# How to foster employee satisfaction by means of coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills in the agri-food value chain

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## Abstract

*Most employee satisfaction studies do not consider the current digital transformation of the social world. The aim of this research is to provide insight into employee satisfaction in agribusiness by means of coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media with a value chain methodology. The model is tested empirically by analysing a survey data set of 381 observations in Spanish agribusiness firms of the agri-food value chain. The results show flexible remunerations of emotional salary are determinants of employee satisfaction. Additionally, motivation is relevant in the production within commercialisation link and coaching in the production within transformation link. Whole-of-chain employees showed the greatest satisfaction with the use of social media in personnel management. Findings also confirmed that employees will stay when a job is satisfying. This study contributes to the literature by investigating the effect of current social and digital business skills on employee satisfaction in the agri-food value chain.*

*Keywords: Agribusiness firms, Value chain methodology, Job satisfaction, Model of employee satisfaction, Turnover.*

## 1. Background and objective

Employee satisfaction has become a dominant managerial concern in business according to both academics and practitioners because employees are increasingly important for organisational success, growth and competitiveness (Barbosa, 2020; Khan and Aleem, 2014; Saari and Judge, 2004). Employee satisfaction drives productivity because satisfied employees are highly motivated, have good work morale, are more committed to work (Raziq and Maulabakhsh, 2015), are more integrated both internally and with trading partners (Jacobs *et al.*, 2016), work more effectively and efficiently (Eskildsen and Nussler, 2000), enhance business quality (Matzler *et al.*, 2004), improve customer satisfaction and increase business outcomes, including profit (Harter *et al.*, 2002). Nevertheless, employee satisfaction is a complex set of expectations which are the result of both labour market determinants and psychological processes (Matzler *et al.*, 2004) that requires deeper research (Alegre *et al.*, 2016).

Employee satisfaction has been extensively investigated. Locke (1976) noted more than 3,300 articles on the topic in 1976, and for the years 1976 through 2000, Harter *et al.* (2002) found another 7,855 publications. Nevertheless,

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most employee satisfaction studies do not consider the current digital transformation of the social world. The digital transformation of the social world is one of the most discussed issues within business management (Sacolick, 2017). Business management needs to include connections between man and technologies which are largely absent from the employee satisfaction literature. Additionally, social business has not yet been included among the many employee satisfaction factors examined (Kianto *et al.*, 2016). Organisations are social systems where human resources are a crucial factor (Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006). In this context, the valuation of human capital, the investigation of various combinations of employment modes, and the management of employee relationships are of primary interest (Matzler *et al.*, 2004). Nevertheless, managers usually spend a minimal amount of time on human behaviour, communication, and how to impact employee performance (Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006). The social business model considers a humanistic business approach that does not follow a purely commercial logic alone and integrates theories of humanistic management (Dierksmeier, 2016). To the best of our knowledge, previous studies provide a partial view of employee satisfaction without taking a global view (Alegre *et al.*, 2016) of the current digital transformation of the social world. This research posits these factors because authors agree that social and digital managerial skills such as coaching, motivation, emotional salary, and social media (SM) can contribute to employee satisfaction (Garcia, 2011). In this sense, it is crucial to know the several social and digital factors influence employee satisfaction from a human resource managerial perspective (Matzler *et al.*, 2004).

Employee satisfaction research has mostly focused on other industries (Raziq and Maulabakhsh, 2015) and has neglected agribusiness. One of the greatest challenges faced by agribusiness in the 21st century is attracting, motivating, and retaining sufficient and qualified labour (Bitsch, 2009; Jankelova *et al.*, 2017). This had led to concerns that labour retention and labour productivity in agribusiness are not at optimum levels, thus resulting in high turnover, depressed profits, and low business wages (Bitsch and Hogberg, 2005). Moreover, given the recent challenges regarding innovation in technology and information systems, global economies, the climate, and changes in demography make agribusiness competitiveness a topic of much interest in both the popular press and academic literature (Bitsch and Hogberg, 2005; Callado and Soares, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2016). In this line, Mugera (2012) demonstrated that agribusiness competitiveness will mainly be through the adoption and use of new and innovative programs and practices in human resources management (Khan and Aleem, 2014). Jankelova *et al.* (2017) expressed that agribusiness still fails to perceive the importance of human resources management, beyond it being simply a service unit in the organisational structure of the business. They demonstrated that managers in agricultural businesses do not seek to gain a better understanding of the relationship between employee motivation and commitment, and personal and family life. Moreover, Bitsch (2009) demonstrated that many agribusiness managers perceive their personnel management competencies as a weakness and pointed out that the peculiar circumstances of agribusiness require specific skill sets. Therefore, agribusiness firms' success could be achieved through changing management models leading to new workplace relationships focused on human factors and social relations in the organisation (Jankelova *et al.*, 2017) because human resources are one of the crucial strategic assets in agribusiness (Mugera, 2012) and have not received significant attention in the literature.

Therefore, we characterised the employee satisfaction research in agribusiness (Table 1) according the Herzberg's theory that claims that work environment determines job satisfaction in three main areas: the work itself, the responsibility one has in the work and the recognition received from performing the work (Herzberg *et al.*, 1967).

