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

S. Thio
Peta Christian University, Sarawak, Indonesia

B. King
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT: This study investigates contents of 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 a 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 7.4% 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 & Monzarz, 2004; Brownell, 2008). Accessing competencies required in the 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
3 METHODOLOGY

An exploratory qualitative research technique was used to assess managerial competencies required by hotel groups in Indonesia. This qualitative data collection was used to portray the current competencies needed by star hotels in Indonesia for management level, entry- and middle-level managers.

3.1 Data collection

Managerial competencies required for this study were collected from the internet through the entire path in the hotel chains’ websites. This approach was adopted because the Internet nowadays is a popular approach for companies to identify potential employees, with competition for talent being online” (Borstello et al., 2005, p. 7).

This study collected data from websites of the top 10 leading hotel groups in Indonesia as used by Sudrajat (2012) from HVS Global Hospitality Services. It encompassed six international and four domestic hotel chains based on the size of the room inventory (see Table 1). The authors collected all of the information from the hotel group website about the job position requirements for entry-level as well as middle-level management under three-star, four-star, and five-star hotels. At the data was collected and sorted from each hotel chains’ website for all the vacancies posted as per November 2, 2015.

3.2 Sample and data analysis

Among the 10 leading hotel groups in Indonesia, only five hotel groups provided job vacancies with specific requirements for each position, namely Accor, Starwood, Hyatt, IHG, and Aston. International and Sahid hotel networks do not provide job vacancies on their website. Aston Internatio[n’s job position that was advertised through Facebook and Google. All seekers for Sahid hotel resources must send their applications directly to the Human Resources Department. Accor, Starwood, Hyatt, and IHG provided the job vacancy requirements for their website. Sahid hotel group also incorporated data on several categories. The categories of managerial competency were adopted from Sandwith’s competencies’ domain model (1993).

4 FINDINGS

After sorting the jobs offered by five hotel groups from each hotel group for entry and middle level positions in different functions, the detailed summary of the sample used can be seen in Table 2. This study utilized 63 positions from five-star hotels for entry and middle-level management, 45 positions from four- and three-star hotels. Middle-level manager position in five-star hotels dominated the jobs posted with 56 job vacancies offered, and in four and three star hotels, there were 24 and 20 positions for entry-level and middle-level manager respectively. The number of job vacancies posted by the hotel website can be seen in Table 2.

4.1 Food and beverage

Among five competencies domains, hotels of all-star-ratings shared the same finding in which the leadership domain was the most dominant competency required for the managerial level in the food and beverage area, followed by the interpersonal domain. The administrative domain seems to be the least required by this department. However, in middle-level management in five-star hotels, technical competencies were viewed as important as interpersonal skills. This showed that technical skills were still heavily required in the food and beverage area, particularly for basic computer skills, such as Microsoft office and other major hotel computer programs, such as Front Desk and Opera. In the leadership domain, excellent management skills were required, followed by strong leadership skills. While, in an interpersonal domain, food and beverage managers need to possess more responsibilities to operate and manage their communication skills to be able to facilitate communication process to their customers, subordinate as well as top managers. All managerial level from all hotels had the same requirement in technical domain which was the ability to possess basic computer skills, such as excel, powerpoint, and words. The competencies required in middle-level managers was higher than in entry-level managers since middle-level managers are expected to bear more responsibilities and less on their department. As stated by Sandwith (1993), the higher the level of the management position, the higher the demand required for competencies.

For food and beverage areas, recruiters were expected to have knowledge in the food and
beverage area and be able to develop and implement a sales, marketing and advertising program, and be familiar with sanitation, health, and safety rules. These requirements particularly include tasks which require more skillful and competent managers in the food and beverage operational focus area, as well as experienced and competent managers in the food and beverage operational focus area.

4.2 Room division

In this study, room division refers to the front office and housekeeping departments. For middle-level managers in five-star hotels, leadership was highly required compared to other departments as these senior managers were required to have passion in improving quality awareness towards their guests in improving quality awareness towards their guests. In three-star hotels, both entry and junior managers in room division were expected to possess more interpersonal than leadership skills. Leadership and interpersonal competencies were equally important for four-star hotels. Technical domain was particularly productive of Microsoft Office (excel, powerpoint, and word) and Opera was highlighted for mobile division areas. Overall, it can be seen that leadership and interpersonal competencies 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 are also noted as the two most important domain among all the classified hotels. Interpersonal skills are required mostly because sales/marketing department, both entry and middle-level managers are expected to meet and attract customers, and they have a mission to communicate tasks. This means that required middle-level managers to have strong interpersonal skills with leadership competency was expected to be possessed by middle-level managers in interpersonal high profile positions. Most of the time, and self-motivated, take initiatives, professional presence and manner, and attention to details.

4.4 Others

Other departments refer to department positions which are not specifically found under food and beverage, housekeeping, and also sales/management, human resource managers, 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 identifying middle-level managers, such as hotel management, sales management, and by interpersonal competence, interpersonal domain in the conceptual domain for four-star and three-star hotels. (human resource managers, housekeeping managers, particularly for middle-level managers, are expected to possess the ability to adapt with dynamic market changes and unexpected 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 managerial positions (entry and middle-level). These findings provide useful insights into the competencies needed by the hotel industry for certain managerial positions. The findings are significant because they have not been studied in Indonesia. 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 administration). This supports Kay & Russell's study (2008) that identified “interpersonal and leadership competencies are essential for managerial success” (p. 53). It is suggested 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 as outstanding personality, passionate, confident, honest, energetic/dynamic, and have integrity. Interpersonal skills, particularly strong communication skills to deal with guests and interpersonal satisfaction in the hospitality industry is people oriented and situative (Millar et al., 2010). Compared to room division and marketing department, interpersonal skills were expected by internal and external stakeholders. This is unsurprising as the responsibilities of sales and marketing people are to sell their products and services to people which ability to facilitate communication process is very important.

The management of five-star hotels were most likely to recruit managers with strong leadership competencies rather than interpersonal competencies. However, this department requires a manager. This is unsurprising as 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 industry online surveys. The study samples were limited to respondents who have been able to reach and was sent 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 reliability (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, students in order to develop hospitality education, especially in Indonesia will be better placed to produce qualified and competent managers in the hotel field. As was stated by manager and successful future hospitality students means a successful future for the hospitality industry” (p. 25).

REFERENCES
