

MAGNETIZING & RETAINING THE FINEST TALENT IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR, AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF DETERMINANTS OF JOB SATISFACTION AND EFFECTS ON EMPLOYEE TURNOVER IN THE HOTELS OF KUALA LUMPUR CITY CENTER

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Abstract *The hospitality sector is labeled as a service sector which provides services to their guest. The industry requires manpower to cope and provide to the guest demands. This situation creates the industry to be labour intensive. How about manpower supply to the industry? Over the years employee turnover has become part of the industries challenge to retain and employ new workforce. The research was to understand the determinants of Job Satisfaction and Effects on Employee Turnover in the hotels. The focus was on the Hospitality industry Food and Beverage department Operational Employees. The research tried to assess the determinants of Job satisfaction and their decision to quit therefore creating a situation of Turnover. The research revealed that Choice of Work and Job Performance influenced Turnover and the main factors of Job Satisfaction that lead to turnover were Wages/Salary and Opportunity for advancement/Career progression. The analysis also revealed that there need to be a balance in order to attract and maintain potential employees as all factors that affect Job Satisfaction directly leads to turnover.*

Keywords *Job Satisfaction, Motivation, Operational Employees, Choice of Work, Job Performance, Employee Turnover*

INTRODUCTION

The Tourism Industry

The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries. We in Malaysia have witnessed tremendous growth in the hospitality. The hospitality sector has been able to cope by opening more hotels and increasing more rooms to cope with the demand and this has allowed for the hoteliers to forecast and prepare for future needs. (www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my) The service industry requires manpower to cope and provide to the guest demands. With the strong Tourism marketing and promotions done by the government of Malaysia we have been able to obtain good tourism arrivals and sustained the need for hotels, rooms and services. How do we supply manpower to the industry? This situation creates the industry

to be labour intensive. Over the years employee turnover has become part of the industries challenge to retain and employ new workforce.

Employee Turnover

Employee/Staff turnover refers to the ratio of the number of workers that had to be replaced in the given time period to the average numbers of workers or employees. (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/employee+turnover>). Turnover is defined as termination of employment at the hotel for any reason. Turnover can either be a positive or a negative effect to the establishment. The effects depend on a great deal whether the employee is a high or low performer. Turnover tends to be greatest among employees that are high

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performers and low performers. The employees that perform in the middle range tend to stay longer in establishments.

Turnover of employees can be Voluntary Turnover, Involuntary turnover and Dysfunctional turnover. Voluntary turnover takes place when employees separation occurs because the employee chooses to leave. Involuntary turnover takes place when employees separation that occurs because the employer choose to terminate the employment relationship. Involuntary turnover normally has much more negative effect on the employee. Dysfunctional Turnover takes place when an employee that is performing satisfactorily voluntarily leaves the job.

When an employee leaves their job the establishment or organization has to identify and appoint new employees to fill the position vacant. This process is troublesome and resources are highly used when changes happen in the work force. Time, energy and cost are some of the resources that are normally taken up during turnover and rehiring process. Below we would observe the Paths to Decision to Quit. (Greg L. Stewart and Kenneth G. Brown, 2009.p.246)

Path to Decision to Quit

First path is Quick Decision to leave; where the employee with some external factor decides to re-look the employment relationship.

Second path is Calculated Decision to leave; here an employee starts to think about leaving the organization or establishment after an event ha occurred.

Third path is Comparison with other Opportunities, here an employee would compare between their current work and other alternatives or offers that they may have received.

Fourth path is Sense of Dissatisfaction; here an employee begins to feel dissatisfied over a period of time.

