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Measuring Service Innovation Performance through Team Culture and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in Hotel Services: A PLS Approach

Kashif Hussain^{a,*}, Rupam Konar^b, Faizan Ali^c

^{a, b}Taylor's University Malaysia, No. 1, Jalan Taylor's, Subang Jaya 47500, Malaysia

^cUniversiti Teknologi Malaysia, 195, Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur 50400, Malaysia

Abstract

Increasing competition in the global marketplace demands hotels to develop a competitive advantage by ensuring innovative performing services. The rapid increase in the scope of service providers within various facets of Malaysian tourism and hospitality sector has not only limited the process of innovation performance but also the commitment of the managements' general practices to manage service innovation. Focusing on the Malaysian hotel industry, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of team culture and knowledge sharing behaviour on service innovation performance. Based on the literature review, team culture and knowledge sharing behaviour are hypothesised to have a significant impact on service innovation performance. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed amongst 327 employees working in luxury hotels within Klang Valley, Malaysia. Data was analysed using partial least squares (PLS) based structural equation modelling (SEM). All the hypothesised relationships are supported and the findings indicate that team culture and knowledge sharing behaviour have a significant effect on the service innovation performance. The hotels need to develop a strong team culture and knowledge sharing behaviour to accelerate the process of service innovation performance while providing the consumers better experiences. Implications, limitations of the study and future research suggestions are also discussed.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6-035-629-5000; fax: +6-035-629-5001.
E-mail address: kashif.hussain@taylors.edu.my

1. Introduction

Globalization and growth of the hospitality industry in the 21st century, which includes the restaurants, accommodation, entertainment and transportation businesses, faces an increasing competition and requires a distinct measurement of their services (Monica-Hu, Horng & Christine-Sun, 2009). Service level and scalability features of hospitality services are continuously introduced while simultaneously achieving certain levels of service quality and sustainable growth (Evangelista, Lucchese & Meliciani, 2013; Parasuraman, A. Zeithaml & Berry, 1994; Tseng, Lin, Lim & Teehankee, 2015). The major focus of the traditional hotels are towards promotional development, cost-competitive and customer-focused-services - those which are continuously driving them towards service innovation for a profitable business process (Möller, Rajala & Westerlund, 2008; Lance, Bettencourt, Brown & Sirijanni, 2012). In pushing for a consistent high performance service, the service innovation and its accompanying dynamic capabilities (Orfila-Sintes & Mattsson, 2009) are the key drivers for the current generation of hospitality business practices. Some hotels focus on introducing new products while others focus on improving customer services to achieve a competitive advantage. The importance of the service innovation is to provide measurements of service performance, service problems and service delivery. Gaining a competitive edge over current competitive market service innovation is an essential concern for improving business service capabilities and quality upgrade of services (Orfila-Sintes, Crespi-Cladera & Martínez-Ros, 2005; Tseng et al., 2015).

Customers in particular always seek for new and unique experiences (Ali & Omar, 2014). To meet the requirements of the customers, a recent emphasis has been put on 'knowledge sharing' between hotel employees and an organization's soft elements such as 'team-culture' relationship to influence the service innovation performance (Monica Hu et al., 2009; Yu, Yu-Fang & Yu-Cheh, 2013). The dynamics of the service industry are moving at a fast pace where the products or services with a greater degree of innovation tend to accomplish higher satisfaction performance for consumers and higher financial performance for organizations (Tseng et al., 2015).

In this race for service innovation the Malaysian hospitality industry is not far behind (Parnian, Hosseini & Shwu, 2013) and with a continuous improvement in service performance of hotel services, it may be possible to satisfy the customers' novel demands. In 2013, Malaysia attracted a huge number of tourists and a receipt of US\$ 21.1 billion from the tourists is considered a huge impact on the nation's economy as well as the tourism industry of Malaysia (Ali, 2015), while a 2.7% of growth in tourist arrival has been indicated by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) where a majority of the studies claimed that Malaysian hospitality industry is one of the key players for such performance (Inside Malaysia, 2012; Nair & Whitelaw, 2009). However, despite the increasing research on product innovation and service innovation, the majority of past research on the issues of innovation focuses on innovation in manufacturing firms (Monica-Hu et al., 2009; Yam, Lo, Tang & Lau, 2010; Lau, Yam & Tang, 2010) whereas a slight concern has been given to the service industry. A few studies have discussed the implication of service innovation performance in the hospitality and tourism sectors from the perspective of knowledge sharing and team-culture (Kim & Lee, 2006; Wang & Yang, 2007; Karlsen & Gottschalk, 2004; Chen & Cheng, 2012; Monica Hu et al., 2009). Although these studies have addressed different issues in different contexts, no relevant studies have been found in the Malaysian context addressing the assessment of service innovation performance in hotels through knowledge sharing and team-culture. This integration is to facilitate understanding of the relationship between service innovation performance and knowledge sharing in the hotel services and how team-culture can stimulate the ability of service innovation performance.

2. Literature review

2.1. Service innovation performance

Over the past years the service sector of hospitality and tourism industry has reached new levels and predominantly has been improving. The most important reason as identified by Osborne (1998) is that post 1985 studies, especially of innovation in services, have a strong socio-economic positioning. A scale has been developed by Scott and Bruce (1994) to measure the employee service innovation behaviour through interviewing high level managers in the firms. Through a continuous process of knowledge transfer and Enz and Siguaw (2003) stated that managers can learn through the success of the proven leaders in the hospitality industry and motivate their

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