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Muslim Friendly Service Supply Chain Management (MFSSCM), Employees Service Behaviour and Muslim Friendly Hotels (MFHs) Service Performance: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract

The increasing demand over Muslim Friendly Hotels (MFHs) since past one decade has significantly contributed to the development of hotel industry in Malaysia. However, it is reported by many scholars that MFHs service performance is still unmatched with conventional hotel dues to the unique norms that exist in MFHs service operation. Concerned to determine the possible approach to improve MFHs employees' service behaviour and service performance, several journal articles were selected regarding the practices of Muslim Friendly Service Supply Chain Management (MFSSCM) which consist of demand management, customer relationship management, and service performance management to possibly assist MFHs service operation to improve the service performance and therefore improve the level of satisfaction among both Muslim and Non-Muslim guest. It is hoped that this conceptual paper is able to provide comprehensive information related to the useful practices of MFSSCM and its relation in improving MFHs service performance.

Keywords: Muslim Friendly Hotels, Service Supply Chain Management, Employees' Service Behaviour, Service Performance.

Introduction

The tourism industry has contributed to the growth of Malaysia's economy especially in the hospitality sector, particularly in Muslim tourism (CrescentRating, 2017). Based on the latest statistic reported by Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), Malaysia is the most preferred destination for Muslim travellers worldwide in 2018 and 2019 which contribute over 5 million Muslim tourist each year. The positive numbers of Muslim travellers visiting Malaysia is resulted from the capability of Malaysian tourism industry in implementing Muslim Friendly tourism product. Muslim Friendly Hotels (MFHs) is one of the tourism products that available in Malaysia. It is defined by Shaharuddin, Kassim, Yusof, Bakar, and Talib (2018) as an accommodation that offer a facilities and services conforming to the Muslim friendly principles. The idea of establishing MFHs is born when the demand for Muslim friendly compliance accommodation is emerging among Muslim travellers (Putit, Muda, Mahmood,

Taufek, & Wahib, 2016). Since the demand for MFHs is increasing, the development of Muslim Friendly-based hotel concept is also growing. In 2020, there were already 42 certified MFHs in total that available in Malaysia (Yusof, 2020).

Similar to other types of hotel operation, the pinnacle objective for MFHs also is to achieve the highest level of service performance to guaranteed guest satisfaction (Shafaei & Mohamed, 2015). However, MFHs service performance is still unmatchable with conventional hotels due to some challenges that need to be faced by MFHs administer, especially in operational term. Based on the study by Samori, Rahman, and Zahari (2013), one of the serious challenges of operating MFHs is to ensure the consistency of staff productivity and employees' service behaviour to satisfy both Muslim and non-Muslim guests therefore achieve an acceptable level of service performance. It is important to address this issue as the risk of poor service performance will not only cause the loss of income but also will bring a bad reputation on MFHs image. Added also by Razak, Yusof, and Aziz (2019), the compliance between MFHs and their customers are still weak and resulting to low service performance. In order to satisfy diverse customer's need, MFHs administrators are constantly shifting their service operating procedures.

Therefore, further initiatives have to be developed to ensure that the challenges faced by the MFHs administrators can be resolved and improving the level of service performance. Based on the latest finding by several researchers, it is suggested that the use of Service Supply Chain Management (SSCM) specifically on the proper practices of demand management, customer relationship management, and service performance management could help the business to boost the level of employees' service behaviour and service performance (Miraz, Saleheen, & Rahman, 2016; Rahman & Zailani, 2015).

Literature Review

The Concept of Muslim Friendly Hotels (MFHs)

The MFHs is a hotel operation that complying to Muslim friendly principles in order to meet the needs of Muslim tourist. It requires different standards compared to conventional hotels to achieve Muslim friendly-compliance certificate (Islamic Tourism Centre, 2020). In other words, there are certain attributes of MFHs that align with the implementation of Muslim friendly teaching in the hotel management and operations (JAIS, 2017). According to Henderson (2010), most MFHs shared a common attribute that reflect towards their image. The general attributes of Islamic hotel can be referred in Table 1.1.

