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Knowledge Design

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“Scale of the organization” and “Management resource which has already been accumulated”, which has been thought to be a dominant source for competitive advantage (continuity of the firm finally) in the future and become. Only the firm, which can achieve a new commodity and service based on the customer needs, that is, the firm can continue to create the customer satisfaction, can keep competitive advantage. The creation of this satisfactory customer can be caught as a knowledge creation process.

The knowledge creation is often done in the group. Generally, the superior who has the role as a group leader and the subordinate who has the role as a follower exist in the group of the organization. In the field of the retail trade which research takes up as a theme, the consensus, “Knowledge creation of the group is activated as long as a superior with higher evaluation from surroundings is a group leader” exists. I wonder whether this shared belief, the above consensus has obtained by individual’s experience rule, is really correct. This research was started by this question.

First of all, we identified, “What type of person is a superior with a high evaluation from surroundings” from the viewpoint of knowledge creation. This purpose is to verify whether the result of knowledge creation of the group rises if only these superiors exist. And we tried to analyze this research from not only the aspect of influence power that the

superior gave to knowledge creation process of subordinate, we call it “influence”, but also other aspects. Other aspects we mentioned above are ones concerning to the intention of subordinate’s knowledge creation, concerning to the relation between a superior and subordinate, and concerning to the relation with subordinates.

The problem sets with this thesis are as follows based on above. The first problem is “What influence does the existence of the superior of the knowledge intention give to the conversion of subordinate’s knowledge process”. This is a problem set concerning ‘influence’ from a superior to subordinate. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th problem shown as follows is problem sets from other aspects we mentioned. The second problem is the one “What influence was knowledge creation of the group given by the degree of knowledge conversion activity of subordinates at the group level”. The third problem is the one “What influence was knowledge creation of the group given by whether all knowledge conversion modes are covered at the group level or not”. This aspect is called “knowledge conversion covering”. The fourth problem is the one “What influence was knowledge creation of the group given by the degree of matching the combination patterns of four knowledge conversion modes of subordinates with those of the superior”. This aspect is called “knowledge conversion pattern matching”. The above are all problems that this research grappled.

First of all, to grapple with the set problem, we started from the analysis of the case with retail trade, I-company and J-company. We made comparative study of the case with I-company and J-company on the business relationship between the employee and the superior because these companies have different business strategies and the organization climates in their shops. The difference is the driving force to use knowledge creation in two companies though a point in common is one that both companies think that the knowledge creation of individual employee is important. In I-company, each one of the employee is thought that the achievement of the mechanism that “stock for yourself, and sell for yourself” can be done is the driving force of the knowledge creation which can satisfy the customer needs which keep changing. On the other hand, it is thought that the employee’s power of learning corresponding to the customer change is the driving force of the

knowledge creativity so that it is said, “Change voluntarily first of all if you talk about the revolution” in J company. As the result of case analysis, we understood that both companies thought that knowledge creation of employees was important though two companies had different opinions on the driving force of knowledge creation. Moreover, the idea of useful findings and index-making for the questionnaire construction for the survey was obtained from the case analysis, and the preparation for the survey was complete. It is retail trade J-company that we selected as a subject for the survey. We focused and assumed this to be a unit of the analysis to “store” which was a minimum unit in the organization of J-company. In the store “superior” is equal to “store chief” and “subordinate” is equal to “store employee”.

The purpose of the investigation is to clarify the following some points.

Purpose 1: Whether the superior of the knowledge intention influences knowledge conversion of subordinates or not?

Purpose 2: Whether shop employee is doing the knowledge conversion process in each store or not?

Purpose 3: Whether the advantage of knowledge conversion covers four modes of knowledge conversion at the group level or not?

Purpose 4: Whether the pattern of knowledge conversion of the superior overlaps with one of the subordinate or not?

The total of the collection vote of the survey which subject was all employees was 1,120(collection rate 70.0%). Moreover, the collection vote of survey which subject was store managers was collected from 5 stores.

Findings from the analysis of the investigation result are following things.

Finding 1: The existence of the superior of knowledge intention gives a positive influence “Customer information maintenance degree” and “Organization learning degree”, and gives a negative influence “Customer satisfaction degree of an external evaluation”. And the absence of the superior of the knowledge intention gives a negative influence “Sales expansion and contraction

degree”.

Finding 2: The knowledge intention of the subordinate gives a positive influence “Customer information maintenance degree” and “Organization learning degree”, and gives a negative influence “Customer satisfaction degree of an external evaluation”, “Customer satisfaction degree of the manager evaluation”, and “Business plan achievement degree”.

Finding 3: Concerning knowledge conversion covering, not covering knowledge conversion modes gives a positive influence “Customer information maintenance degree” and “Organization learning degree”.

Finding 4: knowledge conversion pattern repetition matching gives a positive influence “Customer information maintenance degree” and “organization learning degree”, and gives a negative influence on “Customer satisfaction degree of the manager evaluation”, “Business plan achievement degree”, and “Sales expansion and contraction degree”.

We can obtain the following answers for the problems we had set as a result of deeply consideration about these finding matters. First, the existence of the superior of the knowledge intention does not usually give a influence the customer satisfaction creation. Secondarily, the absence of the superior of the knowledge intention does not usually give a negative influence on the customer satisfaction creation. Thirdly, the knowledge creation style of subordinate influences the customer satisfaction creation regardless of the presence of the existence of the superior of the knowledge intention.

Thus, our conclusion from the discussion with this thesis is that the knowledge creation style of subordinate influences the customer satisfaction knowledge intention. From the analysis based on more various aspects, this research opposes consensus “Knowledge creation of the group is activated as long as a superior with higher evaluation from surroundings is a group leader” in the field of the retail trade.