

# **Effects of a distinctively perceived HRM system:**

The model of Kelley and Bowen & Ostroff examined

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the current study was to examine the relationship of a distinctively Human Resource Management [HRM] and innovative behavior. Distinctiveness was conceptualized in two ways. First, in an experimental study in terms of Kelley (1973), whereby distinctiveness refers to features that allow it to stand out in the environment, thereby capturing attention and arousing interest. Second, in a field study in terms of Bowen and Ostroff (2004), whereby distinctiveness means that the HRM system should be visible and understandable. The research question was: Can distinctiveness affect the relationship between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior? And how can this relationship be explained? Besides that, the research question was elaborated with the question what the effect is of certainty orientation in the relation between HRM and innovative behavior. Results among 356 employees, working in four different types of organizations, showed that a Commitment-based Management was positively related to innovative behavior in the experimental study, besides that distinctiveness had a direct effect on innovative behavior. It was expected that certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior, this hypothesis was confirmed in the field study. Limitations and implications for further research are suggested.

**Key words:** distinctiveness, commitment-based management, innovative behavior, certainty orientation

## Introduction

The importance of innovation for organizational effectiveness is widely accepted (Janssen, Van de Vliert & West, 2004). In particular, employees' innovative behavior is an important benefit that enables an organization to succeed and survive in a dynamic business environment. Employees' innovative behavior is defined as the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a group, organization, or a role in their work (West & Farr, 1989), and can take place at different levels.

In showing innovative behavior, Human Resource Management [HRM] plays an important role (Shipton, West, Dawson, Birdi & Patterson, 2006). To enhance firm effectiveness, it can be possible to increase innovative behavior through the content of HRM, for example a Commitment-based Management (Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Wood & De Menezes, 1998). HRM enhance firm effectiveness through the effect they have on employees (Uen & Chien, 2010), hence, HR practices first have to be perceived and interpreted by employees in such a way, that it will cause attitudinal and behavioral reactions (Nishii, Lepak & Schneider, 2008). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) conceptualized a “*black box*” to answer the question regarding the contribution of HR practices to organizational outcomes (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Sanders & Looise, 2006). But, as is known from psychology, people perceive and interpret the same messages differently (Delmotte, 2008). Therefore not only the content is important, but also the process - through which HRM provides a common interpretation among individuals about what behavior is expected and rewarded - is important (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

According to Bowen and Ostroff (2004) HRM should be perceived as *distinctive*, *consistent* and with *consensus among HR decision makers*. A distinctively perceived HRM means that employees are aware of the different HR policies, practices and messages, second

the messages sent by HRM should be consistent over time and situations, and third there must be consensus among decision makers in such a way that every employee get the same information.

Though all three features are important, distinctiveness is regarded in this paper as the most important feature, because the creation of a strong organizational situation requires that situational characteristics be salient and visible throughout much of employees' daily work routines en activities (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004: 208). Besides, when HRM is not distinctive, ambiguity is high, and employees are thus more likely to refer to another in an attempt to define the situation in their own way (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004: 209). According to Kelley, distinctiveness is important because of the fact that every employee get confidence when they know where HRM stands for.

Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) model is based on the attribution theory of Kelley (1973). Kelley proposed the attribution theory to explain how we explain the behavior of others. Information from events is used to explain the attribution of observed behavior and their possible causes (Kelley, 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980). Distinctiveness, as conceived by Kelley (1973), refers to attributions that allow it to stand out in the environment and whereby the event-effect is highly observable. In this paper, the two theories are studied in an experimental study and in a field study. A benefit of an experimental study is that it allows the researcher to make strong claims about causality. With survey research, causal findings are less easy to establish. The advantages of a field study are that correlations in business settings can be showed to describe and predict behavior, which as a result leads to more external validity. The following research question is developed: can distinctiveness affect the relationship between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior? And how can this relationship be explained?

Aumann and Ostroff (2006) stated that also cultural variables can be responsible for the way employees perceive and respond to the HRM system and their practices. For example people high in uncertainty avoidance prefer strict rules and policies which are adopted and implemented in the system (Schneider, 1989). Clear procedures, well-known strategies, and well-understood rules help employees reduce uncertainty and cope with their discomfort with unknown situations. Besides that, people high in uncertainty avoidance believe that it is important to conform to organizational norms and procedures (Schneider, 1989), therefore they believe that they should not take initiatives on their own ideas without permission from their executive (Hofstede, 1980). In a study of Shane (1993), he found that uncertainty avoidance was negatively associated to innovative behavior. However, a little is known about the moderated effect of a Commitment-based Management, uncertainty avoidance and innovative behavior. Because this study measures the individual perception, uncertainty avoidance is replaced by certainty orientation, but the concepts are the same (Shuper, Sorrentino, Otsubo, Hodson & Walker, 2004). Following the above mentioned findings, certainty orientation is suggested to have an important effect on distinctiveness and innovative behavior. Because of this findings, the research is elaborated with the following research question: What is the effect of certainty orientation in the relation between HRM and innovative behavior?

