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The managerial competencies required by Indonesia's leading hotel groups: A preliminary investigation

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates contents from the websites of leading hotel groups in Indonesia which specify the competencies that are required by star hotels for potential managerial level recruits. This preliminary investigation identified a list of competencies that are expected by hotels and incorporated them into Sandwith's competency domain model with a view to determining the essential competencies. The results showed that leadership and interpersonal competencies were deemed as the most expected competencies at both junior and senior management levels. The identified competencies may be used as a basis for providing a better understanding of hotel manager competencies as a foundation for improving hospitality curricula in Indonesia.

Keywords: managerial competencies, hotels, managers, Indonesia

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism becomes one of the pillars of Indonesia's economic growth as Indonesia welcomed about 9.4 million international travelers which showed a 7.2% growth from the year 2013 (Thadani et al., 2015). A growing number of tourists' arrival to Indonesia has inevitably driven an increase number of hotels built in Indonesia. According to Indonesia Hotel Watch 2015, Indonesia has witnessed the opening of 756 hotel properties with a cumulative room of 77,170 rooms between 2009 and 2014 (Thadani et al., 2015).

The high growth of hotel construction throughout Indonesia has led to the significant demand of human resources to fill huge positions in the hotel sector. Recruiting qualified human resources can be challenging as stated by Negara (2014) that highly educated and well-trained human resources are critical for an innovation-driven economy. The competition among workforce becomes much higher as the ten countries in Southeast Asia (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) have agreed to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) starting December 31, 2015. The AEC has become a big milestone particularly for Indonesian workforce to prepare themselves to compete with more than 600 million people across ASEAN countries.

There has been a consensus among industry practitioners that human resources-related skills become the most essential component of the success of hospitality management in order to be competitive in the market (Kay & Moncarz, 2004; Brownell, 2008). Accessing competencies required in hotel sector therefore has become a topic that has been around for many years (Millar et al., 2010). It is important for employers to identify what competencies required for a particular position before organizations recruit their employees (Siu, 1998). Although previous studies have revealed several competency models or approaches from different perspectives of hospitality professionals, educators, and graduates, yet only few studies conducted in South-East Asia which examine the managerial competencies from different functional area such as food and beverage, room division, and sales within a classified hotel, such as three-star, four-star, and five-star hotels. Also, there is no prior study has been conducted to identify managerial competencies needed by hotel industry in Indonesia. This paper is a preliminary study to provide an initial assessment and exploration of the essential managerial competencies needed by the leading hotel groups in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to enhance the capacity of hospitality education in Indonesia to examine the competencies needed by hospitality graduates, particularly for entry— and middle-level managers. Understanding the

beverage area and be able to develop and implement food and beverage promotions and strategies. They should also be familiar with sanitation, health, and hygiene issues. These requirements particularly are more likely for the five-star hotels. This can be understood as five-star hotels usually have more food and beverage outlets and bigger operational focus which require more skillful and competent managers in the food and beverage operational.

4.2 Room division

In this study, rooms division refers to the front office and housekeeping departments. For middle-level managers in five-star hotels, leadership was highly required compared to other domains as these senior managers were required to have passion in improving quality awareness towards their jobs. While in three-star hotels, both entry and middle-level managers were expected to possess more interpersonal than leadership skills. Leadership and interpersonal competencies were required equally for four-star hotels. Technical domain particularly proficient use of Microsoft words (excel, powerpoint, and words) and Opera were highlighted for room division areas. Overall, it can be said that leadership and interpersonal competency are more dominant needed by junior and senior managers in room division department.

4.3 Sales/marketing

In sales/marketing department, leadership and interpersonal domain were also noted as the two most required competencies among all the classified hotels. Interpersonal skills were required mostly because in sales/marketing department, both entry-level and middle-level managers are expected to meet and attract customers to the hotels and they must have an ability to communicate well. The employers also required middle-level managers to have strong interpersonal skills with both internal and external stakeholders. While, leadership competency was expected to be possessed by middle-level managers than interpersonal competency with the dominant role-model such as highly driven and self-motivated, take initiatives, professional in appearance and manner, and attention to details.