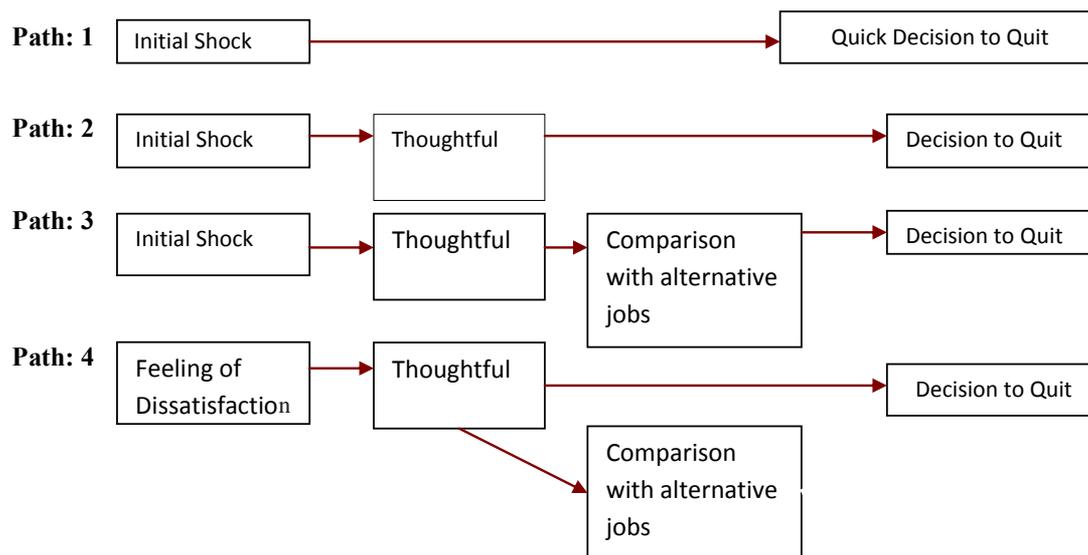
In order to understand further the reasons for turnover in an organization or establishment we would require analyzing the satisfaction level. Lack of satisfaction would lead to employees quitting or leaving their work. (Greg L. Stewart and Kenneth G. Brown, 2009.p.246) In the Tourism and Hospitality context staffs or employees play a major role in the success of the organization or establishment. The Hotel and Food and Beverage industry is under the category of service industry. The service industry is generally accepted as a labour intensive industry. Staff turnover has been a major issue in this sector. This allows us to study what are the factors effecting staff turnover.

Objectives of Research

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To understand what are the Job Satisfaction factors causing Staff turnover in the operational departments. Focusing on the Food and Beverage departments in the Hotel.
2. To understand whether Staff turnover has become part of the Organizational Culture in the Food and Beverage department in the hotel industry.

Figure 1: Path to Decision to Quit. "An alternative Approach: The unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnover" from Thomas W.Lee and Terence R. Mitchell. Academy of Management Review 19 (1994); 51-90



Structure of the Research (Research Methodology)

The Qualitative approach would be used to gather data and analysis would be done to achieve results from the research. The method of structured interview was applied where this allowed for a two way conversation and information was obtained orally. The intention of a structured interview was to provide the respondents the same stimuli so the information gathered from the respondents can be differentiated accurately. The target audience would be the Management and Operational staffs from the Food and Beverage industry. The study would also include secondary data which will be obtained from the previous studies done by the researchers from the books, journals, articles and the websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Growth of the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

The Hospitality and Tourism Industry is the largest sector in Malaysia, contributing to the economy where 58.1 percent to GDP and 49.5 percent total employment during the 8th Malaysian plan period. The service industries contribution is vital to the continuous growth of the economy. Malaysia is a famous visitor destination for many neighbouring countries and the rest of the world. The top ten visitor generating market for July 2007 were Singapore (873,685), Indonesia (171,550), Thailand (108,408), Brunei (101,922), China (45,195), West Asia (34,510), Japan (29,498), India (28,987), Australia (28,716) and the Philippines (24,654).

With the Tourism industry booming in Malaysia the Hotel industry itself has been influenced by this boom and grown rapidly. The average statistic rate for hotels in

Malaysia for year 2005/2006 reached 65.5%, from here, in July - September 2007/2006 the average occupancy rate raised to 73.6% (www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my) this shows Malaysia's tourism potential and the potential to accommodate the need for rooms nights. Statistics issued by Malaysia Association of Hotels shows in year 2006 Malaysia has a total 2,336 Hotels and 157,251 total Hotel Rooms. And a total 1007 hotels has been Rated since 2007 August 31. This is a sign of strong and greater growth to come for the Malaysian Hotel Industry.