## **Theoretical frame and their hypotheses**

### ***The content of HRM: the hard and the soft model***

HRM has frequently been described as a concept with two models: the hard and the soft. Both models can lead to organizational performance (e.g. Guest, 1987; 1997). Guest (1987) and Storey (1992) make two main distinctions in these two models, that is whether the emphasis is on the *resource* or on the *human*. The hard model is based on strategic control and is derived

from Theory X. In this theory, management assumes that employees are lazy and will avoid work if they can, and that employees dislike work. As a result, management believe that employees need to be supervised under control, and that it is the manager's job to structure work and motivate employees. When there is a high control, employees feel less committed and the employees' trust is low (Noon, 1992), with as a result low performance, for example in innovative behavior.

The soft model is based on control through commitment, and can be compared with the Theory Y approach. The soft model assumes that employees enjoy their work, and when employees are fully committed to the organization, they will work best (Guest, 1987). The commitment exists if employees are trusted, if they are trained and developed, and if they can work autonomously (Guest, 1987). It seems that employees are more satisfied when organizations using a commitment-based management style. With as a result, more productive employees and a lower turnover (Huselid & Becker, 1997; Huselid, 1995).

But which HRM practices will be used in a Commitment-based Management? In the past, the conceptualization of what exactly is a *Commitment-based Management* varies (Steijn & Tijdens, 2005). However, recently more is known about which HRM practices belong to a commitment-based management approach, for example employee involvement, supporting employee performance, rewards for performance and information-sharing. A Commitment-based Management approach influence employees behavior by creating opportunities for each employee to give their best performance for the organization (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Also Delaney and Huselid (1996) stated that related HR practices and management can improve organizational performance. Besides this Guthrie, Liu, Flood and MacCurtain (2008) found that HRM practices had also a positive effect on innovative work behavior. Because of the aforementioned conclusions, it can be suggested that a Commitment-based Management leads to innovative behavior.

### *The attribution theory of Kelley*

Research on causal attributions has a long history, scientists such as Heider (1958), Jones and Davis (1965), and Kelley (1973) applied attribution theory to their specific areas of research.

The attribution theory is concerned with the generic causal principles that people use to explain people's behavior; about how people answer questions beginning with "why?". It deals with the information they use in making causal inferences, and with what they do with this information to answer causal questions (Kelley, 1973; Kassin, Fein & Markus, 2008). The main thing of the attribution theory is to understand people's perceptions of causality (Kassin et al., 2008). Understanding attributions is critical, because people's interpretations of the causes of behavior and events determine their attitudes and behaviors (Kelley & Michela, 1980). To understand the question beginning with "why", Kelley (1973) theorized that people need specific information to reach a valid judgment about a cause and its effect. To make a valid judgment, the response should be distinctive, consistent and similar to those made by other persons.

In the attribution theory, Kelley distinguishes three characteristics: the entity, the person and time. If responses from the same person to different stimuli are different, there is high distinctiveness and the behavior is attributed to the situation, when the responses are the same, distinctiveness is low and attributed to the person. This means, for example, that a high distinctively perceived HRM - unlike other companies - offers favorable fringe benefits for their employees, whereas a low distinctively perceived HRM offers the same benefits as most other companies do.

Gelade and Ivery (2003) and Kinnie, Hutchinson and Purcell (2000) demonstrated in their research that a Commitment-based Management has a positive impact on employees' behavior. Also Glavin and Chilingirian (2010) found that a Commitment-based Management has a positive impact on employees' behavior. In their study, Glavin and Chilingirian (2010)

found that HRM practices associated with a Commitment-based Management approach can generate more initiative among employees and meaningful performance gains for an organization. Thereby it is possible that distinctiveness strengthened this relation, because employees will attribute the cause of HRM practices to the internal values of the management. When values are internal, employees perceive respect for them (Koys, 1988).

### ***The attribution theory of HRM by Bowen and Ostroff***

In 2004, Bowen and Ostroff were the first researchers that used the attribution theory of Kelley. The main renewal in their model was that Bowen and Ostroff (2004) shifted the focus from the content of HRM to the process of HRM (Nishii et al., 2008). The process of HRM is about how the messages sent by, for example a Commitment-based Management will be perceived by employees. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) proposed that the organizational goal is to create a strong situation of HRM, wherein employees share the same interpretations of events, behaving in a desired and consistent way towards organizational goals and desired standards of performance. When there is a strong situation, the employees share the same perceptions, and know what HRM expect of them (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

But, in which way can an organization create a strong situation. According to Bowen and Ostroff (2004), the HR department has to communicate messages regarding appropriate behavior to employees in a clear, consistent, and unambiguous way (Delmotte, 2008). Employees should be aware of the different HR policies, practices and messages which are sent by HRM in their company and which are sent by HRM in other companies. To be aware of the different HR policies, practices and messages, HR should sent visible and understandable messages to their employees. When the message is visible and understandable (distinctiveness is high), it can help stage how HRM practices and their influence on employee attributes can lead to desired outcomes at the organizational level, such as



productivity, financial performance, competitive advantage and innovative behavior (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

In this research, the direct effects and moderating effects of distinctiveness are studied in an experimental study and in a field study. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1a:* There is a positive relation between a Commitment-based management and employees' innovative behavior.