The revision of employee satisfaction in agribusiness shows that most job satisfaction studies in agribusiness firms have focused on job attitude and/or hygiene factors and no previous research has considered digital and humanistic skills such

Table 1 - Revision of previous studies about employee satisfaction in agribusiness.

| Author/Type | Objective | Variables* | Country/ Region | Subsector | Findings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meyerding and Lehberger (2018) *Quantitative* | To analyse gender-specific job satisfaction | Job-hygiene | Germany | Horticulture | No significant differences between gender |
| Hoque, Rabbany, Anny & Akter (2016) *Quantitative* | To investigate factors affecting job satisfaction of employees agribusiness sector in Bangladesh | Job-attitude and -hygiene | Bangladesh | Agroindustry | Job hygiene factors influence significantly to achieve job satisfaction |
| Buriro, Tunio, Mumtaz, Mahar & Afzal (2016) *Quantitative* | To determine the most influential factors affecting the job satisfaction and overall satisfaction of employees | Job-attitude and -hygiene | Pakistan/ Sindh | Flour mills | Salary-benefits, healthy working conditions, merit-based fringe benefits, achievements and learning from work determine work satisfaction |
| Chen, Yueh & Liang (2016) *Quantitative* | To investigate perceptions of farmers' association of online Marketing Service | Job-hygiene | Taiwan | Agricultural | Employees lack of tangibility of service quality, followed by reliability, empathy, responsiveness, and assurance |
| Callado and Soares (2014) *Quantitative* | To analise the relationships between business performance indicators | Job-hygiene | Brazil/Parana | Agroindustry | Relationship between indicators of profitability, after sales services and employee's satisfaction |
| Bitsch and Hogberg (2005) *Qualitative* | To analyse job satisfaction of agricultural employees | Job-attitude and -hygiene | USA/ Michigan | Horticulture | Job-attitude is more often job satisfaction and hygiene in the context of dissatisfaction |
| Ladebo (2005) *Quantitative* | To examine effects of Type A behavioral pattern (TABP) on quit intention's and withdrawal behaviors of employees | Job-attitude | Nigeria/ Southwestern | Agricultural | TABP is positively related to employee loyalty and participation |
| Bitsch, Bromm & Schalich (2004) *Quantitative* | To explore the potential of flexible arrangements in production enterprises | Job-hygiene | Germany | Horticulture | There is a large potential and demand for benefits change and time arrangements |

*Note: \*Based on Herzberg theory where Job-attitude means: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement; Job-hygiene means: salary, interpersonal relations, supervision technical, company policy, working recognition, personal life, status, job security (Herzberg et al., 1967).*

coaching, emotional salary and/or SM. We only found Katona-Kovács and Bóta-Horváth (2012) who noted the need to consider coaching in new rural businesses because of their remoteness from markets, isolation, lack of leadership and little access to the value chain.

No previous research considered agribusiness subsectors simultaneously, but rather one at a time. In this line, some authors pointed out that more empirical research and with more representative sampling including several chains embedded in the value chain are needed (Bitsch 2009; Lu and Gursoy, 2013). The value chain should be seen as a system of several interrelated and mutually supportive businesses, and if these are to work effectively together, the employees must be treated as internal customers who need to be continually satisfied (Matzler *et al.*, 2004). The complexity of the agri-food system currently drives managers and academics to conceive the analysis of agribusiness firms based on their performance in the value chain.

To the best of our knowledge no previous research has been conducted on Spanish agribusiness firms despite the fact that recent analysis has shown that country and culture is a strong predictor of employee attitudes and satisfaction (Saari and Judge, 2004). The need to measure, understand and improve employee satisfaction is essential for Spanish agribusiness firms today.

The aim of this research is to provide insight into employee satisfaction in agribusiness firms by means of humanistic and digital managerial skills with a value chain approach.

## 2. Literature/theory

### 2.1. *Explanatory variables of agribusiness firms' characteristics*

Meyerding and Lehberger (2018) stated that agribusiness can be divided into many subsectors, where very different working conditions prevail to determine employee satisfaction. Platis and Zoulias (2017) demonstrated the impact of organisation style on employee satisfaction, while Huang *et al.* (2015) provided evidence that family firms exhibit a human capital enhancing culture that improves employee sat-

isfaction. Moreover, Bitsch (2009) stated that issues and practices developed for large corporations do not always scale down well to smaller businesses. Therefore, our model of employee satisfaction considered business variables such as number of employees, year of foundation, subsector, link of the value chain, existence of a webpage, SM and key performance indicators. Then, the first of the hypotheses that this study seeks to test is as follows:

H1: The agribusiness firm characteristics determine employee satisfaction using coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills.

### 2.2. *Explanatory variables of employee characteristics*

The literature has largely analysed the effects of employees' characteristics on job satisfaction (Judge *et al.*, 2002). Lu and Gursoy (2013) demonstrated generational differences between baby boomers and millennials in determining employee satisfaction and exhaustion. Wheatley (2017) demonstrated the impact of gender on employee satisfaction, while Meyerding and Lehberger (2018) found no significant gender differences for job satisfaction in German horticulturists. Therefore, our model of employee satisfaction considered employee characteristics such as gender, age or position. Then, the second of the hypotheses that this study seeks to test is as follows:

$H_2$: The employee characteristics are determinant in satisfaction using coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills.

### 2.3. *Satisfaction and willingness to leave*

The literature has argued that an individual will stay when a job is satisfying but that they will leave a dissatisfying job (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Ladebo, 2005; Lu and Gursoy, 2013) either to a new type of job in the same business, the same job in a different business or a different job in a different business (Fields *et al.*, 2005). Gollin *et al.* (2014) pointed out the strong incentives for moving out of agriculture and into other economic activities. Researchers have found that job satisfaction is significant with respect

to turnover (Harter *et al.*, 2002) and absenteeism (Lee and Liu, 2007), and managers strive to prevent turnover intention as employees' actual turnover generates extensive costs for both the individual and the organisation (Karatepe and Ngeche, 2012). Therefore, retention and turnover of staff, particularly highly skilled personnel, are important for managers, while Babalola (2016) indicated that an employee will continue on a job as long as it continues to be rewarding. Thus, the research model considered a variable named *willingness to leave* (Table 2). Then, the third hypothesis that this study seeks to test is as follows:

$H_3$: Employees will stay when a job is satisfying.

