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Career Paths in Hotel Management

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Career Paths Expected for Hotel Management and Service Performance Standards

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Abstract

Education and experience play a key role in determining the efficacy and competency of the career paths found in the hotel industry. The research aims to examine how hotel management's education levels and experiences influence employees' service performance standards and customer satisfaction. The research conducted is a qualitative survey on 124 hotels in the U.S using questionnaires with the general managers, human resource managers, executive managers, and frontline employees who regularly interact with customers. The study results showed that the hotels whose managerial roles were held by individuals with high education accomplishments and experiences had the most competent employees, which resulted in improved customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Hotel management; general managers; human resource managers, customer satisfaction; operations; control; service, and employee performance.

Introduction

The hotel industry's performance is highly influenced by the experience, qualification, and competence of human resources. In this era characterized by a high level of competition within the hotel industry, a hotel needs to have human resources with the capability and competence to meet the service standards and international or national certification to survive competition pressure. The expertise of human resources is affected by several factors, including education. Education equips human resources, especially those in managerial positions, with the knowledge and skills necessary to face the competition pressure. For hotel employees to become certified to work in their various departments, they must possess and be able to apply the gained skills in their areas

of specialization. However, several hotel employees do not have certificates of competence in their working areas (Dalimunthe, Syahputra & Sitompul, 2019). Based on several research metrics, hotels that have managers who are certified and have the necessary skills and competencies seem to do well in employees' service performance standards as well as customers' satisfaction.

Moreover, the hotel managers' authority and autonomy depend on the hotel's business structure. For instance, general managers' autonomy in decision-making is determined by whether the hotel is independent. Independent general managers seem to have greater independence in regulating hotel operations and finances than the general chain managers. Therefore, independent hotels are likely to have a more improved employee performance than chain-managed hotels, thus having a higher chance of offering better services.

Literature review

According to the research conducted by Chen et al. (2017) on the impacts of high commitment human resource activities on hotel employees' proactive customer service performance (PCSP). Chinese hotels, highly committed human resource practices have a positive influence on the service employees' PCSP. The researchers created and tested a multiple-level model of the effects of high commitment human resources practices on proactive customer service performance during the study. They collected data through a survey conducted using questionnaires, where they examined 94 hotels in China. The questionnaire's respondents included the chief human resource managers, the service employees who had interacted with the customers adequately, and various employees' coworkers. The research was conducted for six months to reduce potential bias due to the use of a conventional method (p.6). The study results showed that positive influence is achieved through work-related self-efficacy, having a great passion for work, and alleged organizational support (p.9). The results also indicated that the managerial skills that the employees, such as

human resource managers, general hotel managers, and executive managers, possess profoundly influence the outcome of the proactive customer service performance. Excellent hotel management ensures that all hotel employees are working in a favorable environment, thus improving the customer's satisfaction. Working in favorable conditions working in favorable conditions increases employee morale, thus providing the best services to the customer. To ensure that the services delivered are of high quality, the hotel industry employees usually have to deal with non-routine customer's encounters politely and courteously by going beyond their formal responsibilities to produce proactive customer service performance. The researchers concluded that for the PCSP to be achieved in the hotel industry, the determinant factor is the role played by the hotel managers. When the hotel managers adopt and effectively implement high-commitment human resource practices, hotel employees will have strong confidence in performing their duties. Moreover, they will feel passionate about accomplishing their responsibilities as they will have a high level of support from the hotel, thus improving the standards of proactive customer service performance. However, to promote the hotel's service employees PCSP, the hotel managers have to strongly consider embracing and implementing high-commitment human resource systems with competent human resource managers (p.11).

Following the research carried out by Hodari & Sturman (2014), the general manager (GM) is the most significant position in a hotel. However, the researchers argue that due to the hotel industry's changing structure, the autonomy of the general manager's decision-making has been altered. In most hotels, general managers usually work under the hotel operator or owner's control and sometimes under both parties as they have authority over several operational aspects of the hotel. European hotels' research aimed to study the roles and administration of general hotel managers in 115 upscale European hotels (p. 433). The researchers found that the general

managers' roles highly depended on their education and experience as well as whether the hotels were chain-managed or independent.

Moreover, independent general managers have greater autonomy in decision-making than general chain managers. General managers who are highly experienced are often given greater freedom than independent hotel owners (p. 441). However, general chain managers possess a relatively higher authority in marketing, human resource, and strategy but have limited independence on matters such as operations and finance. Overall, general managers have control over the hotel's services. Chain general managers must adopt and enforce the operating standards and procedures laid out by the Hospitality Management Corporation in a management contract though this is not always the case with independent general managers. The general managers are also involved in issues about human resource management extensively by controlling the hotel staff's activities. Moreover, general managers regulate activities regarding marketing, financial matters, and strategies (p. 435).

Ashton (2018) conducted self-administered qualitative research on thirty upscale hotels in Thailand located on various tourist destinations to investigate the influence of human resource management practices on employees. Ashton argued that HRM practices are pivotal in resolving labor and skills shortage crises that arise in the hotel industry. "According to his findings, human resource managers provide conceptual guidelines that help improve the workplace's condition through motivation and ensuring the working environment meets the best performance standards." (Ashton, 2018). Aston reports that HRM practices help in solving personal conflicts that exist among employees, thus leading to a good quality working environment. This study reveals that a good relationship between the human resource manager and the employees is essential because it helps minimize poor working conditions. Ashton (2018) argues that social resource managers'

practices, such as observing the employment status terms, and comprehending each employee's personality, lead to job retention and job satisfaction in the hotel industry. Ashton's survey suggested that HRM practices positively influence the employees' morale and attitude, thus evading stress and dissatisfaction. Stress and discontent in the hotel industry are detrimental because they lead to employees' interpersonal difficulties and poor performance, forcing them to resign or leave work (Ashton, 2018). The study also reveals that human resource managers play an essential role in the hotel industry since their leadership traits influence the hotel's goals and increase employee performance. Human resource managers motivate and inspire the employees through listening to their grievances, providing an impressive supportive environment, and a set of moral values (Ashton, 2018). Ashton suggests that when employees are appropriately managed and are neither stress nor dissatisfied, they are likely to offer high-quality services as prescribed by the hotel culture.

