking at the control condition where no commission-based payment was offered to the participants, the results seem a bit clearer; the Dutch sample showed lower motivation levels than the Mexican sample. Comparing the satisfaction levels, the Dutch indicated slightly lower satisfaction than the Mexicans. Overall, the Dutch sample effectively showed lower motivation and satisfaction, irrespective of the scenario they were exposed to.

In order to see what the specific moderating effect of country on the established relationship was like, a two-way MANOVA test was conducted. This test allows to analyze the between-country effect to answer hypotheses 3 and 4.

Results

Table 9: *Multivariate Test Results for the Interaction Effect of Commission*Country*

Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	η^2p
Commission-Based Pay	Pillai's Trace	—	—	—	—	—	.11
Country	Pillai's Trace	.01	0.99	2	189	.37	.01
Commission × Country	Pillai's Trace	.04	4.25	2	189	.02	.04

In Table 9, the results of the multivariate tests for the two-way MANOVA are shown. Since the multivariate normality assumption was violated again, the relevant test to look at was the Pillai's Trace. Following that the one-way MANOVA already told us the effect of commission-based pay on the two independent variables, the statistically non-significant results of the Pillai's Trace test for the moderator variable 'country' ($V = .01$, $F(2, 189) = .99$, $p = .37$, $\eta^2p = .01$) suggested that there was no significant difference across the two countries on the DVs job motivation and job satisfaction.

Looking at the interaction effect of commission-based pay and country, there was a statistically significant relationship ($V = .04$, $F(2, 189) = 4.25$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2p = .04$), which indicated that the IV and the moderator variable had a relatively strong effect on motivation and satisfaction. However, recalling the effect size of the statistically significant independent variable commission-based pay on the DVs ($\eta^2p = .11$), the combined effect size of commission and country was weaker ($\eta^2p = .04$); while commission-based pay alone explained 11% in the variance of motivation and satisfaction, the interaction effect of commission-based pay and country together only explained around 4% of the variance in the DVs. Levene's test for equality of variances was tested again, now including the moderator variable country. The test was non-significant for the dependent variables motivation ($F(3, 190) = .63$, $p = .60$) and satisfaction ($F(3, 190) = 1.24$, $p = .30$), indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met even with additional variance due to the MV.

Again, univariate tests were conducted in order to see where exactly the interaction effect can be found, uncovering the specific between-country effect on both DV's separately. This is especially interesting, because the effect size of the multivariate test showed a relatively small effect size of the interaction effect of commission and country.

Results

Table 10: *Univariate Tests for the Effects of Country and Commission*Country Interaction on Motivation and Satisfaction*

Effect	Dependent Variable	F	df (1, 190)	p	η^2p
Country	Motivation	1.52	(1, 190)	.22	.01
	Satisfaction	0.63	(1, 190)	.43	.00
Commission × Country	Motivation	1.20	(1, 190)	.27	.01
	Satisfaction	0.06	(1, 190)	.81	.00

Table 10 shows the test results of the between-subjects effects, including the IVs' and the DVs' interaction effect. The two-way MANOVA revealed non-significant effects of the moderator country on either of the two DVs when looked at separately. The univariate tests showed that 'country' did not significantly influence job motivation ($F(1, 190) = 1.52, p = .22, \eta^2 = .01$) or job satisfaction ($F(1, 190) = .63, p = .43, \eta^2 = .00$). These results suggest that the participants' country of origin, which in this case was either the Netherlands or Mexico, did not have an impact on employee motivation or satisfaction when analyzed separately.

Furthermore, also the interaction effect of commission-based pay and country suggested no significant effects. The interaction effect was not statistically significant, neither on job motivation ($F(1, 190) = 1.20, p = .27, \eta^2 = .01$) nor on job satisfaction ($F(1, 190) = .06, p = .81, \eta^2 = .00$). This means, that even though the interaction effect was significant on both DV's combined, the effect is not strong enough on motivation or satisfaction alone to be statistically significant.

To further explore the significant multivariate interaction between commission-based pay and country, simple one-way ANOVAs were conducted within each country.

Results

Table 11: *Simple ANOVA for Effect of Commission-based Pay on Motivation and Satisfaction by Country*

Country	Dependent Variable	F	df (1, n)	p
Netherlands	Motivation	14.28	(1, 91)	< .001
	Satisfaction	11.09	(1, 91)	.001
Mexico	Motivation	5.43	(1, 99)	.022
	Satisfaction	13.52	(1, 99)	< .001

Levene's tests of homogeneity of variances were non-significant across all subgroups and dependent variables ($p > .05$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. In the Dutch sample, the one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of commission on motivation ($F(1, 91) = 14.28, p < .001$) and satisfaction ($F(1, 91) = 11.09, p = .001$) levels. The same counts for Mexico, where the effect on motivation ($F(1, 99) = 5.43, p = .022$) and satisfaction ($F(1, 99) = 13.52, p < .001$) was significant as well. Combining these results with the mean and standard deviation scores showcased in Figure 7, it suggests that while the interaction effect was relatively small (4%), the positive effect of commission-based pay was consistent across countries. For both countries, higher motivation scores also meant higher satisfaction scores for the commission-based scenario.

