

## A Measure of Hope in Franchise Systems: Assessing Franchisees, Top Executives, and Franchisors

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### **Abstract:**

The current study examines the hope level of franchisees, top level executives, and franchisors to add to our understanding of the construct in improving overall motivation that could improve how franchises are managed. The concept of hope is a psychological construct that has been studied thoroughly in the academic and athletic areas, as well as in the psychological literature. It has not been studied in the context of franchising. The relationship between entrepreneurship, franchising, and organizational behavior is discussed and future studies explored.

**Key Words:** Hope level, traits, franchising, entrepreneurship, positive organizational behavior.

### **Article:**

#### **Franchising**

Franchising is widespread—one out of every 12 retail businesses in the U.S. is a franchised business and more than 8 million people are employed in these franchised businesses. According to the International Franchising Association, franchising accounts for greater than 40% of all retail sales and totals more than a trillion dollars in revenue annually (International Franchise Association, 2004a).

Franchising has been one of the fastest growing methods of doing business in the U.S. and abroad for the last half century. It is a less expensive, less risky form of doing business than developing a start up company (Taylor, 2000). Because of the dominance of this form of doing business, the exploration of franchisees' and franchisors' perceptions as well as the perceptions of the top executives that work with them is needed to investigate the differences between franchising and other types of business, but also in order to increase the effectiveness of franchised organizations. This exploratory research is the first step in ascertaining self-assessed hope levels between franchisees, top executives, and franchisors. This trait could further our understanding of organizational behavior within firms and the role that hope potentially plays in motivation at all levels of the franchise organization.

#### **Hope**

The term hope has been defined as the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways (Snyder, 2002). A theory measuring hope and the usefulness of hope was developed in 1991 (Snyder, et al., 1991). Snyder determined that hope, beyond wishful thinking, is represented by a person's ability to use their willpower or desire (agency) to get something (goal) accomplished and that person's ability to then create various pathways (waypower) to get the goal accomplished. These two components (agency and pathways) help determine how successful someone will be at achieving their goals. Hope has been a construct that has been researched in academics, athletics, and physical and mental health areas and has been positively related to positive performance outcomes, but has lacked empirical research in business settings to date beyond Peterson and Luthans' (2003) exploratory study using "state" hope with managers in a single fast food restaurant chain; Adams, Snyder, Rand, King, Sigmon, and Pulvers (2002) who examined some emerging concepts of hope in the workplace; and Luthans, Van Wyk, and Walumbwa (2004) who studied the development of hope in South African organizational leaders. The

concept of hope has not been fully explored relative to business leadership and performance, and has never been studied in the context of the franchise organization.

## **Positive Traits and Work Performance**

In current management literature, the trend has been to start looking at the positive traits that people have and not as much at the negative traits that have been prevalent in the literature regarding work performance. Luthans (2001, 2002a, 2002b) introduced the term positive organizational behavior (POB) and positive approach to leadership (PAL) (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2002) to describe the construct of trying to encourage managers and leaders to support people in developing their strengths instead of reprimanding and criticizing people for their weaknesses. The traditional positive organizational behavior constructs most related to hope are: self-efficacy and optimism.

Self-efficacy (confidence) theory is similar to hope theory (Bandura, 1977). The theories are related in that agency or willpower is similar to efficacy expectancies and pathways or waypower is similar to outcome expectancies. The concept of hope is different in that Snyder (2002) has determined that agency and pathways are equally important to goal accomplishment and operate in a combined, iterative manner, while Bandura (1977) posits that efficacy expectancies are the most critical component of self-efficacy.

Hope is different from optimism because hope is initiated and determined through oneself rather than by external forces. Optimism theory tends to make external attributions for negative outcomes, rather than making internal attributions (Seligman, 1998). Optimism uses the agency component of having drive or motivation to get goals accomplished, but not necessarily the ability to find various pathways to get goals accomplished. In measuring hope, the pathways and agency are both equally important (Snyder, 2002). If a person has the drive and motivation or willpower to get a goal or task accomplished, but they lack the ability to find various ways to accomplish something, they will tend to stop trying when they come up against a barrier to their goal.