### 2.4. *Humanistic and digital managerial skills variables*

Authors have demonstrated both qualitatively and quantitatively the importance of a supervisor and their influence over the level of engagement of employees and their satisfaction (Alegre *et al.*, 2016; Judge *et al.*, 2001; Kianto *et al.*, 2016). The use of leadership behaviours is positively correlated with employee satisfaction (Babalola, 2016; Belias *et al.*, 2015; Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006), and Bitsch and Hogberg (2005) found that a supervisor who is understanding and flexible, who has a sense of humor, who shows recognition and gives constructive feedback and who builds loyalty in horticulture employees is more likely to interact with employees on professional, emotional, and spiritual levels (Babalola, 2016; Tang *et al.*, 2014; Vidal-Salazar *et al.*, 2015). In the case of agricultural businesses, Jankelova *et al.* (2017) pointed out that humanistic managers need to improve employee loyalty and engagement, help employees satisfy their own needs, listen to employees and find solutions, react to their problems, mold their behaviour in order to promote organisational changes and support employees to meet their own needs (Wang, 2013). Finally, Kianto *et al.* (2016) demonstrated that knowledge-sharing activities, including informal communication, brainstorming sessions, mentoring and coaching, can be a way to nurture job satisfaction. Therefore, we created in

our model of employee satisfaction a variable named *coaching* (Table 2).

The literature on job satisfaction has broadly linked employee motivation to satisfaction (Khan and Aleem, 2014). Kianto *et al.* (2016) pointed out that employee motivation is connected especially to social belonging, self-esteem and self-realisation. Motivation is one of the hardest and most important tasks of running a business, as it has significant impact on employee performance (Belias *et al.*, 2015). Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006) stated that some job motivating skills are related to good pay, good working conditions (Belias *et al.*, 2015), involvement in reward systems such as recognition and incentives (Bitsch and Hogberg, 2005), promotion (Khan and Aleem, 2014) and training plans (Matzler *et al.*, 2004). Babalola (2016) suggests that employees are more satisfied with their jobs when they are adequately recognised for a job well done. Accordingly, we created in our model of employee satisfaction a variable named *motivation* (Table 2).

Allen *et al.* (2003) underlined the importance of company support of employee work-family balance (Tang *et al.*, 2014) and flexible working arrangements (Wheatley, 2017) for employee satisfaction. In this sense, businesses are looking for flexible remuneration systems (Vidal-Salazar *et al.*, 2015), such as highly personalised and adjustable indirect remuneration systems, flexible benefit plans which are designed to improve employees' pay efficiency including health insurance, bonuses system, etc., along with better time arrangements (Bitsch *et al.*, 2004; Perez-Perez *et al.*, 2017) with flexible schedules, telecommuting, conciliation among work time, leisure time and familial time, personal and professional promotion, etc. Therefore, we created a variable including flexible remunerations of emotional salary named *emotional salary* (Table 2).

Stamolampros *et al.* (2019) confirmed the effect of SM on employee satisfaction. SM can contribute to developing personal abilities and leadership (Garcia, 2011), improving employee cooperation and communication (Felix *et al.*, 2017), enhancing informal relationships, identifying mentors, facilitating homeworking and

Table 2 - Variables description to approach humanistic business management in the digital era.

| Variable | Definition |
|---|---|
| Willingness to leave | The employee willing to leave the job in the next 6 months. |
| Coaching | There is a supervisor or coach that guides, motives, advices and trains the employee. |
| Motivation | There are incentives, recognitions, training plans or other forms of motivation. |
| Emotional salary | There are flexible schedules, telecommuting, health insurance, bonuses system, conciliation among work time, leisure time and familiar time, personal and professional promotion. |
| Social Media personnel | The firm uses new technologies for internal communications, to involve the employees in the business decisions and feedback. |

developing social activities (Garcia, 2011). Internal communication has a significant positive effect on employee satisfaction and that internal communication and employee satisfaction significantly influence internal integration (Jacobs *et al.*, 2016). According to Garcia (2011) internal integration generates business loyalty and commitment. Then, in the research model we considered a *social media personnel* variable.

Thus, the fourth hypothesis that this study seeks to test is as follows:

H4: Coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media determine employee satisfaction.

Finally, considering the complexity of the agri-food system and the need to analyse agri-business firms embedded in the value chain, the fifth hypothesis that this study seeks to test is as follows:

H5: The link in the value chain determines employee satisfaction using coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills. Figure 1 shows the research method.
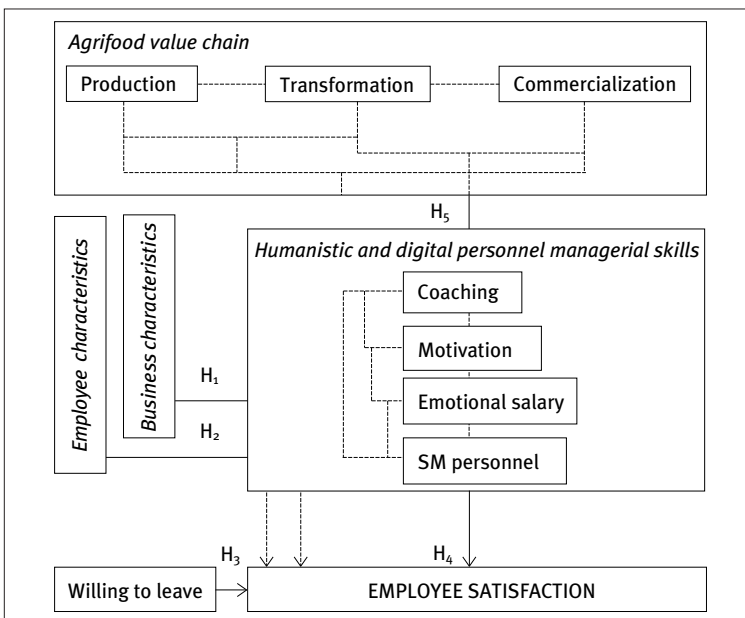