Demand and Supply of Employees to the Hotel Industry

The service industry is generally accepted as a labour intensive industry, therefore there is a need to tackle the importance of labour retention in this industry. This has become one of the major issues in Asia and Malaysia. The hotel industry in Malaysia is facing shortages of local labour force. Most locals work abroad in countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, Dubai, Europe, Mainland of China and the Middle East where the wages are more attractive (MATTA president Ngiam Foon. Monday July 02, 2007). Over the years there has been a shortage in the hotel industry and as a result some management of the hotels has opted to hire foreign workers to fill in the front liners position, this has resulted in not creating an original Malaysian identity. (Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor Tuesday, July 24, 2007). Hotel operators had little choice but to hire foreigners as locals did not want to work in hotels. Foreigners are not their priority to be hired but if locals do not take up these jobs then there would be no sufficient employees to cover for these jobs. (Shamsuddin Bardan, Executive Director, Malaysian Employees Federation MEF). In order to satisfy the need for the hotel

Figure 2: The determinants Of Job Satisfaction from Robert N. Lussier. Human Relations in Organisations. Applications and Skills building. (2008); 79-83



staffs managements are looking at hiring English speaking staffs from other countries. Countries like the Philippines are targeted for some as they have good English backgrounds. (MATTA, President Ngiam Foon. Monday July 02, 2007). This has resulted in over dependency towards foreign staffs.

Turnover in the Hotel Industry

What is the motive behind employees leaving or quitting their work and moving away from their establishment or company? Turnover is a natural aspect in the hotel Industry that happens. Turnover happens when there is dissatisfaction in the job. Job satisfactions are a set attitude towards work and job satisfaction is required by all staffs or employees. Job satisfaction effects turnover, absenteeism and performance. Employees that are more satisfied with their jobs or work are less absent and would stay on longer in their jobs compared to the least satisfied employees. Job satisfaction is determined by a variety of factors, the work itself, wages or salaries, growth and upward mobility, supervision, colleagues and attitude towards work (Robert N. Lussier, Ph.D.2008.pg 79)

Determinants of Job Satisfaction

The Work Itself- The nature of the work or job has a major effect on overall job satisfaction. Employees that think of their jobs as monotonous, unchallenging or boring will tend to have a lower satisfaction towards their job.

Pay or Wage- Overall job satisfactions would be affected if the pay or wage of an employee received is unsatisfactory. Employees or staffs whom are not satisfied with their salaries or wages would not perform the jobs well or to the employees' fullest potential.

Growth and Upward mobility- Whether an employee is satisfied with the establishment or their personnel growth, Potential for upward mobility may affect job satisfaction.

Supervision- Supervision received by staffs or employees would certainly affect job satisfaction. The relationship between the employer and employee is very crucial in maintaining a good balance for employees to be satisfied.

Co-workers- It affect overall job satisfaction. Staffs who do not work well and have good human relations with other co-workers face less satisfaction when compared to those that have good human relations.

Based on the research of Allan R Nankervis, Human Resources Management Strategies as Competitive Advantages in the hospitality sector in Southeast Asia and Pacific Rim suggest that there is a negative perception of the hotel occupation which is characterized as low wages, casualisation of the work force, gender differentiation and the absence of long term incentives and career management.

Based on the research the author observed that service work in the hospitality industry was often unfavourable towards the people of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. In some cultures serving people is known to be degrading and low social status. (Nankervis, A.R 2000)

Based on the Cornell quarterly research conducted by William J. Wasmuth and Stanley W. Davis titled Why Employee Leave? Results show that employee turnover happens based on a few reasons that are for example, is one of many that use the dichotomy of voluntary versus involuntary and attempt to explain the way for reducing voluntary turnover that occurs when the employee leaves on their own accord. This technique takes into consideration that only voluntary turnover can be controlled.

The hospitality industry being a service industry, customer satisfaction is also supported by employee job satisfaction (Gu & Siu, 2009) hence the quality of service given to the customers relies on the instantaneous performance of the employees providing the service. This can also be applied to the kitchen staff now as the concept of Open kitchen has allowed the kitchen crew to have contact with customers and supply information regarding the cuisine served.

Though Friday suggested utilizing the Job Description Index (JDI) & Job Diagnostic survey (JDS) to conduct a job satisfaction research, Rogers, Clow & Kash (1994) have utilized a different model to evaluate job satisfaction and also to identify the factors that contribute to job satisfaction. The model comprises of four determinants which is role conflict, role clarity, job tension and job satisfaction. It discusses about how these factors affect each other and also job satisfaction.