Snyder et al. (1991) has developed a measure of dispositional hope called “trait” hope that is a valid and reliable measure of the hope level that a person is born with, as well as a measure of “state” or more situational hope that can be developed and expanded in a person over their life depending on the situations that arise (Snyder et al., 1996).

Despite the lack of research regarding hope in the area of business performance, the evidence from Peterson and Luthans’ (2003) pilot study is positive. Their study compared the “state” hope of quick service restaurant managers and the level of performance of the business along with the employee turnover rates of the individual restaurants. The most recent study to incorporate the State Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1996) was a study by Larson and Luthans (2006) on manufacturing employees that found that overall psychological capital (which incorporates a measure of state hope) had a positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment and on work attitudes. The current study will look at the level of “trait” or dispositional hope of managers and franchisees. If a relationship is found, hope may be a positive selection tool for franchisors to use while selecting franchisees for their organization.

In studies that have been done in the area of athletics, it has been shown that there are higher success rates for high hope athletes versus low hope athletes (Curry & Snyder, 2000). Because higher hope people tend to have high agency and pathways components, they tend to be more positive about their success in various areas of their lives. They tend to focus on goal achievement and on various ways to accomplish their goals. This research points to the fact that people with high hope tend to be more positive in their thoughts of success as well as their thoughts of various ways to solve problems. In the franchising arena, it would seem that franchisees would have higher hope and be able to find various ways to solve problems due to their commitment to the business, both financially and personally.

## **Hope Applied to Franchising**

Because of the nature of franchising, it is believed that franchisees will have higher trait hope levels than other segments in the business arena. In the literature on franchising, the personality of individuals that choose to go into franchising is more “adventurous, risk taking, and aggressive” than those not in a franchisee position. It is also believed that because of the nature of franchising, where someone puts money and effort into the support of a business that is by all rights their own, that the hope level of this type of person will be higher than the hope level of a person who decides to work in a top executive position rather than as an “owner” or franchisee.

Since both franchisees and the managers in the franchised organizations play a key role in the success of the business, it is important to understand the inter-relationships and perceptions of these inter-relationships between franchisees and managers. Specifically, the variables investigated in this study include the perceived trait hope levels, including both pathways and agency scores of the individuals.

The research instrument used in the current study was created in order to test the following hypotheses to add to the literature on trait hope as a construct measuring the level of hope held by franchisees, franchisors, and top executives in franchise operations that is lacking in the current literature.

**H1:** The dispositional hope of franchisees, as measured by the trait hope scale developed by Snyder, et. al. (1991) will be different than the franchisors that own franchise operations.

**H2:** The dispositional hope of franchisees, as measured by the trait hope scale developed by Snyder, et. al. (1991) will be different than the top executives that work in franchised operations.

**H3:** The dispositional hope of people in franchised organizations will differ based on various demographic characteristics including: gender, age, position in the company.

## **Methodology**

The study analyzed the results of a survey sent out to 1262 top executives, franchisees, and franchisors from a multitude of franchise operations. The surveys were sent out to 1047 members of the International Franchise Association Executive mailing list in July, 2006. The remainder of the 215 other surveys was gathered from the list of attendees at the 2003 International Franchise Association Conference, franchise companies that had participated in earlier research by Welsh over a five-year period, and contact information from the National Franchise Association. The franchise organizations varied as to the service or product that they provided. The surveys took approximately 20 minutes to complete and participants were told that their participation in the study was voluntary. Thirty percent of the surveys were sent out via mail to the franchise locations and the rest of the surveys were sent out via electronic mail specifically to franchisees, franchisors, and top executives in franchised units. Of the 1262 surveys sent out, there were 144 usable surveys returned for a response rate of 11.41 percent. It should be noted that the response rate in the franchise community lags other industry samples (Young, McIntyre, & Green, 2000).