*Hypothesis 1b:* The relation between a Commitment-based Management and employees' innovative behavior is strengthened by distinctiveness.

### ***The effect of certainty orientation in relation to innovative behavior***

Culture, defined as a learned set of norms for social behavior that is shared by members of a group or team (Shane, 1993), has received much attention in organizational behavior literature (see Amsa, 1986; Hofstede, 1986; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv & Sanders, 1990). This attention is mainly because researchers have assumed that cultural factors play an important role in determining results of organizational outcomes. Culture seems to be crucial in explaining cross-national HRM differences. For example, Hofstede (1993) and Schuler, Jackson, Slocum and Jackofsky (1996) argued that national culture has a significant relationship with HRM policies and practices. Hofstede (1980) distinguishes between five types of culture: individualism, power distance, masculinity, long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. People high in uncertainty avoidance try to minimize this by strict laws and rules and safety. According to Hofstede (1980), uncertainty avoidance is the extent of how members in a country handle uncertain and unknown conditions. However, culture can be defined not only at the national level (Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). The emphasis may even be at the individual

level, because culture ensures that individual cognitive processes and behavioral responses are shaped to situational stimuli (Rokeach, 1973), such as HRM practices experienced in the organization.

To address how individuals deal with uncertainty, Sorrentino and Roney (2000) introduced a personality dimension, which is known as uncertainty orientation. Uncertainty orientation refers to people's interest in learning new things about themselves and their environment and the attraction of unpredicted situations, whereas certainty oriented employees want to maintain their current conceptualizations of themselves and their environment and are attracted by predictability. Employees high in certainty orientation find that it is important to conform to organizational rules and values (Bowen, Siehl, Schneider, 1989) to reduce ambiguity. This is reflected in the fact that they prefer strict rules and policies which are adopted and implemented in the system (Hofstede, 1983). Besides that, certainty-oriented employees, look for structure in their work and relationships that are clearly predictable. Therefore, organizations are influenced to use more structures HRM practices (Stohl, 1993). If there are no strict rules and policies it can result in ambiguity and uncertainty. It seems to be that distinctiveness can be of importance to people high in certainty orientation, because distinctiveness try to set clear rules and guidance so that the ambiguity and uncertainty can be taken away.

Convincing employees of the value of innovative behavior is difficult by certainty oriented employees, because innovative behavior requires decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. But as earlier mentioned, certainty-oriented employees have the need for security. That need for security influences daily life, for example in the reluctance to absorb new ideas, and tolerating deviant ideas (Van Oudenhoven, Mechelse & De Dreu, 1998). Therefore it is possible that certainty orientation moderates the relation between a

Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. The following hypothesis will be examined:

*Hypothesis 2:* The relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior is weakened by certainty orientation.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

The survey included a total of 356 respondents, from which 86 (24.2%) were men. The mean age of the respondents was 41.3 (SD=11.74). Seventeen (4.8%) respondents completed secondary school, 137 (39.7%) completed intermediate vocational education, 155 (44.9%) respondents completed higher vocational education, and 36 (10.4%) respondents had a master degree. There are 158 (44.4%) respondents with a fulltime contract. An executive function was held by 57 (16.0%) respondents. The mean job tenure is 7.89 (SD=8.63). Finally, the respondents works in different sectors and companies, such as one hospital, including 184 respondents (5.6%), one company that publishes online gaming portals and online games, including fifteen respondents (42.9%), one municipality with fifteen respondents (86.7%) and 142 respondents (15.8%) who work with people with a physical disability.

### *Procedure*

The employees were asked to participate in a study assessing perceiving the HRM system, participation was voluntary for all employees. There were two ways to complete the questionnaire, by paper or digital. The digital version was sent to all employees with an e-mail address of the company, employees without an e-mail address of the company received a paper version. The questionnaires were administered in Dutch and in English, and randomly distributed. Prior to the questionnaire, a letter was introduced, which contained information

about the research. After a week, the questionnaire was administered with an explanation, concerning the confidentiality of the research, and that the questionnaire focused on a first impression. After two weeks, a reminder was sent for the questionnaires with a deadline for filling in.