Figure 1 - Research model. Figure 1 represents the research model that considers business characteristics ($H_1$), employee characteristics ($H_2$), employee willingness to leave a job ($H_3$), humanistic and digital skills ($H_4$) and the value chain approach ($H_5$).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. *Sample and data collection*

To test the hypotheses of our research model, data were gathered using Spanish agribusiness firms. Firstly, a questionnaire was prepared according to previous research (Bowling and Hammon, 2008; García and Forero, 2014; Huilcapi *et al.*, 2017; Randstad, 2017). Before testing, as a means of exploring, we conducted surveys of a non-probabilistic sample of 100 Spanish agribusiness firms in order to refine and pretest the questionnaire that had been designed. All the firms were first contacted by mail (followed up once or twice a week) and later by telephone in order to fill the required sample. A sample of 381 agribusiness Spanish firms in the agri-food value chain was analysed (Table 3) from a total of 43,624 agribusiness firms in Spain at the time of the study (MAPAMA, 2018), of which 24,410 were agri-food industries, 15,355 agrarian firms and 3,859 wineries. Businesses were screened against inclusion criteria for being Spanish agribusiness firms belonging to the agri-food, agrarian or wine subsector and performing in the value chain. Two criteria sample groups were included

to examine potential cross-subsectors and value chain link differences. The agribusiness firms of the sample were selected following a stratified sampling procedure by subsector, size, and year of foundation from the total population of official records (CES, 2016; INE, 2017; MAPAMA, 2018). Due to the stratified sampling procedure, the data showed a representative distribution of Spanish agribusiness firms' characteristics (Table 3). The sample size (381) yielded a 95.0% confidence interval with a 5.0% predicted margin of error. Finally, the surveys were selected from two Spanish firms' directories by size, year of foundation and subsector: i) agri-food and wine (Expansion, 2020a) and ii) agrarian (Expansion, 2020b).

The final version of the questionnaire (Table 4) was sent to agribusiness firms using the Jotform digital tool and after follow-up by telephone, we obtained the 381 complete questionnaires. Some firms refused to participate because, despite our guarantee of total confidentiality, they did not wish to disclose any information concerning this type of management or because employees were too busy to comply with our request. The questionnaire also inquired about the respondent's demographics and agribusiness characteristics.

Table 3 - Sample characteristics.

| Subsector | N Spain | % Spain | N Sample (381) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agri-food | 24410 | 55.96% | 214 |
| Agrarian | 15355 | 35.19% | 134 |
| Wine | 3859 | 8.85% | 33 |
| *Number of employees* | | | |
| 1 to 9 | | 90.30% | 344 |
| 10 to 49 | | 8.00% | 30 |
| 50 to 199 | | 1.30% | 5 |
| ≥200 | | 0.40% | 2 |
| *Year of foundation* | | | |
| Before 1998 | | 30.50% | 116 |
| 1998-2015 | | 53.10% | 202 |
| After 2015 | | 16.40% | 63 |

*Sources: INE, 2017; CES, 2016; MAPAMA, 2018.*

Table 4 - Employee and the agribusiness characteristics in the questionnaire.

| Characteristic | Description | Variable | Scale | Type of variable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agribusiness | Type of activity | Activity | Agrarian Agri-food Wine | Multistate Qualitative No logic sequence |
| | Location | Location | Province | Multistate Qualitative No logic sequence |
| | Year of foundation | Year | Year | Qualitative Logic sequence |
| | Number employees | Employees | Number | Quantitative |
| | Link value chain | Link | Production Transformation Comercialization | Multistate Qualitative No logic sequence |
| | Webpage | Web | Yes No | Dichotomous |
| | Social media | SM | Yes No | Dichotomous |
| | Social media KPI | Number followers | Facebook Twitter Instagram | Quantitative |
| Employee | Position | Position | Position | Multistate Qualitative No logic sequence |
| | Age | Age | Age | Quantitative |
| | Gender | Gender | Female Male | Dichotomous |
| | Job satisfaction | Satisfaction | Yes No | Dichotomous |

## 3.2. *Data analysis*

The two-way dependence between employee satisfaction and the explanatory variables was calculated using a Pearson's Chi-square ($\chi^2_{.94}$) test, because the null hypothesis of normality was rejected through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

A correlation matrix was constructed to test possible multicollinearity among variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used, and high correlations were considered if their values were greater than 0.800.

Then, binary logistic regression was used to predict the odds of being satisfied based on the values of the predictors. Regression coefficients were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation and were presented with Wald $\chi^2$-statistics and as odds ratios, by using the Wald forward stepwise method. The models revealed the most important predictor/s of employee satisfaction within the possibility of classifying the likelihood that a respondent is (or not) satisfied with his/her job.

## 4. Results and discussion

Regarding the sample profile, the participants' age ranges were as follow: < 20, 0.5%; 21-30, 24.4%; 31-40, 34.1%; 41-50, 29.7%; 51-60, 11.3% and > 61, 1.3%. Referring to their position in the business at which they were currently working, it was found that the 34.9% were administrative staff or in sales, 31.8% were supervisors or managers, 18.9% were operators and 14.4% were in executive positions or were owners.

69.3% of agribusiness firms had a website. However, only 20.2% had Instagram, 24.1% Twitter and 54.9% Facebook, from which a low number of followers was observed (from 0 to 100 followers for 80.8% of firms on Instagram, for 82.4% of the firms on Twitter and for 54.3% of the firms on Facebook). This result is in line with the re-

sults from Pwc (2018) study which demonstrated main barriers for Spanish firms digitalisation are, the lack of digital culture and knowledge (76%), of leadership spirit (64%), the ignorance of the benefits of digitalisation for the firms (56%), the high cost of digitalisation (28%), the lack of collaboration (24%) and the scarce of talent initiatives (20%).