Franchisees, franchisors, and top level executives were surveyed in order to gain their perception regarding their own hope measures. The survey was developed using the trait hope scale which was developed by Snyder, et.al. (1991). There were also some demographic questions included on the survey in order to ascertain some of the demographics of the sample. The dispositional hope items were developed and validated by Snyder, et al. (1991). The 12 items, which used a Likert-type scale that used 1=Definitely False to 8=Definitely True, consist of four items measuring agency, four measuring pathways, and four distracter items. The instrument demonstrates both internal reliability (alphas ranging from .74-.88 for the overall scale, and alphas of .70-.84 for the agency and .63-.86 for the pathways subscales) and temporal reliability (test-retests range from .85 for three weeks to .82 for 10 weeks). The agency and pathways subscales were related, but not identical (Babyak, Snyder, & Yoshinobu, 1993; Snyder, 2002). The hope scale has also received extensive concurrent and discriminant validation support, as well as experimental manipulation-based convergent validation (Snyder et al., 1991).

The statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 14.0. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests were used in order to determine if the hope scores differ significantly for franchisees, franchisors, and top executives. Also correlations and reliabilities were run with the survey responses in order to test the survey and its constructs.

## Results

The results of the survey showed that there were 72.9 percent males and 27.1 percent females that participated in the survey. Of those, the median age was 36-45 years old and the positions represented ranged from 19.3 percent franchisees, 29.7 percent CEOs/COOs, 15.2 percent presidents of the company, and 35.9 percent franchisors. Over 40 percent of the survey respondents owned a controlling interest in the company that they work with. See Table 1 for more information on the demographics of the sample.

Table 2 presents a correlation matrix with reliabilities on the diagonal and number of items, means, and standard deviations of the trait hope scores, pathways, and agency scores. Reliabilities between the three scores were very good. There is a high correlation between each of the scales. The trait hope score is the combined pathways and agency scores and so the relationship between those are logical, but all three were correlated with each other.

After ensuring that the survey items were correlated with each other, an ANOVA was run in order to determine if there were significant differences between gender and hope scores, as well as age, position, time in the franchise, and controlling interest and hope scores. Table 3 shows that there are significant differences between groups in all of the various categories, so further analysis was done to determine where those differences were significant.

From the t-tests it was determined that females in this sample have a lower pathways, agency and total trait hope scores. Also in table 4, individuals that own a controlling interest in a company have lower pathways, agency and trait hope scores.

In Table 5, respondents in the age group of 26-35 years-old have the lowest pathways, agency, and total trait hope scores over all of the other age groups represented in the survey respondents. Also the franchisees have lower pathways, agency and trait hope scores than the other categories, franchisor and CEO/president. These categories were collapsed due to the small response rate and to allow the three groups to be compared with one another. Table 5 breaks down the significant differences by the use of the superscript and that distinguishes which groups are statistically significantly different from one another.

**Table 1: Respondent Profile**

(N=145)

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Males	72.9%
Females	27.1%
Age in years:	
19-25	11.0%
26-35	13.8%
36-45	32.4%
46-55	25.5%
56-65	13.8%
66 and above	3.4%
Position:	
Franchisee	19.3%
CEO/COO	29.7%
President	15.2%
Franchisor	35.9%
Own controlling interest	42.3%

**Table 2: Correlation and Means of Hope Variables**  
(N=145) Reliabilities in bold on the diagonal

Variable	Hope Pathways	Hope Agency	Hope Combined
Hope Pathways	<b>.971</b>		
Hope Agency	.952 **	<b>.980</b>	
Hope Combined	.988 **	.988**	<b>.986</b>
No. Items	4	4	8
SUM	20.1395	20.2946	40.4341
SD	10.4804	10.7132	20.9366

**Table 3: Analyses of Variance with Hope Scales**

Item	Df between groups	Hope Pathways		Hope Agency		Hope Combined	
		F	P	F	P	F	P
Gender	1	7.126	.009	8.286	.005	7.904	.006
Age	5	5.033	.000	3.879	.003	4.487	.001
Position	8	7.560	.000	7.251	.000	7.542	.000
Time in franchise	27	2.242	.002	2.644	.000	2.463	.001
Controlling Interest	1	14.430	.000	10.476	.002	12.672	.001

