

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE FOR SUPERVISORY LEVEL EMPLOYEES IN THE MALAYSIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Ikmal Malik¹, Munira Saaidin²

¹Faculty of Business and Technology, UNITAR International University,
Petaling Jaya, 47301, Malaysia.

²Faculty of Business and Technology, UNITAR International University,
Petaling Jaya, 47301, Malaysia.

E-mail: ikmal@unitar.my¹, munira@unitar.my²

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry is considered a successful sector especially there are more consumers looking at the quality, not merely quantity. Consumers will not be attracted by merely a large quantity of products offered, but they will pay attention to the quality of the products and services provided. The instruments consisted of structures and open-ended questions aimed at finding out: (1) Qualifications and Experiences. Questions on the respondent's and organization's profiles were included to ensure the reliability of responses and to cross-tabulate with the variables. The findings indicate industry experience was very important for the supervisory level employees in all the four operating areas of the hotels: restaurant, kitchen, front office and housekeeping. The respondents preferred more than 5 years of industry experience, followed by 1 to 5 years of work experience in the related areas. Meanwhile, for the academic qualification of restaurant supervisors, SPM would be the most preferred qualification. This was followed by the bachelor's degree and the diploma, while the MLVK and PMR were less preferred. For the kitchen supervisors, similar results were indicated where the first choice was the SPM, followed by the bachelor's degree, the diploma, and the MLVK. For the housekeeping supervisors, the most appropriate qualification was SPM, followed by the diploma. The bachelor's degree, the MLVK and the PMR were not considered as the choice of qualifications. For the front office supervisors, the academic qualifications that were sought after were the SPM and the diploma.

Keywords: *Academic Qualifications, Industry Experience, Supervisory, Hotel Industry*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hotel managers need specific skill sets to handle the many facets of the job. People skills are imperative because hotel managers must know how to understand and satisfy the needs of customers and employees alike. Listening skills help hotel managers to determine guest concerns, while customer service and problem-solving skills give them judgment to choose the best course of action (Torres & Kline, 2013). To motivate and guide hotel staff and resolve conflicts, leadership, and managerial abilities are a must. Plus, hotel managers juggle every aspect of a property's operation, from schedules to budgets to human resources, so organizational skills are essential. Top hotel managers in executive positions focus on sales and marketing, accounting, computer systems, and administration.

Managers of larger or full-service hotels typically need a bachelor's degree in hospitality or hotel management. However, hotels with fewer services and less complicated operations may hire candidates with an associate degree or a certificate in hotel management. Although more than 500 U.S. schools offer training in hotel management, only 100 curricula are qualified

through the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (Alyson, J. (2018). Hotel management programs usually require courses in administration, accounting, economics, electronic reservation systems, marketing, housekeeping, food, and beverage management, and maintenance. Students who want a head start can look for a high school that offers the two-year Lodging Management Program of the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute.

Hotel management is not a job that students land right out of undergraduate school. Most properties prefer managers with on-the-job experience in a series of increasingly responsible positions. A desk clerk, for example, might get promoted to chief room clerk, then to assistant front office manager, front office manager, sales and promotion manager, and finally, hotel manager. Employers typically reserve management-training spots for college-educated candidates, though employees who show leadership potential and have several years of experience can sometimes move into assistant manager jobs (Dessler, G., 2006). Aspiring hotel managers should look for experience through part-time summer jobs and internships. Around the world, the hospitality industry has been marked by growing at an unprecedented rate. There has been increased focus on the hospitality industry as an industry of global dimensions (Jauhari et, al. 2012). Today, the hospitality industry is considered a successful sector especially there are more and more consumers look at quality, not merely quantity. Consumers will not be attracted by merely a large quantity of products offered, but they will pay attention to the quality of the products and services provided. Hence, hospitality firms put more emphasis on customers' needs and requirements so that the customer will feel satisfied. Lane and Dupre (1997) have mentioned that the historic ability of the hospitality industry to anticipate customer needs has contributed to its success in the global economy.

1.1 Purpose of the study

One of the criteria to survive in this competitive era is by providing good service to the customers instead of customer satisfaction (El Saghier, 2015). The drivers for the hotel's success are academic qualifications and the supervisor's industry experience. Both factors indicate that the possessor must have great skills and knowledge which indirectly gives a good performance in their work. These valuable attributes are an attraction for the employer to look for. Thus, there is a need to research the academic qualification and supervisor's experience since it will contribute to the organization's success.