### *Analysis*

Control variables in this study were gender, organization, tenure by the organization, type of contract, and type of function. To examine which control variables were taken into the regression model, an Independent Sample T-tests was conducted to examine effects of type of function and type of contract on the dependent variable. To examine if tenure and years employed in current job were related to innovative behavior, a regression analysis was conducted. To examine if type of organization and educational level had an effect on the dependent variable an ANOVA was conducted. Results showed that the organization that publishes online gaming portals and online games differed significant from the other organizations ( $p = \leq .05$ ). Therefore a dummy variable was made (1= online game publisher, 0=other organizations). There was also made a dummy variable for distinctiveness in the experimental study (0 = low distinctiveness, 1 = high distinctiveness).

The direct effects for the hypotheses were assessed by using a linear regression. To examine if the moderator effects were present, the interaction effects were tested using the Aiken and West method (1991). The control variables were entered in model 1, the variables Commitment-based Management and distinctiveness were added in model 2, and the interaction effect was added in model 3.

### *Measurements*

For the items of all scales, we used 4-point rather than 5-point or 7-point Likert scales. Response items ranged from 1= totally disagree to 4=totally agree. The measures were based on self-report data collected at one point in time.

### *Study 1*

The experimental part of the study was assessed by a scenario (Appendix A), which measured the content of HRM. In this scenario, information was given about a fictitious company. After reading this scenario, the respondent was presented with a perception check to check if the respondent was able to put him or herself into the given situation. To measure the perception check of *Commitment-based Management*, a scale developed by Zhang, Tsui, Song, Li, Jia (2008) was used. The scale consisted of seven items. An example included was: “To what extent do you agree that the management in your company: creates facilities for employees to fully demonstrate their talents”. This scale was found reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .66$ ). Factor analysis showed that the item “To what extent do you agree that the management in your company: respect employees’ self dignity”, was not a component of this questionnaire. The deletion of this item resulted in a sufficient reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .78$ ).

After the perception check, information was given about the HRM department of the fictitious company. Manipulations were created according to the information patterns in the attribution theory of Kelley (1973). In this part, manipulations were created to measure low and high distinctiveness. The items regarding high distinctiveness were all framed positively. An example of that item was: “Since the time you have worked in this company you have noticed that the HRM department offers favorable fringe benefits, for example the provision of laptops”. Another example of high distinctiveness was “Since the time you have worked in this company you have noticed that the HRM department gives a lot of freedom for your own

input into the work”. The items regarding low distinctiveness were all framed negatively. An example of that was “Since the time you have worked in this company you have noticed that the HRM department offers the same benefits as most other companies do”. Another example was “Since the time you have worked in this company you have noticed that the HRM department gives little freedom for your own input into the work”. In appendix B, the different types of the attributions can be found, included consensus and consistency. Thereafter, a manipulation check was introduced. An example item was “Management and the HR department have the same clear vision”. 226 (63,5 %) respondents filled in the questionnaire with high distinctiveness, 116 (32,6%) respondents filled in the questionnaire with low distinctiveness<sup>1</sup>. The difference between low (person attribution)  $M = 2.53$  and high (object and context attribution)  $M = 2.61$  distinctiveness was significant ( $t(356) = 6.78, p \leq .01$ ).

*Employees' innovative behavior* is measured using the questionnaire developed by Janssen & Van Yperen (2004). Previous studies find that innovative behavior comprised three subscales - generation, promotion, and realization -, however this study finds that innovative behavior is unidimensional. An exploratory data analysis utilizing principal component with varimax rotation finds that all items are loaded on only one factor. The values of the factor analysis ranged between .708 and .843 show that all items are reliable estimates to measure innovative behavior. An example of the questionnaire was “I am not afraid to take risks”. The reliability of this scale was good (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ).

*Certainty orientation* was measured by using the *uncertainty avoidance*-scale of Ang, van Dyne and Begley (2003). This scale consisted of five items and is based on Hofstede's

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<sup>1</sup> Distinctiveness, consistency and consensus information was used to create manipulations of object, person and context attribution. The versions of the questionnaires that manipulated high distinctiveness (object and context attribution) have been merged.

(1984) definition of uncertainty avoidance. An example of this scale is: “I prefer work that is highly structured”. The reliability of the scale was found sufficient (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .78$ ). Certainty orientation would be measured in study 1, as well as in study 2 as a moderator.

