Functional Organizational Structure And Employee Engagement In Malaysian Hotel Sector.

Irza Hanie Abu Samah, Abdul Shukor Shamsuddin, Intan Maizura Abd Rashid & Mohammad Harith Amlus

Abstract: In hotel sector, providing the best hospitality is the main agenda. Due to that, many researchers in the area of management and business were trying to find factors that could lead to delivering better services for the customers. So far, many factors could enhance service quality in the hotel. It can be from the management, system, and people of the organization. In an organization, every department is essential. However, the effect of working environment and system unit, such as functional structure of the organization might lead to different results of employee engagement. Even though employees are from the same organization, however, for each department, among the employees itself have their sub-culture. Furthermore, this sub-culture they were practicing have different norms across the department. The objective of this research is to examine employee engagement across the department. The results show that employee engagement differed across the department. Food and Beverage department recorded the highest engagement level compared to other departments. The findings explain that employees in F&B department are very passionate and dedicated to work. The current research contributes to the human resource managers about the different level of employee engagement among its employees, so that management can have information on which employees need to be focused on.

1. INTRODUCTION
Malaysia tourism performance has recorded substantial contributions towards the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which was at MYR167 billion and 13.7 percent in 2016 of total GDP. Due to the rapid advancement of change in the organizations requires industries to adapt to the demand of the globalization. In hotel sector, the working environment force the employees to adapt to turbulences. Environment forces organizations to change and adapt to the situation requires changing the nature of a job to suit the current needs. The adaptation may predict either burnout or engagement [1]. Employee engagement is critical element to look at it. Researches on employee engagement were vast in recent years. However many studies fail to distinguish employee engagement by looking at each department in an organization. This research proposes that in every department, sub-culture exists. Norms and values that employees are practicing differed across the departments. Thus, leading to a variety of engagement levels in the organization were depending on employees’ roles.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee Engagement
Employee engagement is an effort shown by the employee towards his or her organization. Employees who are well engaged tend to give their full commitment; they are cognitively immersed in their jobs with enthusiasm and have the competencies required to accomplish their jobs well [2]. Employee engagement also indicates years of working experience in the organization. In this study, employee engagement refers to vigour, dedication and absorption [3]. Every employee is engaged and committed to their job. However, the degree of engagement depends on the factor such as leadership, management, systems, co-worker and employees’ work-roles. Every activity that is run by the organization will be perceived by employees which is meaningful for the organization to retain employees and to sustain their motivation, interest, and enthusiasm because, in the end, it will affect on the employee’s cognitive and affective domains, consequently contributes to organization performance [4], [5].

2.3 Functional Organizational Structure
The functional structure is an organizational design that groups position into unit based on similar skill, expertise and resources Department in organization works as functional unit. For every department, employees are taught about their roles, duties and responsibility, and employees in the department mostly follow their sub-culture in the organization. Different work roles in an organization would have different responses, reactions and behaviour of employees. Therefore, every single unit or department in the organization would have different levels of motivation, engagement commitment and enthusiasm.

2.3.1 Customer Service
Customer service department is the one that always helps and ready for customers. The customer’s satisfaction is the reflection of services given by the employees in the department. Previous research has shown there is significant influence of customer experience on customer satisfaction [6]. The experiences that customers feels is gain from the perception that they had while having treatment and interpersonal interaction between customer and contact employee [7]. Most of the customer’s service departments were well trained to perform better and delivering, and it is because the sub-culture in the department that they uphold, translating into effective behaviour. Effective behaviour can be seen through the activities and responsibilities carried out by employees. Effective behaviour such as employee engagement is crucial in delivering service quality. Service quality is an essential measure for the success of a hotel. The higher the perception of service quality, the more likely guests will return to the hotel[8]. Therefore, engaged employees in the customer service department will help the organization to have better customer retention.