Recalling the second set of hypotheses in this research, hypothesis 3 predicted that commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job motivation, even more so for people from collectivistic, highly uncertainty avoidant and feminine cultures, whilst hypothesis 4 predicted that commission-based pay has a negative influence on salespeople's job satisfaction, even more so for people from collectivistic, highly uncertainty avoidant and feminine cultures. Considering the statistically significant interaction effect of commission-based pay and country on both job motivation and satisfaction combined, it becomes clear that there is a relationship to be mentioned. However, since it was hypothesized that the relationship would be negative and not, as the tests revealed, positive, the hypotheses are to be rejected. Since the Dutch participants indicated overall more negative motivation and satisfaction levels than the Mexican sample in both commission scenarios and subjects from both countries indicated a lower

attitude towards the no-commission scenario, a measurable relation could be seen, however, contrary to the predictions and only when the effect of the IV on job motivation and job satisfaction was combined. The sole effect on either of the two DVs was not strong enough to be statistically significant.

However, separate one-way ANOVAs conducted within each country showed that commission-based pay had a significant effect on both motivation and satisfaction within the Netherlands and Mexico. This suggests that although the strength of the effect was comparable across countries, resulting in a non-significant interaction for each DV separately, the overall multivariate pattern differed enough to produce a significant interaction at the combined level. In other words, the impact of commission-based pay on employee outcomes was consistent across countries, but small differences in how motivation and satisfaction jointly responded across cultures may have driven the multivariate interaction.

6. Discussion

6.1 Making sense of the findings

Whilst research on the topics of salesperson motivation and satisfaction has received substantial attention over the course of several decades starting in the first half of the 20th century with Lazarsfeld (1934; 1935) and Mayo (1924-1933), it remains one of the most ambiguous research topics in the field of motivation research due to the multitude of contrasting findings (Khusainova et al., 2018). This in turn complicates the process for employers to create an environment for salesforce employees in which they can thrive.

Firstly, recalling the first set of hypotheses which are based on the direct effect of performance-contingent pay on employee motivation and satisfaction levels, predicting negative relationships. Based on the analyses, both hypotheses can undoubtedly be rejected, considering the fact that statistically significant results pointed to higher job motivation and satisfaction levels in the positive framing condition, in which subjects were exposed to a scenario of a base pay and the outlook for bonuses depending on the individual performance output. The direct relationships of commission-based pay and motivation and satisfaction respectively was therefore positive.

Relating the findings of the research at hand to the aforementioned body of literature, it becomes clear that they are in line with Vroom's expectancy theory (1964), which states that people's work efforts depend on the reward they are expecting, setting external motivation in a positive relationship with performance. This comes to some surprise, since research which showed results in favor of the ET tends to be rather outdated (Chonko et al., 1992; Harrison et al., 1996). The findings are in line with one of the first researches conducted surrounding the topic of – as it was called then – piece-rate payments from Vroom & Deci (1970), who also reported that offering commissions to workers led to higher external motivation rates and to an increase in individual performance output. Also, Lopez et al. (2006) found in their study, that commission rates and other monetary incentives were more motivating than recognition or promotion. The findings of the decade-spanning literature review of Cerasoli et al. (2014) can only be partially confirmed, in that they state that performance-related compensation was found to increase only employee output quantity, not quality. The results of Kuvaas et al. (2016) are also worth mentioning; while performance-based pay was found to increase external motivation, paradoxically, it led to a decrease in the performance output of the employees, as their intrinsic motivation was weakened alongside the increase of the EM. The research at hand did not investigate actual employee performance, however, the findings match

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with Kuvaas et al. (2016) in that commissions lead to an increase in external motivation, although, with an unexpected effect on performance.

Contrarily, other research revealed that employees' biggest motivators were of non-monetary nature, like Tyagi (1985) who uncovered verbal recognition and feedback as peoples' main motivation and Galea (2005) who found that recognition, position advancement and trips were chosen as the highest motivators in her compensation survey. Whilst the literature review of Anderson and Huang (2006) emphasizes the urgency for employers to put into place a system focused on employee empowerment and verbal recognition in order to positively affect employee motivation, the research at hand shows proof for the positive effect of monetary incentives as an external motivator.

Regarding satisfaction, the findings of this research go against those of Sypniewska (2014), who identified the atmosphere at the workplace, the stability of employment and good relationships with co-workers as the three most influential factors in her job satisfaction research, all of which are non-monetary, internal motivators. Also Uka and Prendi (2021), Ek & Mukuru (2013) and Shahzadi et al. (2014) found, that internal motivation and satisfaction lead to an increase in performance.