The research aim was to try and match Job Satisfaction and Turnover. The interviews were conducted with ten participants from the management and operational background.

Interview Questions (Management Employees)

1. How long have you been working in the Hotel industry or Hospitality industry and the current hotel you work for?
2. How many employees do your company has?
3. What is your point of view regarding staff turnover?
4. Does your hotel face employee turnover?
5. How will your company cope with employee turnover?(If No, suppose in the future what would be your strategy)
6. In your opinion. What is the main factor that leads to employee/staff turnover?
7. Are we heading towards a sustainable direction in retaining and attracting potential employees/staffs to work in the hotel industry for the future?

Interview Questions (Operational Employees)

1. How long have you been working in the Hotel industry or Hospitality industry and the current hotel you work for?
2. How many staffs/employees does your department have?
3. What is your point of view regarding employee/staff turnover?
4. Does your hotel face employee turnover?
5. What motivates you to perform in your current work and be employed in your current work?
6. In your opinion. What is the factor that leads to employee/staff turnover?
7. Does your hotel work towards a sustainable direction in retaining and attracting potential employees/staffs to work in hotel?

The interview questions differed as to achieve deeper understanding and meaning from both the participative respondents of Management and Operational backgrounds. Below we would observe the interpretations and analysis of the findings.

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

The respondents from the management employees represented managers and directors involved in the hospitality and tourism industry for more than 5 years. The respondents comes from well established group of hotels where they had to management more the 20 employees. This scenario is different for Respondents 4 for the respondent represents an Association that has hotels in Malaysia as part of their members where the respondent represents the hotels in legal advice under Industrial Relations; provide consultancy and training for Hotel employers.

All respondents have faced employee turnover and they agree to the fact that turnover has a negative impact but can be positive as well, as mentioned by Respondent 5. The similarities that can be witnessed from the interview are all respondents agree that employee/ staff turnover cause a problem to the departments/hotels and it affects the team and hotels effort for progress.

All respondents agree that the work conditions/work environment of the service industry is crucial to influence employee turnover. Bad management practice and traditional management styles are deemed one sided and this in return would create employee/staff turnover. According to Respondent 3 Generation X staffs respond differently from generation Y staffs this is an area that needs to be balanced. All respondents especially Respondent 2 stressed that the work culture of International hotel chains are better than Local hotel chains. This is due to the fact that International

Hotel chains place less stress to their staffs to obtain performance; this is due to the culture of excellence derived within a system to be achieved. As for the Local Hotel chains the culture is more profit driven therefore this stresses the staffs and intention to quit arises leading to turnover.

Salary is a concern as the respondents mentioned in the interview that it is difficult to maintain a competitive salary. As highlighted by Respondent 4 the reason for salaries to be low is due to the fact that there is no National Collective Wage Structure for example Banks, Plantation workers and Commercial Employees (Clerks) have this. There is no Collective agreement between National Union of Hotel, Bar and Restaurant workers union and the Association of the Hotel Employers. This allows for salary structure, terms and conditions of services to vary from Hotels, place to place and star rating to star rating. This result in pinching of staffs and turnover being high for employees do not feel valued for the work performed. In regards to retaining and attracting employees, the respondents agreed that the Hospitality and Tourism towards a sustainable direction is fragile. As a result they are hiring foreign staffs for certain job positions.

According to respondent 4 and 5 we can attract and retain employees as Hospitality and Tourism being the second largest revenue earner, employees play a key role. With the service charge element continue to be part of the take home salary of the employees in the industry together with the various perks such as uniforms(shoes), good promotional opportunities, conducive environment of work, medical benefits, food, lodging and transport provided the industry continues to attract staffs and maintain them. Good infrastructure provided (brand of hotel, loyalty, salary and benefits) Succession planning this includes the potential to grow within the establishment and includes sister properties. Even confidential staffs like Security and Pay role from Human Resources would be provided with service charges. Those with basic level of entry for the job have long term service and they do not get promoted. Those with diplomas and degrees move jobs very fast and hotels do not hold them back.