Budhwar, Chand & Katou (2007) conducted qualitative research that measured the HRM practices in 439 best performing hotels in India. In general, the results of this research revealed that hotel service performance is positively associated with human resource management practices. The practices of human resource managers improve organizational performance (Budhwar, Chand & Katou (2007). These authors argue that HRM practices lead to the escalation of sales, productivity, and profitability in the hotel industry. Budhwar, Chand & Katou (2007) suggested that HRM practices enhances the control of hotel activities and improve performance. For example, a company might use face to face or telephonic interviews to collect detailed information from an employee who has been selected based on accurate data. Thus, the probability of performance will be high. These authors argued productivity, goal achievement, and productivity in the hotel industry. Human resource managers embrace multi-pronged job design strategies

whereby cross-cultural job design and flexible job rotation coincide (Budhwar, Chand & Katou (2007). The study also depicted that HRM systems such as training and development improve the hotel industry's excellent service. Kuruüzüm, Çetin & Irmak (2009) conducted qualitative research on path analysis of commitment and satisfaction in the Turkish hospitality industry.

Methodology

The study will be carried out using hypothesis testing as the nature of the topic focuses on various issues and challenges faced by the human resource management of the hospitality industry. Hypothesis testing is essential for such a study because it lets us know which of the factors has a significant effect on the other variable and statistically supported by the sample. This testing is essential as we randomly choose the example from the total population, and it is easy to generalize it afterward. The hypothesis testing can tell if any variable has a positive impact on the other variable or statistically insignificant. It can reveal that if the variable used in the study is already existing or it has occurred by chance. The hypothesis testing tells us to either accept or reject the hypothesis as per the research objectives. The hypothesis testing can let us know the dependence of the dependent variable on the independent variable. The hotels under study ranged from three to five stars hotel. Questionnaires issued to the individuals in managerial positions mainly examined their educational achievements and the employees' performance working under them. Surveys released to surveys issued to the frontline service employees evaluated the competencies of the individuals in high ranks and the level of customer's satisfaction.

Findings

The findings of this survey revealed that hotel managers improve commitment and appreciation to both customers and employees. These authors argued that hotel managers

established organizational strategies that boost the employees' attachment to the situation that changes in the workplace, such as training for alternative career paths that are missing the hotel industry. Among the 124 evaluated hotels, 64.5% exhibited a positive impact on the service employees' performance and improved customer satisfaction (p. 190). These hotels had general managers and human resource managers who had high educational accomplishments and competencies. Based on the service employees' responses in these hotels, the public and human resource managers were not authoritative, and they considered the employees working hours. Therefore, it created a stress-free working environment for the employees, enabling them to offer high-quality services, which resulted in improved customer satisfaction.

On the other hand, 35% of hotels were managed by individuals who pursued careers in other fields or had low education accomplishments (p. 190). Most service employees working under these people revealed that the performance of the hotels was relatively small. However, the service employees from three hotels run by the managers who had pursued careers from other fields showed that their management was performing well. Therefore, from this research, it is evident that hotels managed by people with high education accomplishments in career paths related to hotel management had high performance in their line of duty.

Conclusion

There are several limitations this research encountered, especially the methodological approaches used to obtain the results. However, research entails collecting data from a particular sample and making conclusions from that sample to represent the entire population. The study did not manage to collect data across all hotels in the USA; therefore, the results don't represent all the hotels in the country. Some hotels are still performing better when the frontline employees and managerial personnel are not specialists in the hotel industry or did not undergo any education to

acquire managerial skills, but they are competent. Dalimunthe, Syahputra & Sitompul (2019) mentioned education as one of the critical factors that affect competence in administrative personnel in the hospitality industry. However, some hotels are managed by people who have pursued other careers outside the hotel and hospitality fields and can effectively maintain the hotel industry's service performance standards.

Conversely, some people have undergone hotel and hospitality management career paths, but surprisingly, they cannot deliver services that guarantee high service performance. Therefore, this situation seems to be a drawback when answering the research question of which career paths are expected for hotel management and service performance standards. Another limitation that the research encountered is the degree of honesty of some respondents. Additionally, other respondents gave incorrect information about the performance of their hotels. Therefore, the findings from this research do not provide comprehensive information about the career paths expected for hotel management and service performance standards because some of the data was biased.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Questionnaires for individuals in managerial positions (tick where appropriate)

1. Education accomplishment in hotel management
 - Diploma
 - Undergraduate Degree
 - Master's degree
 - None of the above
2. Performance of service employees
 - Excellent
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
3. Work experience
 - 0 – 1 year
 - 1 – 2 years
 - 2 -5 years
 - 5 and above
4. Certification
 - Yes
 - No

Appendix B

Questionnaire for frontline service employees (tick where appropriate)

1. What type of authority exercised by managers?
 - Authoritative
 - Permissive
2. Does the managers observe your assigned working hours?
 - Yes
 - No
3. What is the attitude of customers towards your services?
 - Positive attitude
 - Negative attitude
 - Neutral attitude
 - Sikken attitude
4. What is your attitude towards the managerial staffs
 - Positive attitude
 - Negative attitude
 - Neutral attitude
 - Sikken attitude