More in line with the findings of the research at hand, Pullins (2001) found that commission-based pay serves as a good performance incentive, increasing satisfaction as well as motivation levels. In 2009, Mallin and Pullins even went so far as to relate IM with employees' performance-contingent commission payments.

All in all, it can be said that even though the findings of this research did not support the hypotheses of commissions leading to less motivated and satisfied salesforce employees due to additional external stress, other research is in line with the results at hand, underlining the positive relationship of commission-based pay and motivation and satisfaction. With the massive body of ambiguous motivation research, which points to many different relationships, this comes to no surprise as support can be found on any type of results, depending on the time, location and focus of previous research. What might have affected the relationship uncovered here, opposing the hypotheses of a negative relationship, is the fact that due to monetary and especially timely constraints, no real salespeople were investigated but rather, people of all kinds of professions were merely asked to imagine working a sales job. Never having been exposed to the real challenges, demands and expectations of a sales representative, it could be difficult to imagine the level of stress added by performance contingent payment methods. Reading about the possibility of receiving additional bonuses to your base salary might sound just

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more appealing and exciting in the ears of someone who has never been confronted with the implied pressure of constantly having to meet pre-set goals and expectations in order to make a better living. This could have led to more positively answered survey questionnaires than they would have by real sales representatives.

The second set of analyses, which was applied in order to test the interaction effect of the IV commission-based pay together with the moderator variable country on the DV's job motivation and job satisfaction, revealed interesting findings, however, not supporting the second set of hypotheses, which must also be rejected. Since the interaction effect of commission-based pay and country was significant only in the multivariate tests, it can be assumed that only when looking at both job motivation and satisfaction together, is the effect strong enough in order to be significant. Generally, just like with the one-way MANOVA, the descriptive statistics of this analysis speak for a positive relationship between commission-based pay and salespeople's job motivation and satisfaction, even when accounting for the subjects' country of origin as a moderator. Recalling that hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted a negative moderating role of country on the previously discovered relationship, the results of the analyses are very interesting; the subjects' culture did play a significant moderating role in the effect of the IV on the two DV's combined, however, opposed to what was hypothesized: generally, both countries showed a more positive attitude in the commission-based scenario and specifically, the Mexican sample showed a slightly more positive attitude in general, irrespective of the scenario. As Mexico represented the collectivistic country with high uncertainty avoidance and the Netherlands represented the feminine country in the hypotheses, the hypothesized negative relationship cannot be confirmed for either of the two countries.

Even though the results oppose the second set of the hypotheses as well, they relate interestingly to aforementioned findings of prior research. Firstly, it is worthwhile to recall that there is generally not much literature to compare the specific findings related to different cultures to in the first place; this is because most research on the effect of merit-pay systems has failed to account for a possible cultural influence and was conducted in western – and therefore fairly similar – countries with regards to work ethics as well as standards (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2011; Kuvaas et al., 2016). Other research failed to mention where the study was conducted at all (Cravens et al., 1993) and yet other research did find interesting results regarding motivation research for non-western

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countries, however, did not contrast their findings with research from other countries (Uka & Prendi, 2021).

To the best of my knowledge, Küster and Canales (2011) were one of the few to conduct research on the effects of commission-based pay on sales employee performance and compare it to related research findings from other countries. Generally, the hypotheses of the research at hand are supported by the findings of Küster and Canales (2011), who compared the influence of fixed versus merit pay on employee performance and effectiveness and found that employees who received a fixed salary performed better and more effectively than those whose salary depended on commissions. This is contrary to what the findings of this research suggest. Their research was conducted in Spain and the authors compared their results to related research from Australia (Cravens et al., 1992), Canada (Barker, 1997) and the U.S. (Piercy et al., 1998). Since all four are western countries, they show fairly similar scores on Hofstede's cultural dimensions and are comparable in their work ethics, which could explain, why no significant differences could be found. It does not explain, however, why the Netherlands, analyzed in this research and which can also be described as a western country with similar country scores, showed opposing results to those of Küster and Canales (2011). Another interesting research to look at in relation to the results at hand is that of Iguisi (2009). Even though Iguisi (2009) did not focus on the effect of monetary incentives in his motivation research, he compared individualistic European countries, amongst which the Netherlands, with the extremely collectivistic country Nigeria, which scores 0 points on the individualism scale (*The Culture Factor Group*, 2025). He uncovered striking differences in which factors were most motivating for the collectivistic country as compared to the individualistic ones. Even though in the research findings of the investigation at hand both countries pointed to a similar positive relationship between commissions and motivation, the differences within this relationship were statistically significant. The researches complement each other in that they uncover the need for a distinction between different cultures in motivation research, irrespective of the specific type of motivator under investigation.