## ***Results study 1***

### *Descriptive statistics and correlations*

The means, standard deviations, and correlations for the studied variables are presented in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, the Commitment-based Management is negatively related to education ( $r = -.14, p \leq .05$ ) and organization ( $r = -.17, p \leq .01$ ) and positively related to innovative behavior ( $r = .21, p \leq .01$ ) and certainty orientation ( $r = .24, p \leq .01$ ). Distinctiveness is negatively related to tenure in the organization ( $r = -.11, p \leq .05$ ) and positively related to innovative behavior ( $r = .18, p \leq .01$ ). This indicates that when employees perceive the HRM policy as distinctive, they show more innovative behavior. Certainty orientation is negatively related to age ( $r = -.23, p \leq .01$ ). This indicates that younger employees are more likely to behave in uncertain circumstances. Next to this, the results showed that the higher the education, the less employees engage in certainty orientation ( $r = -.22, p \leq .01$ ). Besides that, certainty orientation is positively related to type of function ( $r = .11, p \leq .05$ ). This indicates that employees with an executive function are more likely to engage in uncertain circumstances.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables in the experimental study

Variables	Mean	SD.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender (1 = male)	1.75	.43											
2. Age	41.26	11.74	-.22**										
3. Education	3.60	.79	-.05	.03									
4. Organization	.71	.71	-.17**	.14**	.15**								
5. Tenure (Organization in years)	11.93	10.31	-.09	.60**	-.08	.07							
6. Years employed in current job	7.89	8,6	-.03	.43**	-.04	.01	.47**						
7. Contract (1 = fulltime)	1.55	.50	.45**	-.02	-.06	-.18**	-.04	.06					
8. Executive (1= yes)	1.84	.37	.21**	-.13*	-.21**	-.05	-.06	.01	.24**				
9. Commitment-based Management	2.86	.48	.06	-.08	-.14*	-.17**	.01	.05	.08	.02			
10. Distinctiveness (0 = low)	.66	.47	.04	.03	-.06	.05	-.11*	.09	.03	-.05	.01		
11. Innovative behavior	2.89	.39	-.05	.05	-.05	-.11**	.06	.07	-.01	-.05	.21**	.18**	
12. Certainty orientation	2.48	.45	.03	-.23**	-.22**	-.09	-.08	-.01	.01	.11*	.24**	-.09	.05

\*\* p = ≤ .01

\* p = ≤ .05



### *Test of hypothesized models*

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 with distinctiveness and certainty orientation as a moderator and innovative behavior as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 1a predicted that there was a positive relation between a Commitment-based Management and employees' innovative behavior. Hypothesis 1b predicted that distinctiveness strengthened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. Besides that, it was predicted that certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior (hypothesis 2). The relation between a Commitment-based Management and employees' innovative behavior is significant ( $\beta = .07$ ,  $p = \leq .01$ ). This means that when employees perceive that there is a Commitment-based Management, they show more innovative behavior. However, distinctiveness did not moderate the relation between Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior ( $\beta = .02$ ,  $p = .48$ ).

Hypothesis 2 stated that certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. Results showed that the relationship between Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior was significant ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $p = \leq .01$ ). However, there was not a significant effect found of certainty orientation on innovative behavior ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $p = .67$ ). Besides that, there was no moderator effect found ( $\beta = .01$ ,  $p = .53$ ).

Table 2. Results of regression analysis of the experimental study with Commitment-based Management as dependent variable and distinctiveness and certainty orientation as moderator.

	Innovative behavior with distinctiveness as moderator			Innovative behavior with certainty orientation as moderator		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Organization	.01	.04	.04	.01	.02	.01
Contract	.02	.02	-.05	-.01	-.02	-.02
Commitment-based Management		.07**	.07**		.09**	.09**
Distinctiveness (0 = low)		.05*	.04*			
Certainty orientation					-.01	-.01
Commitment-based Management * distinctiveness			.02			
Commitment-based Management * certainty orientation						.01
Constant	2.89**	2.90**	2.89**	2.89**	2.91**	2.74**
R <sup>2</sup>	.01	.06	.06	.01	.06	.06
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-.01	.04	.04	-.01	.04	.04

\*\* =  $p \leq .01$ , \*  $p \leq .05$

## **Discussion**

Results of the experimental study showed that there were only direct effects found of Commitment-based Management and distinctiveness on innovative behavior. Next to that, there were no moderator effects found of distinctiveness and certainty orientation on employees' innovative behavior. Because, Commitment-based Management and distinctiveness had direct effects, this indicates that both variables are good predictors for employees' innovative behavior. In an experimental study, cause and effect relations can be showed (Kassin, Fein & Markus, 2008). Another advantage of the experimental study is that respondents can be assigned to conditions, in this case low versus high distinctiveness. Thereby, scientists have better control over the other influencing variables and experiments can easily be repeated (Potters, n.d.). However, it is still important to test the hypotheses in a field study. 'The question of Real Life' does not longer exist, because a field study is real life. Therefore there is more external validity, because people respond to their own situation.

## ***Study 2***

*Commitment-based Management* in the field study was measured by an questionnaire used by Sanders et al. (2008) and Macky and Boxall (2008). This scale consisted of nine items. Examples of this scale are: “Together with me, a clear career planning is made”, and “I can stay as long as I want in this company”. This scale was found reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .70$ ).