The respondents agree that there is a need to work with and sustain a good infrastructure or factors that would lead to employee turnover like (Wages/ Salary , Fringe benefits, Job security, Interesting job, Flexible hours, working environment, Co-workers, Opportunity for advancement, Training, Empowerment, Allowed being part of the team, Loyalty to employees)

The Respondents from the Operational Employees was represented from front of the house operational staffs to supervisory level employees. All the 5 respondents represent popular and recognized hotels and outlets in Malaysia. The Respondents have been working in the industry for more than a year to five years in the industry. The respondents

have been working in Hotels that has a staff manning of 10 to 30 above employees.

All respondents have faced employee turnover. Respondents from the operations agree that employee turnover is an important thing and it is deemed bad as it affect the efforts of all staffs/employees working. They are aware that the industry is being affected by turnover issues. All respondents agree that salary, career advancement, training and motivation are factors that make these respondents work in their current jobs. The Respondents acknowledge that factors that would lead to employee turnover like (Wages/ Salary, Fringe benefits, Job security, Interesting job, Flexible hours, working environment, Co-workers, Opportunity for advancement, Training, Empowerment, Allowed being part of the team, Loyalty to employees) are very important. The most important factor to them was salaries/wages, fringe benefits and interesting jobs.

All respondents do not believe that the Hotel industry is doing enough to work towards a sustainable direction to retain and attract potential employees. The respondents agree that there are efforts placed to manage with the employee workforce. But then again they are uncertain by directions taken as the management allows staffs to leave rather than retain them. The practice of retaining seems to be done for management positions only most of the time.

All respondents agree that there is a need to identify and balance the factors(Wages/ Salary, Fringe benefits, Job security, Interesting job, Flexible hours, working environment, Co-workers, Opportunity for advancement, Training, Empowerment, Allowed being part of the team, Loyalty to employees) that would lead to employee turnover. When the factors are understood then the management can study the needs of their employees. This would indirectly motivate staffs to retain their job. The interpretations highlights both the objective to understand what the *Job Satisfaction factors are causing Staff turnover in the operational departments especially the food and beverage department and Staff turnover has become part of the Organizational Culture in the Food and Beverage department in the hotel industry.*

The synthesis of both interviews allows us to understand the point of views and opinions of the 10 respondents that participated in the interviews. The interviews were divided between management staffs and operational staffs for this allowed the researcher to obtain optimal data from the interviewers. The respondents were interviewed by series of interview questions. Some questions on organizational culture, salary scale and management techniques were deemed sensitive. Therefore some questions were deemed sensitive to the Hotels and personnel's this allowed for the indirect questioning techniques through the interview questions.

As a result from the analysis we can understand that the management staffs and operational staffs agree there is

significant need to develop, improve and understand the factors affecting employee turnover towards achieving a sustainable direction in employing and retaining staffs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings we would propose a few short term recommendations while constructing more in depth steps to take for long term.

Minimum Wage

Based on the findings it is clear that we can understand that salaries are a very important factor that would influence the decision for turnover. Based on the interview all respondents mentioned that salaries are important to retain and attract potential employees. Therefore a minimum wage structure is recommended compared to the point system of salary currently practiced. This recommendation is in line with the Human Resources Ministry proposal and has been seconded by Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) and Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) (August 8, 2010).

Minimum Wage is defined by the business dictionary as the lowest hourly, daily or monthly rate an employer can pay an employee. In some countries (such as the US) the minimum wage is set by a statute while in others (such as the UK) it is set by the wage council of each industry. This is where the Minimum Wage would be increased from the equilibrium wage based on the market forces of demand and supply of labour. This would naturally increase the salary/wage of employees. Minimum Wage would provide employees a better quality of life.

This initiative has been address by Mr. Vivekanandan the General Manager of Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) for Security, Retail and Hotel Sectors where wages are depressed and there is no bargaining power by employees. However the implementation of Minimum Wage can affect smaller business players and in this case the small hotel chains as Minimum wage would increase business cost. Apart from this we need to consider the cost that would occur when the change from Service Point system to Minimum wage takes place.

Career Progression

Growth and Upward mobility/career progression is critical. According to Robert N Lussier author of Human Relations in Organizations (Applications and Skill Buildings), whether an employee is satisfied with the establishment or their personnel growth, Potential for upward mobility may affect job satisfaction. Some people naturally want to be promoted either in management or technical or operational

fields. Once there is the notion that the growth and upward mobility is restricted or limited this would have an effect on job satisfaction and eventually could lead to turnover.

