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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BYSTANDER PARTICIPATION BEHAVIOR AND INNOVATIVE CAPABILITY IN THE MALAYSIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

*Innovative capability is one of the requirements for organizations to compete, to survive and to succeed in the global competitive environment. Literature shows that there is no single factor for innovative capability success, but it does recognize that it is possible for every organization to discover where the increased efforts must be focused in order to transform a specific success in a process of continuous innovation and to achieve good results. Therefore, this study proposed the concept of bystander participation behavior on innovative capability in the Malaysian hotel industry. The study is a quantitative method, which tested the relationships between bystander participation behavior and innovative capability. Questionnaires were distributed to more than 500 supervisors from four and five star rated hotels in Malaysia registered in the directory of Malaysian Association of Hotels, of which 208 usable questionnaires were considered valid. Statistical evidence was found that there is a significant relationship between bystander participation behavior and innovative capability.*

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## 1. Introduction

The main success of an organization in the twenty-first century is the aspect of innovative capability (Abdullah, Omar, & Panatik, 2016; Palangkaraya, Stierwald, Webster, Jensen, 2010; Emmanuel, 2008; Kuratko, Covin, & Hornsby, 2014). If organizations can better understand innovative capability, they can better foresee, harness, and leverage it to accomplish business results (Dolkiewicz, 2016). Therefore, innovative capability is one of the requirements for organizational success and survival in this competitive environment. High innovative capabilities are determined by workgroups and employees in the organization. Many organizations such as the hotel industry are trying hard to enhance their innovative capability in order to remain competitive. In the context of hotel management, innovative capability appears to be one of the means for organizations to convert change into opportunities and thus succeed (Chen, 2011). In Malaysia, the hotel business is becoming a competitive landscape and it is one of the main industry which contributes to the economic development of the country (Che Ahmat et al., 2011). The hotel industry, a sub-sector of Malaysian service, plays an important role in supporting Malaysian's tourism industry and economy. The performance of hotel industry in Malaysia is influenced by both internal and external factors

(Hilman & Narentheren, 2014). The external factors that affect the hotel's performance are competition, technology and uncertainties (Shahrbanoo, 2013). The Malaysian hotel industry is going through drastic changes, with regard to its external environment, largely due to the greater extent of volatility in the environment and the increasing level of uncertainties in the world's economy (Awang et al., 2008). Hotels have become highly competitive (Shahrbanoo, 2013) and due to this pressure, hotels must continue to innovate in order to remain in global competition (Siti Nabiha et al., 2010). To survive and be sustainable in the sector, it is very important for top management of hotels to find ways to improve their efficiency (Foo & Mohhidin, 2011). Literature indicates that it is possible for each organization to find where the increased efforts must be focused in order to transform a specific success in a process of continuous innovative capability. For this reason, there has been an increased concern from researchers trying to understand factors that contribute to the innovative capability of organizations. The literature review showed that studies on factors that determine innovative capability have been widely given attention at many perspectives and views. Specific attention from the perspective of behavioral, in particular to bystander participation behavior, is lacking.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Innovative Capability

Innovative capability is very important for organization in order to achieve sustainable organizational transformations in turbulent business environments (Rogiervan, Patrick, & Remko, 2017). There is a variety of definitions of innovative capability in the literature. Terms such as innovation, innovation capacity, innovative capability and innovation capability which appear in the innovation literature have been used interchangeably (Hogan, Soutar, Kennedy, McColl, & Sweeney, 2011). Innovative capability refers to organization's ability to create new and useful knowledge or products and services (Zheng, Liu, & George, 2010, Fleury, Fleury, & Borini, 2013) continuously through organizational capabilities, capacities and competencies (Momeni, Nielsen, & Kafash, 2015). Innovative capability is an internal stimulating energy for production and exploration of new ideas in utilization and examination of solutions for detecting environmental opportunities in the market, and it is argued that one way to develop this capability is to increase the absorption capacity of organizations for these opportunities (Assink, 2006). Innovative capability is the ability to routinely achieve innovative outcomes (Wallin, Larsson, Isaksson, & Larsson, 2011).