**Table 4: Differences of Means – t-tests**

Variable	Hope Pathways		Hope Agency		Hope Combined	
	Mean	P	Mean	P	Mean	P
Gender: Males	21.5269	.009	21.8280	.005	43.3548	.006
Females	16.1143		15.8857		32.0000	
Controlling Interest: Yes	16.0577	.000	16.6538	.002	32.7115	.001
No	22.7162		22.7162		45.6351	

**Table 5: Means of Hope by Age Category**

Variable	N	Hope Pathways	Hope Agency	Hope Combined
Age: 19-25	16	21.50 <sup>1,2</sup>	21.42 <sup>1,2</sup>	42.92 <sup>1,2</sup>
26-35	20	9.83 <sup>1,2,4,5</sup>	12.00 <sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>	21.83 <sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>
36-45	47	19.39 <sup>2,3</sup>	19.88 <sup>2,3</sup>	39.28 <sup>2,3</sup>
46-55	37	20.00 <sup>2,4</sup>	18.94 <sup>2,4</sup>	38.94 <sup>2,4</sup>
56-65	20	24.40 <sup>2,3,5</sup>	25.25 <sup>2,3,4,5</sup>	49.65 <sup>2,3,4,5</sup>
66 and older	5	32.00 <sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>	31.20 <sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>	63.20 <sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>
Position: Franchisee	28	11.64 <sup>1,2</sup>	12.28 <sup>1,2</sup>	23.93 <sup>1,2</sup>
CEO/President	65	21.79 <sup>1</sup>	22.35 <sup>1</sup>	44.14 <sup>1</sup>
Franchisor	52	23.41 <sup>1,2</sup>	22.73 <sup>1,2</sup>	46.14 <sup>1,2</sup>

\* means of the same Hope variable with the same coefficient are statistically different (P<.05). Thus, for the Hope Pathways variable, age category 19-25 is statistically different from 26-35 and 66+, but not from 36-45, 46-55, and 56-65.

## Conclusion

The results of the current study indicate several differences between franchisees, top executives and franchisors on the scales tested. Hypothesis 1 tested the dispositional hope of franchisees, as measured by the trait hope scale developed by Snyder, et. al. (1991). It was predicted that franchisees' hope level will be different than the franchisors that own franchise operations. Hypothesis 2 tested the dispositional hope of franchisees, as measured by the trait hope scale developed by Snyder, et. al. (1991). It was predicted that franchisees' hope level will be different than the top executives that work in franchised operations. The findings indicate that there

are differences between franchisees, franchisors, and top executives. From the results of the current study, franchisees are less hopeful than top executives and franchisors. Franchisees have a trait hope score of 23.93, whereas CEOs/presidents had a trait hope score of 44.14 and franchisors had a trait hope score of 46.14. This shows that franchisees have lower hope than CEOs/presidents and franchisors. This is an interesting finding that needs to be further explored. In a franchise system, the franchisor is seen as the entrepreneur and the franchisee is considered less of a risk taker, and this could possibly explain the difference in hope scores between those two groups. Additionally, franchisees are the linking pin to the success of the franchise, and are oftentimes called the “ground troops” of the franchise as they are the ones that have contact with the customer. Therefore, the hope of the franchisees is integral to the success of the franchise as a whole.

Hypothesis 3 tested the dispositional hope of employees in franchised organizations and it was predicted that they will differ based on various demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and position in the company. It was found that there are significant differences between the levels of hope in female versus male respondents. Females have a trait hope score of 32.00, while males have a hope score of 43.35. This is a particularly interesting finding given that in past studies on hope, there have not been a differences found in the hope levels between the genders. Also, it may indicate that females have not had as many opportunities in franchise organizations in the past and therefore do not have the pathways or agency needed to overcome obstacles in those systems yet. Indeed, the first time a woman was elected Chair of the International Franchise Association since its founding in 1955 was in 2000 – Jo Anne Shaw, co-founder of the Coffee Beanery, who served on the board since 1989. According to a 1999 study by private consulting firm Women in Franchising (WIF), the number of women-owned franchises is not increasing proportionately to the increase of women-owned companies in general.