*Distinctiveness* in the field study was assessed using Delmotte’s (2008) distinctiveness-scale, and consisted of seven items. An example of one item was: “The procedures and practices developed by personnel management are easy to use”, another example was “In this organization, it is clear what belongs to the tasks and what is outside the field of personnel management”. The reliability of the scale was found good (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .82$ ).

Janssen and Van Yperen’s (2004) scale of *employees’ innovative behavior* was used a second time in the field study. The reliability of the scale was not sufficient (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .51$ ). After a factor analysis, it turned out that all items are loaded on one factor and ranged between .69 and .80, except the item “I propose new ways to reach my goals”. After a deletion of this item, the reliability of this scale turned out to be sufficient (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .79$ ).

## ***Results study 2***

### ***Descriptive statistics and correlations***

The means, standard deviations, and correlations for the studied variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables in the field study

Variables	Mean	SD.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender (1 = male)	1.75	.43											
2. Age	41.26	11.74	-.22**										
3. Education	3.60	.79	-.05	.03									
4. Organization	.71	.71	-.17**	.14**	.15**								
5. Tenure (Organization in years)	11.93	10.31	-.09	.60**	-.08	.07							
6. Years employed in current job	7.89	8,6	-.03	.43**	-.04	.01	.47**						
7. Contract (1 = fulltime)	1.55	.50	.45**	-.02	-.06	-.18**	-.04	.06					
8. Executive (1= yes)	1.84	.37	.21**	-.13*	-.21**	-.05	-.06	.01	.24**				
9. Commitment-based Management	2.86	.48	.14*	-.12*	-.09	-.19**	.04	-.01	.05	.01			
10. Distinctiveness (0 = low)	2.49	.43	.07	-.23**	-.04	.28**	-.17*	.04	.03	.03	-.06		
11. Innovative behavior	2.96	.38	-.05	.03	.06	-.14**	.09	.04	-.07	-.11	-.06	-.09	
12. Certainty orientation	2.48	.45	.03	-.23**	-.22**	-.09	-.08	-.00	.01	.11*	.14**	.18**	-.04

\*\* p = ≤ .01

\* p = ≤ .05

The Commitment-based Management is positively related to gender ( $r = .14, p \leq .05$ ), innovative behavior ( $r = .27, p \leq .01$ ) and certainty orientation ( $r = .11, p \leq .05$ ), and is negatively related to organization ( $r = -.19, p \leq .01$ ), age ( $r = -.12, p \leq .05$ ) and years employed in current job ( $r = -.15, p \leq .01$ ). Distinctiveness is negatively related to age ( $r = -.23, p \leq .01$ ) and tenure ( $r = -.17, p \leq .01$ ), but positively related to organization ( $r = .28, p \leq .01$ ) and certainty orientation ( $r = .18, p \leq .01$ ).

#### *Test of hypothesized models*

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4 with distinctiveness and certainty orientation as a moderator and innovative behavior as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 1a predicted that there was a positive relation between a Commitment-based Management and employees' innovative behavior. Hypothesis 1b predicted that distinctiveness strengthened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. Besides that, it was predicted that certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior (hypothesis 2). The relation between a Commitment-based Management and employees' innovative behavior is not significant ( $\beta = -.01, p = .63$ ). Also, distinctiveness had no direct effect on innovative behavior ( $\beta = -.01, p = .64$ ). Besides that, distinctiveness did not moderate the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior ( $\beta = .03, p = .10$ ).

Hypothesis 2 stated that the certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. Results showed that this hypothesis can be confirmed ( $\beta = -.04, p \leq .05$ ). Figure 1 shows that if certainty orientation is high, the relation between Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior is weakened. In addition, there were no main effects found for the relation between

Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior ( $\beta = -.02, p = .49$ ) and certainty orientation and innovative behavior ( $\beta = -.01, p = .66$ ).

Figure 1: High certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior.

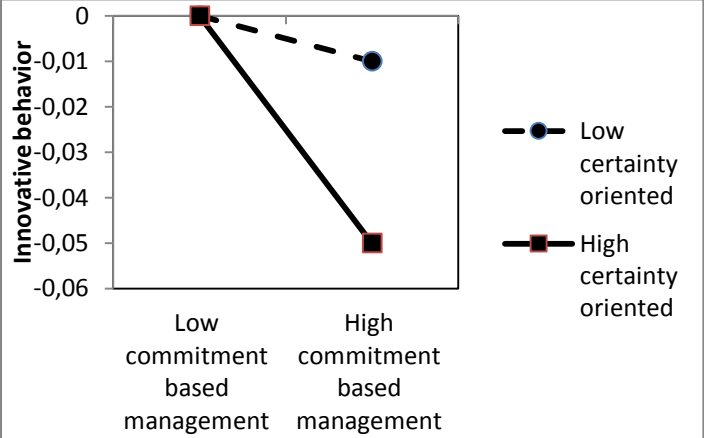


Table 4. Results of regression analysis of the field study with Commitment-based Management as dependent variable and distinctiveness and certainty orientation as moderator.