Innovative capability flows from a collection of abilities, which means an internal potential for generation of new ideas, identification of new market opportunities, new services and products through resources and capabilities of organization (Momeni et al., 2015). According to Dennis (2015), innovative capability is something which must be new and different from what has previously existed in that context or application and it must somehow benefit someone or something. If organizations can better understand innovative capability, they can better predict, harness, and leverage it to achieve business results (Dolkiewicz, 2016). It is widely considered that high innovative capability is necessary for survival and facilitates superior performance (Francis, 2005).

Previous studies on innovative capability have identified various factors affecting innovative capability from various perspectives such as knowledge management (Gloet & Samson, 2013), intellectual capital, (Wu & Sivalogatlansan, 2013), and entrepreneurship (Jia, 2010). According to research done by Neely and Hii (2012), innovative

capability of an organization is underpinned by the management of four interconnected dimensions: culture, resources, competence, and networking. Helfat et al. (2007), they found that innovation can be achieved in two ways which are exploitation and exploration. Other researchers suggest that the key determinants of organization's capacity to innovate are a culture of the firm; the internal processes adopted; and the external environment (Neely & Hii, 2012). In the empirical research by Chen (2007) on knowledge sharing and organization's innovative capability, it was indicated that employee willingness to both donate and collect knowledge enables the organization to improve innovative capability. Lawson and Samson (2001) found that the stronger the innovative capability possessed by an organization, the more effective will be their innovation performance. Most of the studies on the subject of innovative capability attempted to draw out the variety of dimensions of innovative capability from the literature (Hogan et al., 2011; Ibrahim, Saleh Zolait, Subramanian & Ashtiani, 2009; Lawson & Samson, 2001; Wang & Ahmed, 2004; Balan & Lindsay, 2010). Research by Momeni et al., (2015) innovative capability has been dependent on other capabilities in an organization and classifies them into three groups including structural capability, personnel capability, and operational capability. Brett (2014) stated that organization's innovative capability may be influenced by many of factors that are present throughout the organizational system.

## **2.2 Bystander Participation Behavior**

Bystander term is widely used in the field of social psychology result (Barnett, 2012). Based on the bystander concept defined by scholars from the literature review, bystander maybe those who see few opportunities, or see opportunities but decide not to act (Gerstein & Shaw, 2007) and not to participate or not directly be involved (Bowes & Leary, 2005). Bystander participation behavior is a dynamic process that includes people's responses to events and ideas over a period of time as well as the changes in their self-perception and identity that result (Barnett, 2012). A bystander could be anyone who sees or otherwise becomes aware of behavior that appears worthy of comment or action (Scully & Rowe, 2009). Some authors refer to the bystander as a passerby, observer, witness, or participant (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2005). Bystanders might be peers or teammates. They might be a subordinate or a senior to the person whose comment or behavior warrants reaction. Generally, the bystander is seen as an individual, a group, an institution, an organization, a state etc. (Barnett, 2012). Scully (2005) provided descriptors nature of what a bystander is and is not. According to the descriptors, a bystander is a witness, concerned party, listener, mediator, facilitator, observer, colleague, peacemaker, stakeholder, helper, onlooker, peer, humble questioner, advocate, friend, eavesdropper, audience, and learner. Meanwhile, a bystander is not a judge, rescuer, avenger, hero/heroine, enforcer, final authority, fixer, and know-it-all.

Bystander behavior concept has been discussed by various scholars from different countries and different academic disciplines such as history, social science, social psychology, pedagogy and philosophy (Barnett, 2012). Bystander behavior can also surface in other contexts, such as technological or market-driven opportunities requiring substantial investment and timely, decisive actions (Gernstain & Shaw, 2007). Gernstain & Shaw (2007) provided the types of organization bystander behavior as shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1:  
Consequences of Organizational Bystander Behavior

	<b>Belief accurate</b>	<b>Belief false</b>
Individual takes action	1. Increases likelihood of productive organizational outcome 2. Risks of whistle-blower retaliation 3. Individual is a hero or whistle-blower	4. Cost to individual's reputation, career 5. Costs to the organization to follow-up identified concerns 6. Individual is an alarmist
Individual remains Passive	7. Decreased likelihood of productive organizational outcomes 8. Individual is a <i>bystander</i>	9. No cost 10. Individual is a savvy professional