Another major finding of our study is that people who own a controlling interest in a franchise tend to have lower hope (32.71) than those who do not own a controlling interest in a franchise (45.64). This is an interesting finding that would need to be further explored as it appears to go against intuition. This finding means that the people who own a controlling interest in a franchise are less hopeful in life, where it would appear that a person that purchases controlling interest in a franchise would have more hope. This could be influenced, in part, by the higher level of risk taking by those having a controlling interest.

In analyzing the differences in age and hope, there are not any clear conclusions that can be made relative to the data presented here. There are various differences across the age ranges relative to hope levels. People 66 years and older have higher hope in comparison with the rest of the age groups. People 26-35 years old have lower hope than the other age groups represented in the current study. This may, in part, be due to the Generation Me phenomena – that those Americans in this age group are more confident, assertive, entitled, and more miserable than previous generations (Twenge, 2006). This could also be an indicator of life experience, as those 66 years of age and older have more hope as they have experienced the positive and negative flows over time and realize change occurs often for the better. It could also reflect that over time, people accumulate more pathways thinking and therefore their overall hope levels rise as they find alternatives over a lifetime to help them get out of difficult situations. It could also reflect that people in the 26-35 years age group are less hopeful as they are in their prime working years and need to ensure that their careers are moving in the right direction and therefore may be indicative of some level of career stress and balancing personal and professional responsibilities.

The results of this exploratory study can be used as a basis for future research. In addition, the results may help to determine whether dispositional or trait hope should be used as one determinant in franchise recruiting. This exploratory study found dramatic differences in the hope level of franchisees, franchisors, and top executives. Future studies should explore the relationship between performance (operational as well as financial) of the franchise organization and the hope level of franchisees. Also, a larger sample would make the results more generalizable. Differences between categories of franchises could be explored to see if there are differences between service and non- service franchises, as well as international versus domestic franchises. Our sample used only US- based franchisees. It would also be interesting to look further at the gender issues surrounding the hope construct. In order to explore further if there are differences between males and females regarding

hope in franchise organizations, studies need to be conducted to determine what role gender and hope plays in the performance of franchise organizations, including number and percentage of franchisees, history of the franchise, and franchise success, among other variables.

### **Study Limitations**

There are some major limitations of the current study. The first limitation is the response rate relative to the sample size. There was only an 11.41 percent response rate on a sample size of 1262 franchisees, franchisors and top executives. The sample was not randomly chosen as some franchise operations do not belong to the International Franchise Association. There was no randomization of the sample. In the social sciences and particularly in franchise samples, the response rate tends to be low. This has been confirmed based on a review of franchise literature by Elango and Fried (1997) as well as Young, McIntyre, and Green (2000). Due to the sample size, the results cannot be generalized. This is an exploratory study that for the first time looked at self-assessed hope levels in franchise organizations.

Our sample is only U.S.-based and the next step would be to internationalize the sample, which is the future here and now in franchising (Welsh, 2002).

### **Discussion**

Franchising is a major form of business in the U.S. and globally. Increasing the understanding of the leadership styles of franchisees and the managers working for them will help to discern the effectiveness of these various leadership styles with the positions held in the organizations. From this information, selection tools used by franchisors and franchisees can be adapted to target the hope levels of effective franchisees, franchisors, and top executives in particular organizations.

The current study helps to fill a void in the entrepreneurship and franchising literature regarding self-assessed trait hope levels of individuals involved in franchising. This information can lead to improved performance and success in franchised systems. Little emphasis is placed on people and performance in franchise systems, mirroring the leadership literature on system effects and its lack of emphasis on how people and performance can affect the entire system (Lynham & Chermack, 2006).

Future research is sorely needed that examines the performance of the franchise organization in relation to the hope level of the franchisee and franchisor within each franchise system and then compared between franchise systems. A more comprehensive study that allows for more randomization of the sample and could help with the generalizeability of the results is needed. Future research should be conducted to understand the role of gender, age, and level in the organization in relation to franchisee hope level. Franchisor hope level in relation to success factors and motivational systems of the franchises is an area that offers great promise to allow franchise systems to better recruit, train, and motivate franchisees. This is part of the new thinking and approaches that are required to meet the challenges beyond just economic capital in businesses but in the human capital of the organization (Larson & Luthans, 2006).

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