The results of the research of Anderson and Oliver (1987) are in line with the findings at hand, in that performance-based payment and monetary rewards worked effectively in incentivizing employees to perform better at their sales job. This also supports the prior discovery that Vroom's expectancy theory is supported by rather outdated research. Comparing the findings at hand to those of Uka and Prendi (2021), who conducted their

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research on the question which motivational factors influence employee performance in a variety of Albanian companies, alignment can be found in that monetary incentives like bonuses were found to be among the most essential motivational factors. This is especially interesting, since the statistically significant interaction effect of commission-based pay and country on motivation and satisfaction found in the research at hand point to the same implication, namely that countries who are highly collectivistic, are in favor of performance-contingent payment systems. The Mexican subjects' attitude towards commission-based pay was significantly more positive than that of the Dutch subjects; while Mexico scores only 34 points on the individualism scale of the Hofstede based country comparison tool and Albania scores as little as 27 points on said scale, the Netherlands score a striking 100 points (*The Culture Factor Group*, 2025). It seems like contrary to what was hypothesized, collectivistic countries are more in favor of commission-based payment systems as compared to individualistic countries. Even though the relationship was significant only in the interaction effect, meaning that the difference was not big enough in order to be significant when analyzing the IVs' and the MVs' effect on motivation or satisfaction separately, the significant interaction effect on both DV's is supported by Uka and Prendi's (2021) findings.

All things considered, the findings point to interesting and relevant relationships, especially when looking at the moderating effect of peoples' country of origin. A possible explanation as to why these two culturally very different countries both showed a positive relationship between commission-based pay and motivation and satisfaction, is that the cultural distinctions analyzed in this research – individualism/ collectivism, masculinity/ femininity and high/ low uncertainty avoidance – were not the decisive factors in this correlation. Again, conducting this research with real salesforce employees who are exposed to the pressure of commission-based pay, might lead to different results, potentially to a more negative attitude towards bonuses. The attempt to compare Mexico and the Netherlands, two entirely different cultures thousands of miles apart, while having limited resources, bares the risk of not fully grasping crucial distinctions in the research which might explain the unforeseen results. The Netherlands' overall lower attitude irrespective of the experimental scenario could be based in the socioeconomic fact that employees generally are fairly well compensated for their work and make a very good living, making the whole system of bonuses obsolete for them. Just as it is not too common to tip service workers in the Netherlands as they receive a fair wage and are not dependent on tips (Gössling, 2020), it might be more uncommon for Dutch employers to

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put in place a payment system which is based on a low base pay and bonuses, leading to Dutch people having an overall more negative attitude towards performance-contingent pay.

Calling to mind the research question posed at the beginning of this paper:

How does commission-based pay influence job motivation and job satisfaction for salesforce employees from individualistic versus collectivistic countries?

The goal was to contribute to the closure of the research gap that was left by the lack of cross-cultural considerations in existing motivation and satisfaction research. Simply put, the answer is that commission-based pay has a positive influence on salesforce employees' job motivation and satisfaction levels for both individualistic and collectivistic countries. However, there are several layers adding to the implications of this answer. Even though the relationship was positive for both countries under investigation, they still showed significant differences in their respective indicated levels of motivation and satisfaction. Specifically, the Netherlands, representing an individualistic country, showed lower overall scores than Mexico, which represented a collectivistic country. This was the case for both the commission-based and the no commission-based scenario, which points to the possibility that Dutch salesforce employees require entirely different motivation and retention strategies. All in all, it can be said that motivation and satisfaction is positively influenced by commission-based pay as a monetary incentive strategy for salespeople from differing cultures.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings have a variety of theoretical implications. Firstly, this research contributes to the existing body of literature regarding motivation and satisfaction research, which is highly ambiguous in its findings to this day. More importantly, light was shed on the importance of considering potential cultural factors when looking for incentivizing strategies for salesforce employees. Furthermore, with most of recent literature contradicting the implications of Vroom's expectancy theory (1964), this research found evidence regarding its theoretical qualifications to this day, supporting its supposition that external motivators, such as monetary incentives, do work in raising motivation and

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satisfaction levels of employees. Furthermore, the research at hand provides context for the ET in the human resource management field, as compared to the motivational psychology field where most of the related literature can be found and validated its theoretical qualifications to this day. As most of the research concerning Vroom's expectancy theory is rather outdated and there is a certain ambiguity regarding the theory's applicability in modern work environment contexts (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018), this research builds ground for the ET in that the external motivator commission did lead to an overall increase in motivation and satisfaction.

Regarding the inclusion of Hofstede's cultural dimensions as an additional concept which might affect and challenge prior research findings, this research breaches the interdisciplinary gap between culture as a crucial predictor of work behaviors and attitudes on the one hand and motivation research on the other. The research at hand calls for more academic attention towards intercultural implications in a dynamic, globalized world; research regarding the international working environment can hardly be conducted without the consideration of cultural differences. More specifically, academic research has a way of considering the results found in western societies as applicable to all cultures, not even trying to conduct comparisons with culturally very different countries from the own. The statistically significant differences between the two countries researched at hand provide ground for the idea that cultures are worth studying separately and comparatively in order to grasp a more holistic picture of differing preferences, behaviors or attitudes, especially when applying those to the real world.