In general, the concept of MFHs requires a unique attribute such as praying facilities, the availability of Al-Quran and the direction of Qibla' in the guest room, non-alcoholic and pork free in food and beverage offerings, and clean dining utensils that free from elements of 'Syubhah' (Juratnasan & Jaroenwisan, 2014). Plus, the marriage certificate has to be shown by couples before checking in the MFHs is a compulsory requirement for MFHs (Shakona, Backman, Norman, Luo, & Duffy, 2015). The usage of drugs or drug dealing activities are also prohibited in MFHs (Ibrahim & Jamal, 2016). Based on the statements by Samori, Ishak, and Kassan (2014), MFHs also should be dependable on the trustworthy source of funding that comes from Shariah-compliant contracts and required to spend the income on yearly zakat. Therefore, it can be said that the concept of MFHs covers the whole aspect of hotels operation (Battour, Battor, & Bhatti, 2013).

Table 1.1: The General Attributes of MFHs

No.	Attributes of MFH
1.	No alcohol to be served on the premise
2.	Halal Foods
3.	Quran, prayer mats and arrows indicating the direction of Mecca in every room
4.	Beds and toilets positioned so as not to face the direction of Mecca
5.	Bidets in bathrooms
6.	Prayer rooms
7.	Appropriate entertainment
8.	Predominantly Muslim staff
9.	Conservative staff dress
10.	Separate recreational facilities for men and women
11.	All female floors
12.	Guest dress code
13.	Islamic funding

Source: Henderson (2010)

Challenges Faced by MFHs

Despite the mentioned attributes of MFHs, the formal concept of MFHs that can be referred as the common ground to all MFHs administrators is still not available (Shaharuddin et al., 2018; Salleh et al., 2014; Jurattanasa & Jaroenwisana, 2014). Hence, MFHs administrators in Malaysia is currently runs based on management's own thought and understanding of the MFHs operation (Ahmad et al., 2015).

Based on the study by Henderson (2010), it is revealed that the international industry players such as Starwood, Hilton and Inter-Continental hotels group have no intention to shift the operation to the MFHs concept as they view the MFHs concept is still unstable and unpredictable (Shaharuddin et al., 2018). This situation arises from several factors such as various restriction that unfriendly to non-Muslim guest and gender segregation facilities. Besides, the lack of understanding towards the concept of MFHs cause the low interest of international hotels to operate MFHs business in Malaysia.

Currently, the growth of MFHs is increase as the demand for Muslim tourism product is emerging among Muslim travellers (Putit, Muda, Mahmood, Taufek, & Wahib, 2016). However, as mentioned earlier, the problems in service problem in MFHs is causing substantial negative impacts which can be generalised on several aspects such as managing customers' demand, the relationship with guests to that cause the low level of satisfaction, and lack of service performance measurement. Hence, the goal of this study which to develop Muslim Friendly Service Supply Chain Management (MFSSCM) which consist of demand management, customer relationship management, and service performance management could help encounter the problems and could act as a guiding mechanism for MFHs to improve its service performance.

Muslim Friendly Service Supply Chain (MFSSCM)

MFSSCM can be considered as an advanced service supply chain model in terms of interdisciplinary study of the Muslim Friendly service operational practice. Three elements are present in a MFHs setting which are demand management, customer relationship

management, and service performance management. These practices which are normally present in the Service Supply Chain Management (SSCM), would often play a significant role in employees' service behaviour and service performance. Similar to other types of hotel operation, effective demand management is one of the keys that should be available in MFHs to thrive in the hotel industry. Based on studies related to demand management in hotels operation, Benggston and Valler (2012) studied the importance of demand management to identify the customer's preferences towards hotel industry. They found that the demand management can help hotels administer to develop the service differentiation and adjustment of room price to meet the demand from potential guests. Meanwhile, it is also confirmed that demand management can help hotels to achieve better service performance.

Besides, proper practice of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in MFHs service operation is vital to improve the service performance. It is clear that service objectives can only be accomplished through the introduction of the CRM, which will result in a fruitful relationship between MFHs service employees and their customers. (Papastathopoulou et al., 2007; Verdugo et al., 2009). CRM is commonly regarded as one of the most successful ways to promote the growth and expansion of the customer base that, in turn, would help to boost the level of service performance and increase guest loyalty (Mylonakis, 2009; Sigala, 2005; Sigala & Connolly, 2004; Wu & Li, 2011).