4.4 Others

Other departments refer to department or positions which were not specifically under food and beverage, room division, and also sales/marketing areas, such as assistant human resource manager, human resource manager, learning and development manager, resident manager, and hotel

manager. Leadership competencies were highly valued by the management of five-star hotels as well as four-star hotels when recruiting middle-level managers, such as hotel manager, middle-level manager and human resource manager, followed by interpersonal competencies for five-star hotels and conceptual domain for four-star hotels (human resource managers, hotel managers, and so on), the conceptual domain becomes essential, particularly for middle-level managers, and conceptual competencies are very important as managers are expected to possess the ability to adapt with dynamic market changes and unforeseen environmental demand (Suh et al., 2012).

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The significant growth of the hotel industry in Indonesia has led to increased demand for qualified and competent managers. This preliminary research has investigated the managerial competencies that are required by three hotel classifications (three-, four-, and five-star hotels) and two levels of management (entry—and middle-level). The findings may provide useful insights about competencies needed by the hotel industry for certain managerial positions as prior studies have not done yet in Indonesia. In this study, knowledge, skills, and attitudes/abilities required for employees were incorporated into Sandwith's domain model to identify what competencies need to be performed in certain departments and/or positions.

From the findings, it can be concluded that leadership and interpersonal were the most dominant competencies at both management levels (junior and senior level managers) within all departments (food and beverage, room division, sales, and others). This supports Kay & Russette's study (2000) that identified "interpersonal and leadership competencies are essential for managerial success" (p. 53). It means that the hotel industry seems to expect their managers to have strong leadership skills to manage their subordinates and to be a role-model for particular attitudes or traits, such as outgoing personality, passionate, confident, honest, energetic/dynamic, and have integrity. Interpersonal skills, particularly strong communication skills to deal with guests and subordinates were also considered to be crucial as the nature of hospitality industry is people oriented and intensive (Millar et al., 2010). Compared to others, sales and marketing department demands interpersonal skills, especially when dealing with internal and external stakeholders. This is unsurprising because the responsibilities of sales or marketing people are to sell their products and services to people

which ability to facilitate communication process is very important.

The managers of five-star hotels were most likely to recruit managers with strong leadership competencies rather than interpersonal competencies, particularly for middle-level manager. This is unsurprising because five-star hotels have more products and services to offer with a wider range of rooms and facilities to manage, therefore requiring managers with an excellent leadership competency. In the case of four-star and three-star hotels, the requirements for leadership competencies were roughly equal to interpersonal competencies. In smaller properties with fewer people, it is deemed crucial that managers have more ability to communicate and manage efficiently.

The results of this study also concluded that food and beverage as well as other departments, such as human resources need candidates to possess relatively stronger leadership rather than interpersonal skills. In the case of the rooms division and sales/marketing departments, interpersonal competencies were more expected than leadership competencies.

6 LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

All of the data collected for this study were extracted from hotel websites with a view to providing information that relates to competencies required by hotel management. This might create bias in the sense that what is stated on websites may differ from what is truly required. Also, not all hotels posted comprehensive competencies on their respective websites. Efforts need to be made by the authors to triangulate the data collection and analysis from the perspectives of other stakeholders such as hotel professionals, educators, and students or alumni in order to reliably formulate what managerial competencies actually required by each management level and department.

Future studies need to be more in-depth and focused on investigating managerial competencies from the perspective of hotel practitioners, educators, and students in order to determine the gaps that might occurred among those stakeholders. Educators must continually identify and explore the essential competencies required to fill the growing demands of the hospitality industry (Sisson & Adams, 2013). There is a pressing need for better collaboration between hotel education institutions and the hospitality industry in order to improve human resource development in Indonesia. Through a better curriculum which meets industry expectations, it is expected that hospitality education, especially in Indonesia will be better placed to produce qualified and competence

managers in the hotel field. As was stated by Martin (1998) "a successful future for hospitality students means a successful future for the hospitality industry" (p. 25).

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