6.3 Managerial Implications

There are also some practical, hands-on implications to consider. Directly building on the theoretical implications, the results have shown that people from different countries react differently to the specific incentive strategy researched here. Even though for both countries under investigation there was a positive relationship between commission-based pay and motivation and satisfaction, the interaction effect including country as a moderating variable speaks for a statistically significant difference between Mexico and the Netherlands as representations of collectivistic and individualistic countries. For both countries, the no-commission scenario evoked a lower attitude; however, the Dutch participants had an overall lower attitude, also towards commission-based pay, which might imply that this external motivation strategy is not of interest to them to a degree

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that it might be to people from other cultures. Keeping this in mind, it becomes clear that in order to create a healthy, thriving work environment for salesforce teams that consist of increasingly international employees, managers should consider different motivational strategies for different cultures. Generally, peoples' understanding of culture and their need to belong and identify themselves in terms of their surrounding groups seems to not only affect their way of working as a whole (Steers & Sánchez-Runde, 2017) but also their understanding of a fair and motivating environment specifically.

6.4 Limitations

When looking at the methodological approach and the results obtained through this research, there are some aspects which should be addressed. First of all, as the research was conducted as part of a master's thesis, there were clear monetary and time-related constraints as for the scope of the investigation. This means, that the sample sizes for each of the two countries might actually have been too small to make confident statements regarding real-world implications, especially when the statements include suggestions for the samples' culture as a whole. Knowing that culture is abstract and difficult to operationalize, the scope of this research may have not sufficed to grasp the subjects' cultural understanding while being able to exclude possible individual noise such as the social desirability bias (Grimm, 2010).

Additionally, the majority of the sample for both subject groups was reached through my personal network, which in turn passed on the survey to their contacts, making it a snowball, non-random sampling method for most obtained answers, which may have skewed the results, overrepresenting certain groups and underrepresenting other groups. For example, the majority of the subjects for both countries were between 18 to 35 years old and indicated a bachelor's degree as their highest completed educational level.

With the limited scope of this research, only two countries could be compared, representing a collectivistic and an individualistic culture respectively, which paints a rather narrow picture and makes it hard to expand research findings to all cultures pertaining to these certain categories. Also, in terms of variables studied, including more incentive strategies would have allowed for a more differentiated overall image of the effect of external motivators, however, the limitations of the given framework did not allow for a more holistic research approach.

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What should also be mentioned, is that due to time and resource constraints, it was decided to create a scenario in which participants were asked to imagine that they work as sales employees, and, depending on the scenario they were exposed to, to imagine that they receive only a fixed salary or a base salary with bonuses based on their individual performance. It would have been too time intensive to seek out real Mexican and Dutch sales employees, which adds to the difficulty of making confident statements about real world conditions.

Lastly, the survey was conducted online, which of course was in favor of a timely research conduction, however, the anonymity of the participants makes it impossible to know whether they actually are who they indicated to be. There is a possibility that subjects indicated different demographics, for example, just for the fun of it. Another factor to take into consideration when conducting an online survey is that the researcher cannot control for the environment in which the survey is answered. Depending on outside noise or surroundings, subjects may have been in very different circumstances while taking the questionnaire, which can influence responses. In the research of Kemmelmeier (2016), the researcher discovered, that individualistic and collectivistic countries show different response styles and behaviors, which can lead to skewed results based on the fact that respondents come from different cultures.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to do two things: firstly, the goal was to apply the famous, but controversial expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) to a human resource management field, adding theoretical value to the existing body of motivation and satisfaction research, in the specific context of sales staff. Secondly and more importantly, the aim of this research was to conduct a cross-country comparison of two culturally very different countries, attempting to close at least to some extent the research gap existing in motivation research to this day.

The goal was to uncover, whether commission-based pay, if at all, has a positive or negative influence on perceived job motivation and job satisfaction, specifically comparing Mexico and the Netherlands. A quantitative survey with an experimental condition was conducted, in order to unveil the effects of two differently framed commission-based pay scenarios (one including and one excluding commissions) on salesforce employee motivation and satisfaction. The theory was based on Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) as well as on three of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions, namely individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and high versus low uncertainty avoidance. Mexico and the Netherlands were chosen as two representative countries, because they are characterized by very opposing values on Hofstede's dimensions, Mexico being especially collectivistic, masculine and uncertainty avoidant, and the Netherlands being very individualistic, feminine and not uncertainty avoidant in work related behaviors, norms and values.