50.4% of employees with a coach expressed that it is very helpful in their workdays for individual work, teamwork, and to achieve business objectives. The 49.6% of other employees without coaching declared that they were not sure about the function of a coach. 55.1% said that they were motivated due to the agribusiness firm's motivation. 81.6% stated that they had at least two of the flexible paybacks of emotional salary and expressed being satisfied with emotional salary and that they would recommend it. Regarding the use of SM in the internal management of the firms (personnel, processes, etc.), 83.5% declared that the firm did not use SM for this purpose. 86.9% of employees expressed that they were unwilling to leave their job.

## 4.1. *Agribusiness subsectors*

In the agrarian, wine and agri-food subsectors it was significant and very likely that satisfied employees do not leave their job ($P = 0.000$; 0.007 and 0.000 respectively) (c.t.r.= 5.9; 2.7 and 6.2). This result is in line with previous studies demonstrating that turnover is negatively associated with employee satisfaction (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Ladebo, 2005; Lu and Gursoy, 2013). It was significant likely that employee satisfaction in the agricultural sector is related to motivational tools ($P = 0.028$) (c.t.r. = 2.2), and emotional salary ($P = 0.000$) (c.t.r. =6.3). This result is in line with the results from Bitsch's (2009) study which demonstrated that agricultural employees' job satisfaction and retention can be increased with inexpensive measures, such as feedback and appreciation.

For the wine subsector, it is significant and very likely that employee satisfaction is related to emotional salary ($P = 0.038$) (c.t.r. = 2.1). As for the agri-food subsector, it is significant and very likely that employee satisfaction is related to coaching ($P = 0.003$) (c.t.r. = 3.0) and emotional salary ($P = 0.000$) (c.t.r. = 6.4). These re-

Table 5 - Significant relationship among humanistic digital management skills and employee satisfaction by agribusiness subsectors.

| Significant humanistic and digital managerial tools | | Satisfaction | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Agrarian* | | | |
| Motivation | Frecuency (%) | 55.22 | 0.028 |
| | c.t.r. | 2.2 | |
| Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 75.37 | 0.000 |
| | c.t.r. | 6.3 | |
| Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 81.34 | 0.000 |
| | c.t.r. | 5.9 | |
| *Wine* | | | |
| Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 87.88 | 0.038 |
| | c.t.r. | 2.1 | |
| Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 90.91 | 0.070 |
| | c.t.r. | 2.7 | |
| *Agri-food* | | | |
| Coaching | Frecuency (%) | 54.21 | 0.003 |
| | c.t.r. | 3.0 | |
| Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 78.04 | 0.000 |
| | c.t.r. | 6.4 | |
| Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 80.37 | 0.000 |
| | c.t.r. | 6.2 | |

sults are in consonance with Kianto *et al.* (2016) who demonstrated that job satisfaction differs as a function of sector characteristics and Corstjens and Umblijs (2012) who proved that the subsector influences employee satisfaction. The results can be explained due to the different working conditions of agribusiness subsectors, as stated by Meyerding and Lehberger (2018). Harter *et al.* (2002) also explained that subsector firms differ in how they encourage employee satisfaction and engagement initiatives, and Mugera (2012) pointed out that heterogeneity exists also because of the different firms' organisational cultures, kinship and friendship ties, resource endowments, and human resources practices. From these results, agribusiness firms should learn about the management talent and practices that drive business outcomes if they have studied their own business characteristics.

Table 5 shows that for agribusiness subsectors the first of the hypotheses that the research study sought to test have been confirmed: H$_1$: The agribusiness characteristics determine employee satisfaction using coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills.

### 4.2. *Employee characteristics*

As expressed by employees aged 21-30 and 31-40 years, it was significant and very likely that job satisfaction is related to emotional salary (*P* = 0.000) (c.t.r. = 6.6 and 4.9 respectively). As expressed by employees aged 41-50 years, it was significant and very likely that employee satisfaction is related to coaching (*P* = 0.000) (c.t.r. = 2.2) and emotional salary (*P* = 0.000) (c.t.r. = 3.6). This result is in consonance with that of Alegre *et al.* (2016) who demonstrated that a combination of coaching support and greater identification with the organisational strategy of senior employees led to job satisfaction.

Many authors have demonstrated that the generational cohort to which employees belong is likely to influence employees' workplace attitudes, their satisfaction, and turnover intention (Belias *et al.*, 2015; Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006). This result shows that managers need to use the proper mix of humanistic and digital managerial skills to lead employees from different generations. Younger employees appreciated emotional salary due to being at an age at which employees seek out fascinating projects from which they can learn, progress and be recognised in a good job environment (Salahuddin, 2011). For those aged 41-50, coaching was significant. For these employees, the workplace was of greater importance, and they considered their job as more central to their lives than younger generations. In this stage, employees might strive to maintain their status at work, and hold onto their positions by updating and recycling

Table 6 - Significant relationship among humanistic and digital managerial skills and satisfaction by employee's age.

| Age | Variable | | Satisfaction | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21-30 | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 73.12 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 6.6 | |
| | Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 67.67 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 4.2 | |
| 31-40 | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 79.20 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 4.9 | |
| | Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 84.00 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 4.5 | |
| 41-50 | Coaching | Frecuency (%) | 42.48 | 0.026 |
| | | c.t.r. | 2.2 | |
| | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 82.30 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 3.6 | |
| | Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 91.15 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 7.3 | |

Table 7 – Pearson's bivariate correlation between independent variables (N=381).