2.0 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

a) Academic Qualifications

In the modern world, it is a must to have an academic qualification. There is no resume without academic qualifications, which the future employer will look into. Besides, it is an indicator that a person posse a good and strong basic of learning. Inside the academic qualification, an individual was tested and to get a good grade, they need to put in extra effort and gain more knowledge. If they are good, they pass with flying colors, or vice versa. In a way, good academic qualifications can give a good job to the employee (Jaoko, 2014).

b) Industry Experience

The industry experience of your management team has a significant influence on the investor's perception of the viability of your business proposal. It is very important to check for contradictions in your business proposal that could be challenged. It's important to consider the fact that most angel investors prefer to invest in industries in which they have considerable knowledge and experience. They also prefer to invest with companies, especially early-stage

companies that have a management team with industry experience. It's a fact that early startups are a risky venture and without the experience, it is even riskier but there is something you can do to improve your chances of succeeding.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses the case study design since the objectives are to understand the employees' competencies, employees' communication skills. Service quality levels, training and development activities, recruitment sources, and turnover rates in hotel organizations. The variables are examined in a limited number of hotels since the purpose is to gain a better understanding of the preferences and practices among the hotels. The study uses the cross-sectional design with periods of data collection extending over 6 weeks.

a) Data collection

Primary data are collected via mail survey addressed to participating hotel organizations. It was requested that the respondents to the survey questionnaire should be any management staff in the human resource management department or division. Secondary information was derived from research reports (thesis, and journal articles) and information from newspaper articles.

b) Population and Study and Sample

The study examined selected 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star hotels in the Klang Valley. It is a convenient sample, whereby the sample was selected from the list of hotels in the area as published in the directory of hotels by Tourism Malaysia. Thirty hotels are solicited for participation in the study.

c) Research Instrument

Research instruments are required to guide the study. The instruments consisted of structures and open-ended questions aimed at finding out: (1) Qualifications and Experiences, (5) training and Development programs. (6) Recruitment Sources, Questions on the respondent's and organization's profiles were included to ensure the reliability of responses and also to cross-tabulate with the variables. The seven instruments are compiled in the form of a survey questionnaire that is mailed out to the hotels. The followings are the variables and the listing of the dimensions of each variable.

(1) Qualifications and Experiences

Requirement of Industry/Work Experience:

- Restaurant
- Kitchen
- Housekeeping
- Front Office

Requirement of Academic Qualifications:

- Restaurant
- Kitchen
- Housekeeping
- Front Office

(2) Recruitment Sources

Main recruitment Sources of Employees:

- Restaurant
- Kitchen
- Housekeeping
- Front Office

Internal recruitment Source

External recruitment Sources

The type of scaling method used was the subject-centered approach where the hotel variables were examined on the variations and all the variation was attributed to the differences among the hotels. The following were the types of scales used: (1) Nominal Scale for the demographic profiles, (2) Ordinal Scale for ranking the importance of some attributes, and (3) Interval Scale where differences between the mean score of the attributes are compared. A 4-point Likert-like scale was used that ranged from 1 – Very Satisfied/Very Important to 4- Not Satisfied/Not Important; and (4) ratio Scale for questions such as the number of days and years, and length of period.

4.0 STUDY FINDINGS

a) Profile of Respondents

The number of hotel organizations included in the study was 21. An analysis of the profile of respondents indicated that from the 21 hotel respondents, 67% of the respondents held positions as either personnel executive or training manager. 19% were human resource managers, whilst the other 14% were human resource supervisors.

Table 1 Profile of Respondents

Position	Number	Percent
Human Resource Manager	4	19
Personnel Manager. Training Manager	14	67
Human Resource Supervisor	3	14
Total	21 (hotels)	100

b) Organizational Profile

The average number of full-time employees was 190. These 190 employees were made up of 63 employees or 33% as front-liners, 27 employees, or 14% as supervisors, and 100 employees, or 53% of the employees working in other positions such as support, back of the house, or management level employees.

Table 2 Profile of Organizations

Position	Number	Percent
Total number of full-time employees	190	48
Number of first-line (guest-contact) employees	63	33
Total number of supervisory employees	27	14
Other employees (support, back of the house, administrative)	100	53

c) Supervisory Employees' Industry Experience

As illustrated in Table 3, the respondents had similar that industry experience was very important for the supervisory level employees in all four operating areas of the hotels; the restaurant and the kitchen were rated with a mean score of 1.62, the housekeeping had a

mean score of 1.76 and the front office was rated with a mean score of also 1.76. The overall average was therefore rated as very important at 1.64. On the number of years of experience, the respondents were also in agreement. They felt that the supervisors should have at least 5 years of industry experience. To a lesser extent, however, a period of 1 to 5 years of experience was also acceptable. For the restaurant and kitchen supervisors, having less than one 1-year experience was somewhat unacceptable. But for the housekeeping and front office, it was somewhat acceptable. Overall, the respondents still preferred more than 5 years of industry experience (1.00), followed by 1 to 5 years (1.14) of work experience in the related areas.