Having conducted a variety of statistical analyses, a clearer picture could be painted, adding to the ambiguous body of existing research, which made it difficult for employers to apply actual, hands-on strategies to retain motivated and satisfied salesforce employees. Support was found for the expectancy theory's main proposition, namely that money or other forms of external incentive strategies lead to an increase in employee motivation. Furthermore, even though there were some evident differences uncovered between Mexico and the Netherlands, both countries showed an overall increase in motivation and satisfaction scores when exposed to the possibility of earning performance-based bonuses. Retaining salesforce employees in today's fast-paced and demanding international business environment is a hard enough job for employers and with employees often coming from many different countries, creating an international daily routine at work, it becomes even harder to find the right strategies for incentivizing all. The results at hand

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offer insights into the overall cross-cultural consistency of incentive-based motivation and highlight the practical potential of commission structures in international workforces.

8. Outlook

The research at hand provided some valuable insights into the important moderating role that culture plays in the dynamic of commission-based pay and salesforce employee motivation and satisfaction. However, the limited scope of this investigation leaves substantial room for further research. Firstly, it is important to note that the comparison of different cultures should extend to more countries, including non-western countries, so as to be able to draw a more sophisticated picture on which cultures require which internal or external motivators in order to perform at their best. This would also serve to reduce the bias in most research to extend their findings generally to all countries, leading to the adoption of western management standards in countries where wholly different approaches would lead to far better performance and more motivated employees (Igusi, 2009). Furthermore, an extensive comparison of different external as well as internal motivational strategies would fill the hole that this research left by only investigating the effect of commissions on motivation and satisfaction levels. Also, while this research was able to paint a general picture on the positive effect of performance-contingent pay on motivation and satisfaction, qualitative research would be able to analyze more in-depth, what specifically led to their increase in attitudes in the specific scenario of receiving bonuses for performance. As was mentioned in the limitations, due to timely constraints, people were asked to imagine working as sales employees; researching the topic on real salesforce employees from different cultures could lead to more differentiated and grounded findings, uncovering from first-hand experiences what and why specific motivators work better than others.

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10. Appendix

Appendix A.

1. Stimulus Material [English Version]

Scenario 1: Commission-based pay

Please imagine, that you work in the sales department of an organization. The company sells organic animal feed in several countries across Europe and North America. Your job is to sell the company's product to potential new customers, usually farmers. In your position as a sales representative, your company offers commission-based bonuses, which means your income depends to a certain degree on the number of sales you could make during the month. Your salary offers you a regular level of disposable income, which you can increase based on the company's commission system.

Scenario 2: No commission-based pay

Please imagine, that you work in the sales department of an organization. The company sells organic animal feed in several countries across Europe and North America. Your job is to sell the company's product to potential new customers, usually farmers. In your position as a sales representative, your company does not offer commission-based bonuses, which means your income does not depend on the number of sales you could make during the month. Your salary offers you a regular level of disposable income, which you cannot increase based on the company's fixed pay system.

2. Stimulus Material [Spanish Version]

Escenario 1: Comisión

Imagine que trabaja en el departamento de ventas de una empresa. La empresa vende piensos ecológicos en varios países de Europa y Norteamérica. Su trabajo consiste en vender los productos de la empresa a nuevos clientes potenciales, normalmente granjeros. En su puesto de representante de ventas, la empresa ofrece primas basadas en comisiones, lo que significa que sus ingresos dependen en cierta medida del número de ventas que consiga a hacer durante el mes. Su salario le ofrece un nivel regular de

Appendix

ingresos disponibles, que puede aumentar gracias al sistema de comisiones de la empresa.

Escenario 2: Ninguna Comisión

Imagine que trabaja en el departamento de ventas de una empresa. La empresa vende piensos ecológicos para animales en varios países de Europa y Norteamérica. Su trabajo consiste en vender los productos de la empresa a nuevos clientes potenciales, normalmente granjeros. En su puesto de representante de ventas, la empresa no ofrece primas basadas en comisiones, lo que significa que sus ingresos no dependen del número de ventas que consiga a hacer durante el mes. Su salario le ofrece un nivel regular de ingresos disponibles, que no puede aumentar en función del sistema de retribución fija de la empresa.

Appendix B.

1. The Survey Questionnaire [English Version]

Consent

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey! You are helping me in the attainment of my Master's degree at the University of Vienna.

The goal is to unveil by which internal as well as external factors employees feel motivated to do their job and how employee satisfaction can be achieved.

Firstly, you will be asked about demographic information. In the second part of the survey, you will be presented with a scenario and are asked to answer the following questions, keeping this certain scenario you were given in mind.

Please read the questions carefully and answer them as truthfully as possible. There are no wrong answers!

Filling out this survey should take you no more than 5-10 minutes and your responses will be analyzed and processed anonymously and only for the purposes of this thesis.

To continue, please press "I consent" to allow me to analyze your responses.

I consent

I do not consent

Appendix

Demographics

What is your gender? (male, female, diverse, prefer not to say)

What is your age? (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66 or older)

What is your nationality? (Dutch, Mexican, other)

What is your highest degree of education? (High school, Bachelor, Master, PhD, other)

Stimulus Material

Random assignment of participants to either of the two Scenarios shown in Appendix A

Motivation and Satisfaction (Intro)

In the second part of this survey, you are asked to indicate your level of motivation and satisfaction with your imagined role as a salesperson for organic animal feed as well as with your particular payment system.