Table 2:  
Two Types of Organizational Bystander Behavior

<b>Types of Organizational Bystander Behavior</b>	<b>Description of Bystander Behavior</b>
Failure to anticipate and address organizational catastrophes.	Those with information or perspective that could potentially prevent an organizational disaster remain silent or fail to voice their concerns in a manner that results in productive action.
Failure to identify and seize organizational opportunities	Those with information or perspective that could increase the likelihood of seizing an opportunity remain silent or fail to voice their concerns in a manner that results in productive action.

Previous research on bystander has been referred to the various domains of inquiry especially with emergencies and dangerous situations such as bully victim, peer victimization, violence, etc. Although the bystander effect specifically applies to helping behavior in emergency situations, Hudson and Bruckman (2004) used bystander effect as lens through which to view non-emergency situations such as educational environments. Following this, the study was conducted in the context of non-dangerous, non-violent emergencies by applying and understanding the Social Exchange Theory of the bystander behavior to explain and predict behavior in the context of employees' participation in innovative capability. Hudson and Bruckman (2004) borrowed the notion of the bystander effect from social psychology in examining the participation patterns in educational settings both online and classroom environment. Peter and Christian (2014) stated that employees can provide new ideas and actively participate in intra-corporate improvement processes which is important factors in innovative capability outcomes.

### 3. Research Model

Buergin (2006) proposes an organization's innovative capability landscape to visualize factors of innovative capability in the context of the business environment. He stated that in the level

of behavioral specific, the collaboration, way of communicating, willingness to responsibility, style of leadership, incentive system or acceptance of risks are described. Based on literature review there are few types of research conducted issues relating to behavioral level and innovative capability. According to Daskalakis (2013), behavioral determinants such as creative abilities prove to be relevant for the decision to conduct eco-innovation (Daskalakis, 2013). In particular, to behavioral additionality, focus on collaboration has been used as an approach to the evaluation of innovation programmes and contribute to policy-making and analysis (Gok, 2010). Behavioral competence indicators have also been used to support managers and staff in identifying appropriate. 'Behavioral Indicators' that may enable more effective delivery and consequently improve the application of skills and knowledge that improve overall individual performance (The University of Nottingham, 2012). Related to behavioral perspective, research focus on leader behavior influencing employee idea generation and application behavior has been carried out (Jong De Jong & Hartog, 2007). According to Jong De Jong and Hartog (2007), innovative behavior can be seen as a multi-dimensional, overarching construct that captures all behaviors through which employees can contribute to the innovative capability process.

### **3.1 Bystander Participation Behavior and Innovative Capability**

Bystander participation behavior is defined by scholars from the literature review, those who see few opportunities, or see opportunities but decide not to act (Gerstein & Shaw, 2007) and not to participate or not directly be involved (Bowes & Leary, 2005). It is a well-known fact that individuals are less likely to act when they are a part of a larger group of bystanders. Individuals seem often to think that others know better (Van, Ang & Botero, 2003). Friedman (2005); Hagel, Brown, and Davison (2010); Castells (2010) stated that organizations within the business, government, and academic circles are compelled to innovate due to rapidly changing market dynamics precipitated by globalization and rapid advancements occurring in information technology. Brett (2014) proposed in his research program that within a context of profound change, an organization's ability to innovate is vital, and may serve as a leading indicator pointing to its potential to achieve sustained success. However, organizations are dependent on the goodwill of their members, particularly during periods of crisis when people are expected to go beyond their job descriptions and do what is needed for the organization's success. While there are strong reasons to be passive, there are also good reasons for being engaged (Gerstein & Shaw, 2007). Scott and Bruce (1994) state that all innovative improvements within the organization are founded on ideas that are supplied by individual employees (Van de Ven, 1986). The cognitive capacity of "engage" is crucial to organizational innovation particularly given how important the "work environment" is with respect to nurturing its innovative capability (Amabile, 1996; Ekvall, 1996). Brett (2014) stated engagement suggests being emotionally involved and motivated to do the work of innovation. Organizational employees will be more "engaged" in innovation tasks when the organizational conditions are conducive to stretching conventional mindsets and current organizational practices without fear of negative reprisal. Brett (2014) stated engagement will be reduced when detractors exist within the organization's climate such as "political problems and 'turf battles,' destructive criticism and competition within the organization, strict control by upper management, and an excess of formal structures and procedures" (Amabile, 1996).