	Innovative behavior with distinctiveness as moderator			Innovative behavior with certainty orientation as moderator		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Organization	.41**	.41**	.42**	.42**	.42**	.45**
Contract	-.08	-.08	-.08	-.03	-.03	-.04
Commitment-based Management		-.01	-.01		-.02	-.02
Distinctiveness		-.01	-.01			
Certainty orientation					-.01	-.00
Commitment-based Management * distinctiveness			.03			
Commitment-based Management * certainty orientation						-.04*
Constant	2.65**	2.66**	2.63**	2.89**	2.91**	2.74**
R <sup>2</sup>	.06	.07	.07	.01	.06	.06
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.04	.04	.04	-.01	.04	.04

\*\* =  $p \leq .01$ , \*  $p \leq .05$



## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore and test whether and how HRM contributes to innovative behavior with the moderators of distinctiveness and certainty orientation in an experiment and in a field study. The focus in this study lay on the perception of individual employees, about how they thought of Commitment-based Management, distinctiveness and innovative behavior in their organization.

It was predicted that a Commitment-based Management had direct effects on innovative behavior (hypothesis 1a). A direct effect was found in the experimental study, however this hypothesis could not be confirmed in the field study. This is striking, because earlier research showed that commitment-based management had positive effects on outcomes and performance (Guest, 1987; 1997, and Huselid & Becker, 1997). Research from Anderson, De Dreu and Nijstad (2004) has indicated that employees' innovative behavior depend greatly on their interaction with their colleagues or supervisor in the workplace. When employees do not have a good relation with colleagues, they are less likely to exchange new ideas. Kotter and Heskett (1992) found that some aspects of group culture may improve or hinder performance, for example innovative behavior. Therefore, it is possible that an group culture can moderate innovative behavior. A second explanation could be the leadership style. Graen and Scandura (1987) suggest that the quality of the relation between a leader and their employees is related to innovation. A high-quality relation include providing employees with difficult, challenging tasks, supporting their employees and the provision of task-related resources. Also De Jong and Den Hartog (2007) found that it is known that the leadership style affect innovative behavior of employees. For example, an authoritative leader provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. As a result, no or less input from the employees. In their study, De Jong and Den

Hartog (2007) found that leaders need to enhance employees' innovative behavior by ensuring sufficient autonomy among employees. Besides that, it is important for leaders to support their employees, because leaders' support could motivate employees in the innovation process, in for example creating and generating ideas ( Jong & Den Hartog, 2007).

In hypothesis 1b, distinctiveness, also conceptualized in an experimental study and in a field study, was theorized to have a moderating effect on a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. In both studies, distinctiveness did not strengthened this relation. It could be the case that another variable, for example consensus strengthened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. A commitment-based Management and consensus can strengthened the sense of belonging to an organization, which in turn lead to an increase in employees' performance, for example innovative behavior.

It could also be the case that distinctiveness strengthened the relation between a Control-based Management (Theory X) and innovative behavior instead of a Commitment-based Management. In a Commitment-based organization, jobs are broad, and employees have greater autonomy. In a Control-based organization, practices are based on standardization and formalization. Generally, performing tasks rely on strict and clear work rules and procedures. Distinctiveness ensure that there are visible and understandable messages, and thus clear work rules (Whitener, 2001). In addition, innovative behavior is behavior that go beyond role prescriptions (Katz, 1964), but distinctiveness ensures that rules are imposed.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that certainty orientation weakened the relation between a Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. This hypothesis could be confirmed in the field study. However, this hypothesis could not be confirmed in the experimental study. It may be possible that certainty orientation is also an important moderating variable in relation to a Commitment-based Management and other dependent

variables. For example, Shane (1993) hypothesized that individualistic societies are more innovative than other societies, because individualistic employees are more likely to stress the importance of freedom and autonomy. Next to that, Hofstede (1980) found that managers with an individualistic orientation are more likely to believe in the importance of making contacts with other managers. Results of the study of Shane (1993) showed that individualism is an important factor in showing innovative behavior, but highly innovative organizations have people who are individualistic, accepting uncertainty and scoring low in power distance.

### *Strengths and limitations*

While it is essential to conduct a longitudinal research, this study contributed to my understanding of HR-performance link by focusing on innovative behavior, which is known as a contribution to competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness. Another strength of this research is that this study focused on the perceived HRM and not the intended HRM practices (Li, Frenkel & Sanders, 2011). An advantage is that in such a way HRM get insight in the way employees think about the HRM in their organization and not whether employees do know what the practices formulated by policy-makers are (Khilji & Wang, 2006). This perception is the basis of how HRM practices are perceived and what the effect is on employees' behavior. This study focused only on the perception of their own innovative behavior, however future research could be done to ask colleagues or an executive about the way they perceive employees' innovative behavior, for example the innovative behavior of their team.