| | Subsector | Location | Year of foundation | Number of employees | Link value chain | Position | Age | Gender | Motivation | Coaching | Emotional salary | Willingness to leave | SM personnel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subsector | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Location | 0.331** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Year of foundation | 0.332** | 0.308** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of employees | -0.387** | -0.175** | -0.209** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Link value chain | 0.136** | 0.082 | 0.042 | -0.161** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Position | 0.377** | 0.203** | 0.287** | -0.253** | -0.043 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Age | 0.007 | -0.081 | -0.156** | -0.007 | -0.061 | 0.300** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Gender | 0.087 | 0.092 | 0.025 | -0.119* | 0.063 | 0.057 | 0.011 | 1 | | | | | |
| Motivation | -0.063 | 0.038 | 0.025 | 0.087 | -0.055 | -0.015 | -0.106* | -0.018 | 1 | | | | |
| Coaching | 0.173** | 0.211** | 0.271** | -0.132** | 0.029 | -0.039 | -0.175** | 0.050 | 0.192** | 1 | | | |
| Emotional salary | 0.056 | 0.023 | 0.073 | 0.024 | -0.048 | 0.137** | 0.077 | 0.013 | 0.062 | 0.166** | 1 | | |
| Willingness to leave | 0.013 | 0.091 | -0.070 | 0.076 | 0.034 | -0.154** | -0.216** | -0.017 | -0.024 | 0.044 | -0.317** | 1 | |
| SM personnel | 0.066 | -0.019 | -0.002 | -0.028 | 0.054 | 0.035 | -0.051 | 0.022 | 0.118* | 0.074 | 0.047 | -0.027 | 1 |

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

with a coach (Lu and Gursoy, 2013; Rad and Yar-mohammadian, 2006).

For all age ranges, it is likely that employees who are satisfied are not willing to leave their job ($P = 0.000$) (c.t.r. = 4.2; 4.5 and 7.3 respectively) (Table 6).

Table 6 has confirmed for the employee age the second of the hypotheses that the research study sought to test: $H_2$: Employee age may determine employee satisfaction using coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills.

### 4.3. Determinant factors in employee satisfaction

Multicollinearity was not a major issue in the model as is shown in Table 7.

In Table 8, the regression coefficients with their corresponding standard errors (SE), the value of the Wald statistic to evaluate the null hypothesis ($\beta_i = 0$), associated statistical significances and value of the OR (Exp ($\beta$)) and goodness of fit statistics are presented.

Table 8 - Employee satisfaction model for business and employee characteristics, coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media using coefficient estimates and diagnostics from binary logistic regression and Wald forward stepwise method.

| | $\beta$ | SE | Wald | gl | Sig. | Exp($\beta$) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional salary | 2.456 | 0.396 | 38.410 | 1 | 0.000 | 11.654 |
| Willingness to leave | -2.278 | 0.417 | 29.834 | 1 | 0.000 | 0.102 |
| Constant | 1.050 | 0.311 | 11.430 | 1 | 0.001 | 2.858 |

Goodness-of-fit statistics of the model associated with employee satisfaction: -2Log likelihood statistic=180.377; Nagelkerke R²= 0.433.

The regression equation shows that emotional salary and willingness to leave are determinant factors in agribusiness employee satisfaction. This result is in consonance with that of Twenge *et al.* (2010) who demonstrated that employees valued extrinsic rewards, flexible work hours, an informal work environment and work-life balance (Tang *et al.*, 2014) as being relevant for job satisfaction. Moreover, Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006) demonstrated that managers could make effective efforts in emotional salary to improve employee morale once employees have covered their primary job needs, while Matzler *et al.* (2004) proved fairness in remuneration is highly significant in employee satisfaction.

The logistic regression equation is constructed as follows:

$$Y = 1.050 + 2.456 * \text{Emotional Salary} - 2.278 * \text{Willingness to leave.}$$

This logistic equation allows for predicting the likelihood of the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of an employee. The equation explains that the greater the flexible payback of emotional salary is, the greater the likelihood of employee satisfaction. Moreover, it demonstrates that employee satisfaction is negatively associated with a willingness to leave the job.

| Y = Satisfaction | $X_1$ = Emotional Salary (1= Yes, 0 =No). |
|---|---|
| $\beta_0$ = 1.050 | $\beta_2$ = -2.278 |
| $\beta_1$ = 2.456 | $X_2$ = Willingness to leave (1= Yes, 0 =No) |

The likelihood of the model predicting that an agribusiness firm employee is satisfied with emotional salary and unwilling to leave the job is 97.1% for a given likelihood > 50%.

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-y}} = \frac{1}{1+e^{-[1.050+2.456(1)-2.278(0)]}} = 0.971$$

The likelihood of the model predicting that agribusiness firm employee is satisfied with emotional salary and willing to leave the job is 77.3% for a given likelihood > 50%.

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-y}} = \frac{1}{1+e^{-[1.050+2.456(1)-2.278(1)]}} = 0.773$$

The likelihood of the model predicting that an employee is satisfied in a firm without emotional salary and is unwilling to leave the job is of 97.1% for a given likelihood > 50%.

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-y}} = \frac{1}{1+e^{-[1.050+2.456(0)-2.278(0)]}} = 0.971$$

The likelihood of the model predicting that an employee is satisfied in a firm without emotional salary and is willing to leave the job is of 22.7% for a given likelihood > 50%. In this case, the predictive ability of the model is compromised.

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-y}} = \frac{1}{1+e^{-[1.050+2.456(0)-2.278(1)]}} = 0.227$$

From the data obtained in the model and for a risk α = 0.05, we can conclude that for a total of 381 employees from agribusiness firms, 353 were "satisfied or not satisfied", or, in other words, 92.7% have been correctly classified according to job satisfaction.