Please read the statements carefully and indicate your level of agreement using the 7 options on the scale below.

Remember, there are no wrong answers!

(Scale options: 1= strongly disagree – 7= strongly agree)

Job motivation

1. Expectancy

- a. "I think the effort I put into my job directly influences my performance outcomes."
- b. "With the salary I receive, I feel motivated enough to perform well at my job."
- c. "The compensation I receive is sufficient for me to strive for high performance in my role."

2. Instrumentality

- a. "My organisation recognizes and rewards high performance."
- b. "There is a clear connection between my performance and the rewards I receive."
- c. "I believe that performing well in my job will lead to an adequate compensation."

3. Valence

- a. "The rewards I receive in my job align with my personal values and goals."

Appendix

- b. "I feel that the rewards (e.g., pay, recognition, promotions) for my work are worth the effort I put in."
- c. "The opportunities for growth and advancement in my job are important to me."

Job satisfaction

1. Expectancy

- a. "My job performance is directly linked to the rewards I receive."
- b. "I am satisfied with the financial rewards I receive for my work."
- c. "High performance in my role is rewarded appropriately by my organization."

2. Instrumentality

- a. "I believe there is a fair relationship between the effort I put in and the outcomes I achieve."
- b. "The benefits offered by my organization meet my needs and expectations."
- c. "I feel adequately rewarded for the effort I put into my job."

3. Valence

- a. "My work contributes to my personal growth and career development."
- b. "The tasks I perform at work lead to measurable rewards."
- c. "I feel a sense of accomplishment in the work I do."

Sources:

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Appendix

(https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2015_GagneForestEtAl_MultidimensionalWork.pdf)

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(<https://link-springer-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/article/10.1007/BF00929796>)

Cultural Dimensions

In the last section of this survey, you are asked to indicate your perceptions of your culture's norms and values. It is about the way you think your culture actually is, not the way you think it should be.

There are no right or wrong answers, and answers don't indicate goodness or badness of the organization.

Just like before, please click on the number which most closely represents your observations about your culture. (House et al., 2004)

Ind/Col

1. "Where I am from, group members take pride in the individual accomplishments of their fellow group members."
(1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree)
2. Generally, where I am from, people support a pay and bonus system that reflects:
(1: individual interests – 7: collective interests)
3. In my culture:
(1: individualism is more valued than group cohesion – 7: group cohesion is more valued than individualism)
4. In my culture, managers encourage group loyalty even if individual goals suffer.
(1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree)

Masc/Fem

1. In my culture, people are generally:
(1: assertive – 7: non-assertive)

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2. In my culture, people are generally:
(1: not at all sensitive toward others – 7: very sensitive toward others)
3. In my culture, employees are encouraged to strive for continuously improved performance.
(1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree)
4. In my culture, people in positions of power try to:
(1: increase their social distance from less powerful individuals – 7: decrease their social distance from less powerful individuals)

Uncertainty

1. The way to be successful in my culture is to:
(1: take events as they occur – 7: plan ahead)
2. In my culture, most work is highly structured, leading to few unexpected results
(1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree)
3. In my culture, job requirements and instructions are spelled out in detail, so employees know what they are expected to do.
(1: strongly disagree – 7: strongly agree)
4. In my culture, being innovative to improve performance is generally:
(1: not rewarded – 7: substantially rewarded)

Source:

House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies. *Thousand Oaks, CA*. (<https://globeproject.com/data/GLOBE-Phase-2-Alpha-Questionnaire-2006.pdf>)

2. The Survey Questionnaire [Spanish Version]

Consentimiento

Estimado participante,

Muchas gracias por participar en esta encuesta. Me está ayudando en la consecución de mi Master en la Universidad de Viena.

Appendix

El objetivo es desvelar por qué factores tanto internos como externos, motivan a los empleados a realizar su trabajo y cómo se puede lograr la satisfacción de los empleados. En primer lugar, se le preguntará por información demográfica. En la segunda parte de la encuesta, se le presentará un escenario y se le pedirá que responda a las siguientes preguntas, teniendo en mente este determinado escenario que se le ha dado. Lea atentamente las preguntas y respóndalas con la mayor sinceridad posible. No hay respuestas incorrectas.

Rellenar esta encuesta no le llevará más de 5-10 minutos.

Sus respuestas se analizarán y procesarán de forma anónima y sólo para los fines de esta tesis.

Para continuar, pulse «Doy mi consentimiento» para permitirme analizar sus respuestas.