Table 3 Supervisory Employees' Industry Experience

Requirement of Industry/Work Experience	Level of Importance	Years of industry/work experience Required		
		Less than 1 year	1- 5 years	More than 5 years
Restaurant Supervisors	Very Important 1.62	Not Satisfied 3.48	Very Satisfied 1.10	Very Satisfied 1.00
Kitchen Supervisors	Very Important 1.62	Not Satisfied 3.48	Very Satisfied 1.10	Very Satisfied 1.00
Housekeeping Supervisors	Very Important 1.76	Slightly Satisfied 2.67	Very Satisfied 1.14	Very Satisfied 1.00
Front Office Supervisors	Very Important 1.57	Slightly Satisfied 2.67	Very Satisfied 1.14	Very Satisfied 1.00
Overall	1.64	3.08	1.14	1.00

1.00 – 1.74	1.75 – 2.49	2.50 – 3.24	3.25 – 4.00
Very Important/ Very Satisfied	Important/ Satisfied	Slightly Important/ Slightly Satisfied	Not Important/ Not Satisfied

d) Academic Qualifications for Supervisory Employees

For the supervisory employees, as illustrated in Table 4, the respondents indicated that academic qualifications were very important for all four operating areas. The restaurant supervisors believed that the SPM (1.29) would be the most preferred qualification. This was followed by the bachelor's degree (1.46) and the diploma (1.67), while the MLVK (2.00) and SRP (2.67) were less preferred. For the kitchen supervisors, similar results were indicated where the first choice was the SPM (1.38), followed by the bachelor's degree (1.52), the diploma (1.67), and the MLVK (1.76). For the housekeeping supervisors, the most appropriate qualification was the SPM (1.29), followed by the diploma (1.67). The bachelor's degree, the MLVK, and the SRP were not considered as the choice qualifications. For the front office supervisors, the academic qualifications that were sought was the SPM (1.29), and the diploma (1.57).

Table 4 Academic Qualifications for Supervisory Employees

Requirement of Academic Qualifications	Level of Importance	Minimum Acceptable Academic Qualifications					
		SRP	SPM	MLVK	Certificate in area	Diploma	1 st . Degree
Restaurant Supervisors	Very Important 1.62	Slightly Relevant 2.67	Very Relevant 1.29	Relevant 2.33	Very Relevant 1.67	Very Relevant 1.67	Very Relevant 1.48

Kitchen Supervisors	Very Important 1.62	Slightly Relevant 2.67	Very Relevant 1.38	Relevant 1.76	Very Relevant 1.67	Very Relevant 1.67	Very Relevant 1.52
Housekeeping Supervisors	Important 1.81	Relevant 2.29	Very Relevant 1.29	Relevant 2.33	Very Relevant 1.67	Very Relevant 1.67	Relevant 2.05
Front Office Supervisors	Very Important 1.67	Not Relevant 3.48	Very Relevant 1.29	Slightly Relevant 3.00	Relevant 2.05	Very Relevant 1.57	Relevant 2.05
Overall	Very Important 1.68	Slightly Relevant 2.78	Very Relevant 1.31	Relevant 2.36	Relevant 1.77	Very Relevant 1.67	Relevant 1.78

1.00 – 1.74	1.75 – 2.49	2.50 – 3.24	3.25 – 4.00
Very Important/ Very Relevant	Important/ Relevant	Slightly Important/ Slightly Relevant	Not Important/ Not Relevant

e) Supervisor Training and Development Programs

For supervisory training, 90% of the respondents indicated that their hotels did provide in-house training programs for them. They also indicated that the average number of days that each supervisor had to undergo was approximately 13 days per year.

The restaurant supervisors had to attend 15 days of training per year with programs such as complaint handling, service quality, food handling, and upselling. The kitchen supervisors had to attend 13 days of training on programs such as kitchen sanitation, food handling, work ethics, and team building. The housekeeping supervisors were required to attend 15 days of training per year with programs such as employee relations and work ethics. The front office also had to attend at least 15 days of in-house training on programs such as complaint handling, guests relations, and upselling.

Table 5 In-house training/development for the supervisory employees

	In-House Training/Development Programs	
	Number of Days in a Year	Type of programs
Restaurant Supervisors	15	Compliant Handling Service Quality, Food Handling, Upselling
Kitchen Supervisors	13	Kitchen Sanitation, Food Handling, Work Ethics, Team Building
Housekeeping Supervisors	15	Employee Relations, Work Ethics,
Front Office Supervisors	15	Compliant Handling Guest Relations, Upselling

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

a) Implications of Industry Experience

More industry experience will ensure a better chance of moving up the career ladder faster. The nature of the jobs at the higher levels would require decision-making and analytical knowledge which could, to a certain extent, be derived from industry experience and the type of networking the supervisors have. The nature of the workload demands also experience in multitasking and multiskilling work in the hotel organizations.

b) Implications of Academic Qualifications

Hotel programs offered by educational institutions vary all over the world, but they have similarities in terms of the curriculum breakdown in general about educational requirements and major course requirements. Regardless, the curriculum should be routinely/periodically evaluated, to be flexible enough to have the courses upgraded when required, as the hotel industry environment changes due to the need to accommodate the changes for example the technology change. Hotels' supervisory and management employees will need to be equipped with the latest knowledge and know-how to lead the organizations. In environment uncertainty and also to be able to lead employees who might be more knowledgeable, for example, with IT and current customers' preferences.

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