To assess the predictive capacity of the model, sensitivity and specificity values were calculated. It is verified that the model has a high specificity (98.8%) and a low sensitivity (46.7%) so that the model adequately classifies employees as "satisfied" and poorly classifies them as "not satisfied", which may be related to the distribution of the sample for this variable.

Taking into account the variables of the model as expressed by the 381 employees of the agribusiness firms, 88.2% are satisfied and 11.8% are not satisfied. This is broken down as follows:

- Of the 75.1% of agribusiness firms with emotional salary (1) and employees unwilling to leave (0), 96.5% are job satisfied and 3.5% are unsatisfied.
- Of the 6.6% of agribusiness firms with emotional salary (1) and employees willing to leave (1), 84% are job satisfied and 16% are unsatisfied.
- Of the 11.8% of agribusiness firms with no emotional salary (0) and employees unwilling to leave (0), 77.8% are job satisfied and 22.2% are unsatisfied.
- Of the 6.6% of companies with no emotional salary (0) and employees willing to leave (1), 16% are job satisfied and 84% are unsatisfied.

The model of employee satisfaction in Table 8 has confirmed the third and the fourth hypotheses

that the research study sought to test: $H_3$: Employees will stay when a job is satisfying and $H_4$: Emotional salary determines employee satisfaction.

It is highly recommended that agribusiness firms' managers should integrate emotional salary into a humanistic and digital management system to foster employee satisfaction. More information about humanistic and digital management may help agribusiness firms' managers understand more fully the impact of their managerial styles on their employees. It is concluded that agribusiness firms' managers should choose the best humanistic and digital managerial style according to their business culture and employees' characteristics. In this process, separate ownership from management may be recommended (Barbosa, 2020).

### 4.4. *Employee satisfaction and the agri-food value chain*

Results show that emotional salary is the factor most related to employee satisfaction for all the links of the agri-food value chain (Table 9).

In the commercialisation link, it is significant the emotional salary ($P = 0.005$) (c.t.r. = 2.8) because Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006) demonstrated that recognition and respect are very important, especially for employees who are in direct contact with clients (Table 10).

In the production within transformation link, emotional salary is the factor most related to employee satisfaction ($P = 0.001$) (c.t.r. = 3.5).

This result might be explained by the peak times of work in production and transformation, for instance during harvest, that might recommend flexible remuneration systems (Vidal-Salazar *et al.*, 2015) such end of season bonuses, along with better time arrangements (Bitsch *et al.*, 2004; Perez-Perez *et al.*, 2017).

In the production within commercialisation link, it is significant that the combination of motivation ($P = 0.005$) (c.t.r. = 2.8) and emotional salary ($P = 0.005$) (c.t.r. = 2.8) is related to employee satisfaction. This result might be explained by the peculiar circumstances of the production employees who lack marketing abilities (Katona-Kovács and Bóta-Horváth, 2012). Remoteness from markets and little access to the value chain (Mugera, 2012) require extra motivation on the part of production employees to dare commercialisation. Additionally, Bitsch *et al.* (2004) stated that motivation and patience is required more in retailing. Employees in production within commercialisation can benefit from motivation and emotional salary practices that enhance and meet customer expectations (Saari and Judge, 2004).

In the transformation within commercialization link, employee satisfaction is related to coaching ($P = 0.001$) (c.t.r. = 3.3) and emotional salary ($P = 0.000$) (c.t.r. = 6.5). This result can be explained by the complexity of the transformation processes that can require more guidance or coaching for employee satisfaction than less complex jobs (Saari and Judge, 2004).

Table 9 - Employee satisfaction on coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media personnel in the value chain.

| Variable | | | | | | *Value chain link (%)* | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent | Determinants | | Others | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1,2 | 1,3 | 2,3 | 1,2,3 |
| Satisfaction | Willingness to leave | Emotional salary | Motivation | Coaching | SM personnel | | | | | | | |
| Yes | No | Yes | No | No | No | 42.9 | 42.9 | 36.4 | 39.1 | 35.7 | 35.2 | 37.6 |
| Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | 21.4 | 20.0 | 23.3 | 21.7 | 32.1 | 20.1 | 19.7 |
| Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | 14.3 | 20.0 | 17.8 | 21.7 | 10.7 | 23.4 | 17.0 |
| Yes | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | 7.1 | 5.7 | 5.4 | 0.0 | 7.1 | 3.9 | 9.6 |
| Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | 7.1 | 8.6 | 13.2 | 17.4 | 10.7 | 15.5 | 11.5 |
| Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | 7.1 | 2.9 | 3.9 | 0.0 | 3.6 | 2.0 | 4.6 |

*Note: *Value chain link: Production (1), Transformation (2), Commercialisation (3).*

Table 10 - Significant relationship among links of the agribusiness value chain and humanistic, digital management skills and satisfaction.

| Value chain link | Variable | | Satisfaction | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Commercialisation | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 83.87 | 0.001 |
| | | c.t.r. | 3.3 | |
| | Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 88.71 | 0.050 |
| | | c.t.r. | 2.0 | |
| Production & Transformation | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 75.00 | 0.001 |
| | | c.t.r. | 3.5 | |
| Production & Commercialisation | Motivation | Frecuency (%) | 76.92 | 0.005 |
| | | c.t.r. | 2.8 | |
| | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 76.92 | 0.005 |
| | | c.t.r. | 2.8 | |
| | Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 76.92 | 0.005 |
| | | c.t.r. | 2.8 | |
| Production, Transformation & Commercialisation | SM personnel | Frecuency (%) | 25.00 | 0.052 |
| | | c.t.r. | 3.1 | |
| | Emotional salary | Frecuency (%) | 75.63 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 3.6 | |
| | Willingness to leave | Frecuency (%) | 81.51 | 0.000 |
| | | c.t.r. | 3.3 | |