Doy mi consentimiento

No doy mi consentimiento

Demografía

Cuál es su edad? (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66 o más)

Cuál es su género? (masculino, femenino, diverso, prefiero no decir)

Cuál es su nacionalidad? (Mexicana, Neerlandés, otra)

Cuál es su nivel de educación más alto (completado)? (Escuela secundaria, Licenciatura, Máster, Doctorado, otro)

Material de estímulo

Asignación aleatoria de los participantes a uno de los dos escenarios que figuran en el Apéndice A.2

Motivación y satisfacción: Intro

En la segunda parte de esta encuesta, se le pide que indique su nivel de motivación y satisfacción con su papel imaginado como vendedor de piensos ecológicos, así como con su sistema de pago particular.

Por favor, lea atentamente las afirmaciones e indique su nivel de acuerdo utilizando las

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7 opciones de la siguiente escala.

Recuerde que no hay respuestas incorrectas.

(Escala: 1= totalmente en desacuerdo - 7= totalmente de acuerdo)

Motivación laboral

1. Expectativa

- a. "Creo que el esfuerzo que pongo en mi trabajo influye directamente en los resultados de mi rendimiento."
- b. "Con el salario que recibo, me siento lo suficientemente motivado para rendir bien en mi trabajo."
- c. "La remuneración que recibo es suficiente para que me esfuerce por obtener un alto rendimiento en mi puesto."

2. Instrumentalidad

- a. "Mi organización reconoce y recompensa el alto rendimiento."
- b. "Existe una conexión clara entre mi rendimiento y las recompensas que recibo."
- c. "Creo que un buen rendimiento en mi trabajo me reportará una remuneración adecuada."

3. Valencia

- a. "Las recompensas que recibo en mi trabajo se alinean con mis valores y objetivos personales."
- b. "Siento que las recompensas (por ejemplo, salario, reconocimiento, ascensos) por mi trabajo merecen el esfuerzo que hago."
- c. "Las oportunidades de crecimiento y ascenso en mi trabajo son importantes para mí."

Satisfacción laboral

1. Expectativa

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- a. "Mi rendimiento en el trabajo está directamente relacionado con las recompensas que recibo."
- b. "Estoy satisfecho con las recompensas económicas que recibo por mi trabajo."
- c. "El alto rendimiento en mi función es recompensado adecuadamente por mi organización."

2. Instrumentalidad

- a. "Mi organización reconoce y recompensa el alto rendimiento."
- b. "Existe una conexión clara entre mi rendimiento y las recompensas que recibo."
- c. "Creo que un buen rendimiento en mi trabajo me reportará una remuneración adecuada."

3. Valencia

- a. "Mi trabajo contribuye a mi crecimiento personal y al desarrollo de mi carrera."
- b. "Las tareas que realizo en el trabajo conducen a recompensas medibles".
- c. "Me siento satisfecho con el trabajo que hago."

Dimensiones culturales

En la última sección de esta encuesta, se le pide que indique su percepción de las normas y valores de su cultura. Se trata de cómo cree que es realmente su cultura, no de cómo cree que debería ser.

No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas, y las respuestas no indican la bondad o maldad de la cultura.

Al igual que antes, haga clic en el número que mejor represente sus observaciones sobre su cultura. (House et al., 2004)

Ind/Col

1. De donde yo soy, los miembros del grupo se enorgullecen de los logros individuales de sus compañeros.

(1: totalmente en desacuerdo - 7: totalmente de acuerdo)

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2. En general, de donde soy, la gente apoya un sistema de retribución y primas que refleje:
(1: intereses individuales - 7: intereses colectivos)
3. 3. En mi cultura:
(1: se valora más el individualismo que la cohesión del grupo - 7: se valora más la cohesión del grupo que el individualismo)
4. En mi cultura, los directivos fomentan la lealtad al grupo, aunque se resientan los objetivos individuales.
(1: totalmente en desacuerdo - 7: totalmente de acuerdo)

Masc/Fem

1. En mi cultura, la gente suele ser:
(1: muy asertiva - 7: nada asertiva)
2. En mi cultura, la gente suele ser:
(1: nada sensible hacia los demás - 7: muy sensible hacia los demás)
3. En mi cultura, se anima a los empleados a esforzarse por mejorar continuamente su rendimiento.
(1: totalmente en desacuerdo - 7: totalmente de acuerdo)
4. En mi cultura, las personas en posiciones de poder intentan:
(1: aumentar su distancia social con las personas menos poderosas - 7: disminuir su distancia social con las personas menos poderosas)

Incertidumbre

1. La forma de tener éxito en mi cultura es:
(1: tomar los acontecimientos espontáneamente como ocurren - 7: planificar con antelación)
2. En mi cultura, la mayor parte del trabajo está muy estructurado, lo que da lugar a pocos resultados inesperados
(1: totalmente en desacuerdo - 7: totalmente de acuerdo)
3. En mi cultura, los requisitos y las instrucciones del trabajo se explican detalladamente, por lo que los empleados saben lo que se espera de ellos.
(1: totalmente en desacuerdo - 7: totalmente de acuerdo)
4. En mi cultura, ser innovador para mejorar el rendimiento es generalmente:
(1: nada recompensado - 7: recompensado sustancialmente)