Momeni et al. (2015) believe that innovative capability has been dependent on other capabilities in an organization and classifies them into three groups including structural capability, personnel capability, and operational capability. From the personnel capability point of view, Momeni et al. (2015) stated that personnel capability is dependent upon the capacity for finding opportuni-

ties. The innovative capability is the core capability concerning dynamicity, requires finding new ideas in the midst of opportunities. Based on the bystander concept, bystanders may be those who see few opportunities, or see opportunities but decide not to act (*Gerstein & Shaw, 2007*) and not to participate or not directly be involved (*Bowes & Leary, 2005*). Bystanders are experts in the innovation field (*Hale, 2011*). From the perspective of organization bystander, a bystander could be anyone who has high quality and motivation who could make a critical contribution to organization innovative capability. It has been argued that exploiting the potential of new ideas is crucial for competitive success (*Hamel, 2006*). Therefore, it is meaningful to assert that every employee has an innovative potential, no matter what educational background or sector (*Lin & Chen, 2007*). This flows from their credentials, specific expertise and/or personal qualities (*Francis, 2005*), their abilities, knowledge, know-how, talent, education, skills and experiences of employees in organizations. The expertise of employees determines what they are capable of doing, but the motivation determines what they actually will do (*Paalanen & Hyypia, 2008*). Employees can help to improve business performance through their ability to generate ideas and use these as building blocks for new and better products, services and work processes (*Jong De Jong & Hartog, 2007*).

In order to realize the continuous flow of innovation, employees need to be both willing and able to innovate (*De Jong & Hartog, 2007*). One of the elements of innovative capability is that creativity and idea can come from the millions of small acts by employees that cumulate in significant continuous improvement, or alternatively, creativity can result in a radical idea that transforms business strategy or creates new businesses (*Lawson & Samson, 2001*). Employees' participation and actions are of crucial importance for continuous innovative capability and improvement (*Jong De Jong & Hartog, 2007*). Thirteen significant factors that explain the innovative capability in an organization as outlined by Sepulveda and Vasquez (2014) were product design planning, innovation project follow up, strategic level involvement, portfolio management, team control and feedback, infrastructure, competency-based management, incentives and support, collective learning, knowledge management, technological surveillance and business intelligence, networking, and employee's participation in innovative ideas. Employees can provide new ideas and actively participate in intra-corporate improvement process which is an important factor in innovation outcomes (*Peter & Christian, 2014*). Bystanders who actively participated in any activity have an important role. Example of this statement can look at the activities in the persecution of fellow human beings (*Van, Ang & Botero, 2003*). Bystander behavior also involves marketplace, competitive, or technological opportunities that require the investment of resources and timely action. While missed opportunities are often hard to recognize after the fact, bystander behavior impacts the seizing of new opportunities for growth and innovation, not just the prevention of disaster (*Gerstein & Shaw, 2007*).

In the heart of all innovation lie creative ideas and individual employees, who alone or in groups, generate, promote, discuss, modify and realize these ideas (*Scott & Bruce, 1994*). Employees may have fresh and profitable ideas to offer, information, and opinions for constructive ways to improve work and work organizations. All innovative improvements within organizations are founded on ideas that are supplied by individual employees (*Van de Ven, 1986*). Sometimes these employees exercise voice and express their ideas, information, and opinions; and other times they engage in silence and withhold their ideas, information, and opinions (*Van et al., 2003*). A silent bystander chooses to be silent and refuses to be vocal in order to avoid conflict with other experts. Some experts who are silent bystanders might have great opinions, but those opinions could be lost (*Phan, 2013*). Employees often have crucial information or valuable point of views that could improve organization innovative capability, but for a variety of psychological

and organizational reasons they do not intervene (*Gerstein & Shaw, 2007*) and those great opinions could be lost. Barnett (2012) emphasized that it is important to bring scholars together to discuss the concept of the “bystander” and how it may be used in different academic disciplines, such as history, social science, social psychology, ethics etc.