Growth and Upward mobility/Career progression is ranked as the most important factor which jobseekers in the Middle East's hospitality sector look for in an employer, according to a new survey conducted by CatererGlobal.com. Caterer Global are a recruitment website for luxury hotels, resorts and cruise ships, the UK-based online recruitment company, revealed in their research that career progression is followed jointly by working environment, job security and style of management. Relevant training and competitive salaries together emerged as the third most important factor when choosing a hotel, the survey found.

The perspective for career growth must be weighed and balanced out in the work force among the younger and older generation employees as younger generation employees may be more anxious than others to rise quickly themselves within the organization. The younger generation may not gain the necessary experience and skills before expecting a promotion to the next level. This is one area that the management could focus to cater for career progression with the minimum wage. This would certainly increase job satisfaction and lead to reduce turnover.

Motivation

Motivation is the internal process leading to behavior to satisfy needs. When the management knows what are the motivation factors behind their employees they can design incentive systems to motivate employees. Motivation affects how and to what extent we utilize skills and abilities. When an employee is motivated they would be productive, cooperative and increased performance to name a few.

Need → Motive → Behavior → Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction

But in order to understand or identify what motivates people, we require understanding the employee's needs. Here we could refer to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The needs are arranged based in order of importance. The Needs Hierarchy explains five classifications First Physiological Needs, Second Safety Needs, Third Social Needs, Fourth Esteem Needs and Fifth Self Actualization.

Physiological needs are primary or basic needs that are required, for instance air, shelter and food. In an organizational setting it would be adequate salary, breaks and working condition. Safety needs once the basic needs are met the individual looks at safety. In the organizational setting this includes Job security, fringe benefits, increases in salary to meet inflation and working condition.

Social needs are when individuals have established safety the look for love, friendship, acceptance and affection. In the organizational setting this includes opportunity to interact with others, to be accepted and to have friends. Esteem needs is after the social needs are met the individual focus on status, ego, self respect, recognition and self confidence. In the organizational setting this needs include titles, satisfaction of accomplishing a task, participation in decision making and chance for advancement.

Self Actualization is the highest level of need to develop ones full potential. In order to obtain this need one looks for growth, achievement, and advancement. In the organizational setting this needs include the development of one's skill, achievement and promotion and the ability to have control over ones job. Therefore, once these needs are identified the management could act towards the most crucial need to assist in decision making for improving the level of motivation that could lead to satisfaction and reduce turnover. (Robert N. Lussier, Ph.D.2008.pg 79)

Maslow's theory of needs can be debated upon; the needs theory is a design that came around the 1940s the needs of today societies have change over the period of years. The theory of needs has been seemed unclear at times to explain what ones persons need may not be the need by another. (Learning-Theories.com) Apart from that according to Hofstede a Sociologist has mentioned that the needs do not illustrate and expand upon the difference between the social and intellectual needs of those raised in individualistic societies and those raised in collectivist societies. The needs would be different for those whom derive from collectivist societies when compared to those whom derive for individualistic societies.

Maslow's theory of needs acts as a platform for the Management to plan or develop understandings of their employee's motivation but it must be expanded upon and take into consideration the difference and individual employees needs when put to practice the theory.

CONCLUSION

The tourism and hospitality industry has been through an immense transformation over the years as countries understand the benefits these industries bring to the economic and development benefits of a country, to the people and businesses across the country and even the world. The research conducted was to highlight the effects on the industry, here highlighting the Hotel industry in the area of Food and Beverage concerning staff/labour satisfaction.

The food and beverage industry operates or caters to the needs of guests, therefore making it a labour intensive industry where humans provide services for humans. Job satisfaction

is a crucial area that needs to be identified and understood to ensure there is a continuity of supply for manpower to the industry and continuity of service standards where staffs are provided with their needs for sustenance.

The research revealed that Choice of Work and Job Performance influenced Turnover and the main factors of Job Satisfaction that lead to turnover were Wages/Salary and Opportunity for advancement/Career progression. The analysis also revealed that there need to be a balance in order to attract and maintain potential employees as all factors that affect Job Satisfaction directly leads to turnover. Job satisfaction and effect on employees is an area of that should be respected and developments for these areas should be priority to the hotel industry to be sustainable for future in providing manpower and maintaining service standards.

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