2.3.2 Frontline office
Frontline office is the face of the organization. Employees are
dealing with customer’s check-in and out. It is the first line of employees that greet the customers the moment they enter the lobby. Frontline employees have responsibilities such as (1) giving customers what they ask for, efficiently and courteously; (2) a means to accomplish immediate objectives, such as sales quotas; and (3) the formation of mutually beneficial relationships with customers through problem-solving [9]. Besides, the role of frontline employees as spokespeople for the company in being influential is vital in the case of a service failure or complaint management [10]. With the interaction with the customers, employee engagement is vital to aid employees in fulfilling their responsibilities, especially when it comes to dealing with fussy customers.

2.3.3 Food & Beverage
Employees working in Food and Beverage (F&B) was meant to serve with good manners despite serving the best food quality and presentations. Research has shown that F&B service is proving to be significantly crucial towards the customers [11]. Furthermore, in F&B the there is six dimensions that very important towards the customers, which are healthy and attractive food, assurance and employee knowledge; empathy; responsiveness of service delivery; tangibles; and reliability [12]. However, customer expectations were highest for assurance and employee knowledge [12]. The result indicates that in order for F&B employees to have assurance and employee knowledge, they need to be engaged because assurance and employee knowledge are when the employee can obtain it through dedication and passion. Dedication and passion are among the essence of engagement [13].

2.3.4 Housekeeping
Housekeeping is the one that works as a back operation, dealing with chores and has recorded most hypertension in the hotel management [14]. However, research has shown housekeepers believe that they had delivered best quality service compared with another department[15]. This indicate that housekeepers have an engagement level. An employee that engaged is suitable for service performance [16].

2.3.5 Human Resource
Human Resource is the main department that manages employee welfare, training and development. Probably this department is the one that understands well about the organization’s vision and mission because this department is managing and train employees into following the goal of the organization. It is understandable if human resource department should show some degree of engagement. Having highly engaged employees can significantly help individuals to showcase better performance and work behaviours, and to achieve organizational goals in a much effective manner [17].

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The quantitative method was used and using self-administered questionnaire; the survey is distributed towards employees in four- and five-star hotel. The data is not normally distributed due to the method of sampling is purposive technique. The hypothesis in this study was measured using Kruskal Wallis. Kruskal-Wallis does not assume that the data is normal, but it explains the different groups have the same distribution, and groups with different standard deviations have different distributions. Using SPSS the results indicate as per next section.

4 RESULT AND INTERPRETATION
Kruskal Wallis (Nonparametric test) used to measure the most engaged employee according to their department. Result as in Table 1 and Table 2.

### Table 1: Mean rank
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee engagement</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>122.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frontline Office</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>141.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resource</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>162.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>182.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>101.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Chi-Square
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Statistics</th>
<th>Employee Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>28.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, results from table 2 explain that employee engagement significantly differs across the five terms, which are customer service, frontline office, food and beverage, human resource and housekeeping (4, N=284) = 28.155, p-value <0.05.

Meanwhile, to obtain the hypothesis of the test summary, using customized analysis, the result illustrated in Table 3.

### Table 3: Result of Hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis Test Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The distribution of EE is the same across categories of UNIT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.
Table 3 explains the result of hypothesis. Kruskal Wallis analysis was performed; the hypothesis test summary suggested that null hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is difference in terms of employee engagement for every department. Results show that every department were varied in term of their employee engagement. this can relate to the nature of work, job duties and responsibilities that each employee in the department holds.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This research focus on employee engagement differs across department. Food and beverage show the highest engagement compare to another department, this could be because food and beverage not only serving the customers but also understanding customers’ heart need and wants. Therefore, delivering that requires certain engagement level. Meanwhile for housekeeping is the least engagement mean score. The lowest score could be because of hypertension and high workload they are facing. Housekeeping department management may need workplace interventions to avoid hypertension among hotel housekeepers [14]. Finally, this research contributes to the body of knowledge of engagement study which focuses on the functional organizational structure. The limitation of this research is that the sampling technique is purposive and non-probability sampling. Future research should focus expand on the population sampling and change the method to probability sampling so that parametric tests could be implemented in the analysis part. Finally, human resource managers could take some initiative to customize design training and development for each department.

6 REFERENCES