Therefore, this study proposed the following hypothesis as shown in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between bystander participation behavior and innovative capability.

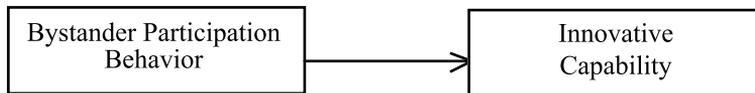


Figure 1: Research model.

#### 4. Methodology

A quantitative method was used in this study. A quantitative method employs deductive reasoning and seeks to test the hypothesis that has been formulated and stated (*McBurney & White, 2010*). Burns and Grove (1993) define quantitative research as a formal, objective, systematic process to describe and test relationships. This study used the questionnaire survey to collect the data in order to validate the theoretical framework. A survey is used to collect original data for describing a population too large to observe directly (*Mouton, 1996*). A survey obtains information from a sample of people by means of self-report, that is, the people respond to a series of questions posed by the investigator (*Polit & Hungler, 1993*). In this study, the data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed personally to the subjects. The design of the questionnaire was also based on the literature review and the use of established measures as shown in Table 3.

Table 3:  
Instrumentation - Development of Questionnaire

Section	Variables	No. of Items	Scale	Sources of Adopted & Adapted questionnaires	Validity & Reliability (Cronbach's Coefficient)
1	Innovative Capability	4	Seven - point Likert	Kumar & Raduan (2012) - Originally adapted from Lee & Choi (2003)	0.87 strongly validated and Widely used in research Study
2	Bystander Participation Behavior	5	Seven-point Likert	Peter & Christian (2014)	0.89 Demonstrated good reliabili

The targeted population of the study were supervisors. Supervisors were surveyed because they are individuals who are usually in direct contact with their subordinates and are linked closely with the management and the subordinates at the lowest level (*Pillai, 1999*). Innovative capability

is an area where supervisors can have a strong impact on employee creativity through their influence on the context within which employees work (Shalley & Oldham, 2004). In order to achieve innovative capability, supervisors need to foster, encourage and support creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). The unit analysis of this study was Malaysian hotel employees from four and five star rated hotels in Malaysia who are registered in the directory of Malaysian Association of Hotels. A list of hotels from four and five star rated in Malaysia registered in the directory of Malaysian Association of Hotels was used as the sampling frame for this study. Hotels were chosen for this study because, in this time of globalization, technological advancement, dynamic hospitality environment and fierce competition, hotels have to identify and respond quickly to clients' changing needs, preferences, and expectations in order to achieve and maintain a strong competitive position (Razvan, Stegorean & Petre, 2014).

Probability sampling was used in this study. According to Sekaran (2010) in probability sampling, the elements in the population have some known, non-zero chance or probability of being selected as sample subject. The five states of Pulau Pinang (Northern region), Kuala Lumpur (The Central region), Pahang (Eastern region), Johor (Southern region) and Sabah (East Malaysia) were identified as the geographical sampling area. According to Aslam and Hassan (2003), regions in Malaysia are divided into six regions. They are four regions in Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and two regions in North Borneo (East Malaysia). The four regions in Peninsular Malaysia are the Northern region (Perlis Kedah, Perak and Pulau Pinang), The Central region (Selangor, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka), the Eastern region (Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang) and the Southern region which consists of just one state, Johor. Regions in East Malaysia are Sabah region and Sarawak region. The locations were the major regions representing Malaysia Pulau Pinang (Northern region), Kuala Lumpur (The Central region), Pahang (Eastern region), Johor (Southern region) and Sabah (East Malaysia). The selection of four the particular states were based on the growth center (Aslam & Hassan, 2003) and Sabah represents East Malaysia. In this study to determine the estimated total of respondents, stratified random sampling was adopted. The population was stratified into samples of respondents from each state and drawn using simple random sampling as shown in Table 4.