In the whole-of-chain link, it is significant that the combination of SM personnel ($P = 0.052$) (c.t.r. = 3.1) and emotional salary ($P = 0.000$) (c.t.r. = 3.6) is related to employee satisfaction. This result might be explained by the continuous need for communication for establishing performance in the whole-of-chain link. This result is in line with that of Hadley *et al.* (2002) who proved that communication problems in agri-food value chain persist despite the fact that internal communications have a significant positive effect on employee satisfaction. Moreover, Jacobs *et al.* (2016) proved that internal communications and job satisfaction might contribute to internal and external employee integration which could enhance the performance of the whole value chain. Nevertheless, White *et al.* (2017) analysed the use of SM, and even when they found it to be positive for agribusiness, they found that agribusiness leaves the potential of SM in business management unused. The results confirm that SM in personnel management for agribusinesses is still in its early stages, and the interconnectivity and complexity of SM platforms can be obstacles to strategic personnel management activities over SM, thereby rendering this technology extremely difficult (Felix *et al.*, 2017).

Tables 9 and 10 show that the fifth hypothesis that the research study sought to test has been confirmed: H$_5$: The link in the value chain determine employee satisfaction using coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to provide insight into employee satisfaction in agribusiness firms by means of coaching, motivation, emotional salary and social media skills with a value chain approach. The results aim to integrate humanistic and digital skills into agribusiness' daily working routines, and in doing so, foster employee satisfaction. The results of this study illustrate that humanistic managerial skills such as flexible remunerations of emotional salary have a positive impact on agribusiness firms' employee satisfaction. It should therefore encourage agribusiness managers to implement humanistic and digital managerial skills in their firms in order to improve well-being at work, employee performance, including competitiveness, and to retain employees because findings also confirmed that agribusiness firm employees will stay when a

job is satisfying. In addition, the results demonstrate that different employee groups and links in the value chain benefit from different kinds of humanistic and digital managerial skills. The results indicate that managers should develop proper management and leadership strategies to lead employees from different groups and positions in the value chain. For employees to be effective, managers should consider distinct work values for different generations. Managers should develop an appropriate incentive structure for employees from each generation. This might help improve employee loyalty and satisfaction and lower turnover in agribusiness firms' employees. Employees in commercialisation link can benefit from emotional salary practices such as sales incentives and flexible schedules that enhance and meet customer expectations. The employees in production within transformation link can benefit from flexible remuneration systems such as end of season bonuses, along with better time arrangements. Motivation can benefit employees performing production within commercialisation due to the lack of marketing abilities of the production employees that require extra motivation to dare commercialisation. Coaching can benefit transformation within commercialization link because the complexity of the transformation processes requires more guidance. Employees in the whole-of-chain presented the greatest job satisfaction with the use of social media in personnel management due to the continuous need for communication for establishing performance in the whole-of-chain. Finally, job satisfaction can contribute in agribusiness firms to internal and external employee integration which could enhance the performance of the whole value chain. Moreover, humanistic and digital management can gain a strategic character that improves competitiveness and is a creator of added value for the organisation, its employees, as well as clients, and which can improve the performance of the whole agri-food value chain. This study contributes to the employee satisfaction literature by investigating the effect of the current social and digital businesses managerial skills and advancing the discipline of agribusiness management.

## 5.1. Practical implications

The results of this research also have practical implications for managers because they may provide them with a more holistic understanding of employee satisfaction in the current social and digital business world. How can agribusiness firms attract, motivate, retain and satisfy their employees? This question is relevant for practice. These research findings should be taken into consideration by managers to foster and promote increased employee satisfaction, leading to higher productivity and general well-being. In this sense, lessons can be extracted from this research and offer guidance for both agribusiness management practice and future research. Employers and managers can use the results to tailor their management practices to specific employee groups and performance in the value chain, thereby increasing retention and productivity. Employees will benefit from improved management practices in terms of higher job satisfaction and increased ability to develop their full potential. Agribusiness firms' managers should be educated to choose the proper skills, either being trained and advised by experts in humanistic and digital managerial skills or sub-contracting the humanistic and digital management of the firm. After that, they should apply the proper skills to foster employee satisfaction. The results of such studies can be very helpful for developing a new model of management with the implementation of new humanistic and digital skills that can be executed easily and successfully. Aligning the personal needs of the employees with those of the organisation can be helpful in the development of loyalty and retention of employees.

## 5.2. *Future research lines*

There is scope for further research regarding the generalisation of the findings in connection with the majority of agribusiness firms. The future direction of employee satisfaction research will be able to better understand the interplay between the person and the situation and the various internal and external factors that influence employee attitudes for ages and subsectors. Other sociodemographic variables com-

mon to the agribusiness sector, such as race, ethnicity, or culture of employees, might play critical roles in predicting significant differences in job satisfaction and work values, and this requires future research. This paper assumes that there is a connection between satisfaction and performance, although this assumption has not yet been tested empirically. By demonstrating that the benefits of the use of coaching, motivation, emotional salary and SM to foster employee satisfaction differ as a function of the link of the value chain, the paper supports moving employee satisfaction research to the next stage at which the impact of humanistic and digital practices can be explored as a contingent and contextual issue, taking into account the requirements and characteristics of the various types of tasks conducted in a business. In this line, the impact of COVID-19 in the labour market, in the most vulnerable segments of the working population, in the use of personnel SM, in telecommuting and digitalisation deserve a further research. Future research should continue to focus on causality, including qualitative analysis of value chain performance, path analysis, predictive studies and studies of change over time. Finally, this study is among the first to examine the relationship between coaching, motivation, emotional salary and SM and agribusiness employee job satisfaction. As such, it has only provided an initial perspective on the topic and much more research remains to be done to deepen our understanding.

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