According to Bowen and Ostroff (2004), future research is needed to measure also the effects of consistency and consensus on innovative behavior, because all three parts together should predict more. At least, this research showed that the perception of employees is not only influenced by a Commitment-based Management, but also by the employees' personality,

because the higher the employee was in certainty orientation, the lower innovative behavior was. However, in the future it would be interesting to examine other cultural variables between Commitment-based Management and innovative behavior. For example, Shane (1993) stated that individualism and power-distance have all been found to be associated with national rates of innovation.

The design of this research has its weaknesses and strengths. Some respondents mentioned that the questionnaire was too long, thereby keeping in mind that the computer-made questionnaire could not be stopped in the mean time. Next to this, was the choice of a four point scale instead of a five point Likert scale in order to address the tendency to answer “neutral” or “not applicable”. As a result, there was a large amount of missing variables. The questionnaire about HRM was sometimes difficult to understand, because employees (especially those in the large companies) had no direct contact with HRM. Another weakness was that the questionnaire came right after a research about employees’ satisfaction within the company, this resulted in a low response. A strong point of the design was the fact that employees were not required to fill in the questionnaire, so all employees who filled in the questionnaire were motivated to do that. Besides that, employees were asked to fill in the questionnaire anonymously. In one company, we found that an actual training-program about innovative behavior, had an effect on the way employees perceive their own innovative behavior. Therefore, in the future it is interesting to examine if the focus on actual situations has direct effects on the perception of employees. Another strong point is that of the combination of content and process, which gives insight in how individuals attribute to a (given) situation.

### *Practical implications*

The implication of this study is that it is important that there should be paid attention to the perception of employees about HRM. Therefore, organizations have to apply commitment-based practices, for example education and a career planning. By the constant development in the economy and labor market, it is important that organizations should ensure that their HR practices remain up to date, periodically analyze and eventually redesign their HR practices in such a way that employees still perceive their management as committed (Koneremann, Runhaar, Vermeulen & Sanders, 2011).

The role of certainty orientation is confirmed in the field study. Uncertain employees showed less innovative behavior. Therefore, to reduce the uncertainty, organizations should ensure that those employees have strict rules and clear tasks. Besides that, it is important that these employees perceive they have control over the situation, so that the fear of making mistakes decreases and as a result the employees feel more successful in their job (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Which in turn can lead to an increase innovative behavior.

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## **Appendix A**

The following scenario was administered:

You are employed as product developer within a company that manufactures high-quality and innovative electronic products. Your task is to design and develop new ideas and products.

Next to the product development department, the company's management is supported by four other departments: the financial department is responsible for all financial activities. The personnel- or Human Resource department is responsible for all employee related affairs. The IT department provides support all computerized systems within the company. Finally, the department of Communication facilitates all internal and external communication of the company.

The management desires to create an atmosphere in which every employees can make use of their talents and perform as best as possible. Within your own department management activity involves all employees in major decisions and opinions are taken seriously. Moreover, management has arranged that the financial department reserves a budget for development of the company's employees. Also the costs for a home internet connection are refunded so that you can work at home. The IT department has laptops available, so that employees can work wherever they like. Besides this, there is the possibility to log on into the company's network from home. The department of Communication makes sure that all employees are informed of important management decisions.

## Appendix B

Attribution	<b>Since the time you have worked in this company you have noticed that the personnel department</b>
Object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually takes measures that are experienced by you, as well as your colleagues in the same way.</li> <li>• Offers training and learning that are equally valued by both you and your colleagues.</li> <li>• Always offers opportunities to take courses</li> <li>• Has attuned all different parts of personnel policy, for instance they attuned recruitment and selection</li> <li>• Offers favourable fringe benefits, for example the provision of laptops</li> <li>• Gives a lot of freedom for your own input into the work</li> </ul>
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually takes measures that you and your colleagues experience differently</li> <li>• Offers training and learning that are differently valued by both you and your colleagues</li> <li>• Always offers opportunities to take courses</li> <li>• Has attuned all different parts of personnel policy, for instance they attuned recruitment and selection</li> <li>• Offers the same benefits as most other companies do</li> <li>• Gives little freedom for your own input into the work</li> </ul>
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually takes measures that you and your colleagues experience differently</li> <li>• Offers training and learning that are differently valued by both you and your colleagues</li> <li>• Doesn't offer the opportunity to take courses, whereas in the past it had been possible</li> <li>• Hasn't attuned all different parts of personnel policy, for instance they did not attune recruitment and selection</li> <li>• Offers favourable fringe benefits, for example the provision of laptops</li> <li>• Gives a lot of freedom for your own input into the work</li> </ul>