Table 4:  
Population of the Study

Major Area/State	No. of Hotels rated four star	No. of Hotels rated five star	Total No. of Hotels rated four to five star	Supervisor (at least estimated supervisor for 1 hotel @7)	% of Respondents using Stratified Random Sampling (%)	Number of estimated respondent (based on Stratified Random Sampling)
Pulau Pinang (Northern Region)	20	6	26	182	22% (182/819)*100	(40) (182*0.22)
Kuala Lumpur (The Central Region)	22	25	47	329	40% (329/819)*100	(132) (329*0.40)
Pahang (Eastern Region)	9	3	12	84	10% (84/819)*100	(8) (84*0.10)
Johor (Southern Region)	12	3	15	105	13% (105/819)*100	(14) (105*0.13)
Sabah (East Malaysia)	8	9	17	119	15% (119/819)*100	(18) (119*0.15)
TOTAL	71	46	117	819	100	212

Source: Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) website (6 April 2015)

## 5. Results and Discussion

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modeling data with the goal of underlining essential information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making (Ader & Mellenbergh, 2008). The data analysis for this research was conducted using the version 23 Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

To test the hypothesis in this study regression analyses were performed to determine the significance of the relationship of bystander participation behavior on innovative capability.

Table 5:  
Regression on Innovative Capability by Bystander Participation Behaviour

Model		Coefficients			t	Sig.	Model Summary		ANOVA	
		Unstandardized Standardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Beta			R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
1	Constan	.13	.30		.44	.66	.60	.59	75.40	.00
	Bystander Participation Behaviour	.57	.06	.55	8.94	.00				

### Dependent Variable: Innovative Capability

As shown in Table 5, bystander participation behavior was regressed on innovative capability. The regression model utilized to predict the relationship of bystander participation behavior on innovative capability resulted in Adjusted R Squared = .59 at significant 0.00 levels. It was found that there is a significant relationship between bystander participation behavior and innovative capability  $\beta = .550$ ,  $t = 8.937$ , at the significant level of  $p < .001$ . This means that bystander participation behavior is found to have an impact on innovative capability. From the research finding, it was found that there is a significant relationship between bystander participation behavior and innovative capability. This finding seems to reflect the notion from the literature, that innovative capability can come from the millions of small acts by employees that cumulate in significant continuous improvement, or alternatively, creativity can result in a radical idea that transforms business strategy or creates new businesses (Lawson & Samson, 2001). This notion also is supported by Jong De Jong and Hartog (2007) that employee actions or responses to ideas are of crucial importance for continuous innovative capability and improvement. Sepulveda and Vasquez (2014) emphasized that the most significant factors that explained innovative capability in an organization are the worker's participation in innovative ideas. However sometimes employees exercise voice and express their ideas, information, and opinions; and other times they engage in silence and withhold their ideas, information, and opinions (Van, Ang & Botero, 2003). Employees often have crucial information or valuable point of views or ideas that could improve organization innovative capability, but for a variety of psychological and organizational reasons they do not intervene (Gerstein & Shaw, 2007) and those great opinions could be lost. Therefore, this empirical finding is in line with the notions by the scholars in the literature. Thus, it can be concluded that bystander participation behavior has an impact on innovative capability.

## 6. Conclusion

The main contribution and value of this study are the empirical results on the behavioral level in particular to the concepts of bystander participation behavior on innovative capability in the Malaysian hotel industry. As stated by Chen (2011) in the context of hotel management innovative capability is one of the critical factors for success. As literature indicates that there is no single path or recipe for success in innovative capability and revealed a wide range of factors and perspectives that enable an organization, workgroup, and individual to be innovative. However, the findings of this research show that there is a significant relationship from the perspective of bystander participation behavior on innovative capability. Based on the data this information may be of great importance to managers in particular to Malaysian hotel industry to find where the increased efforts must be focused and about how to improve innovative capability among their staff in order to transform a specific success in the process of continuous innovative capability.

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