Nevertheless, in the MFHs service operation, the best service performance of service employees can have a significant effect on guest satisfaction and eventually on hotel's profitability. Therefore, service performance management is important to assess the employees' service performance in certain basis. Previously, researchers and practitioners have paid more attention to service performance management. Numerous empirical studies have shown that the principle of service performance management is closely linked to the sustainability and growth of the company. (Razalli, 2008; Richard et al., 2009). On this basis, former researchers such as Harris and Mongiello (2011) studied hotel service performance management and found the primary reason for improving hotel service performance.

Employees' Service Behaviour

Employee service behaviour is important in a service performance as it links the organisation with its customers and is a key factor in maintaining successful working relationships with customers (Grönroos, 1990; Gwinner, et al., 1998). They will also preserve customer loyalty by keeping the commitment given to the consumer. In MFHs service operation, the rising issue of service performance creates a barrier to achieve the fullest potential of the business. Looking at the factors of low service performance in MFHs, the level of employees' service behaviour is still questionable as there is still no wider studies on this area. As the service employees have the ability to represent the hotel' image, it is important to analyse the service behaviour that they performed in front of the customers. Therefore, it can uncover the real situation on the perspective of employees' service behaviour and improving the level of MFHs service performance.

Service Performance

Service performance has been taken into consideration at two levels, an organisational level of performance that covers all organisational activity and an individual level linked to personal performance or employee performance. (Liao & Chuang, 2004). This

study will focus on the MFHs performance of employees and their relationship with employees' service behaviour and service performance. According to Xu and Ye (2014), The level of service performance is often reflected in the employee's behaviour and found that service performance has significant positive correlation with employees' service behaviour, in other words, to which the employee is competent to that the service is good.

Methodology

Having identified the variables in the reviews of the relevant literature, the variable of interest (dependent) in this study is service performance and the predictor variable (independent) are the three cores of MFSSCM practices which consist of demand management, customer relationship management, and service performance management. Employees' service behaviour is predicted to moderate the relationship between the three independent variable and service performance. Next, the development of conceptual model consisting these variables is required to established the connection for methodological purpose. Result and Analysis

Developing the Conceptual Relationship Model

The development of the model involved identifying its core constituents or dimensions and exploration of the employees' service behaviour and service performance. The dimensions under employees' service behaviour and service behaviour will be used in relation to the practices of Muslim Friendly Service Supply Chain Management (MFSSCM).

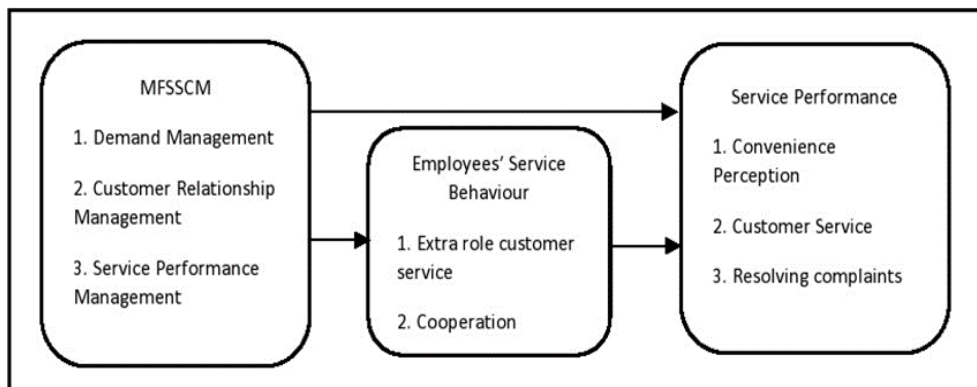
Dimensions of Employees' Service Behaviour

Employee behaviours throughout customer interaction have a positive or negative impact on customer perceptions of service quality (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004). When employees perform one type of service behaviour, they are prone to perform another service behaviour (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This idea is based on the theory of socialisation. The theory indicates that one "helpful behaviour" (cooperation) leads to another "helpful action" because of the personal meaning formed during the socialisation process (Kelly & Hoffman, 1997). Bettencourt and Brown (1997) and Kelly and Hoffman (1997) state that there are two types of service behaviour: customer-driven and employee-driven. It is therefore defined that the dimensions of employee service behaviour consist of (1) extra-role customer service and (2) cooperation.

Dimensions of Service Performance

Dimensions of services performance have also been subject to different itemisation. Some authors considered two core elements for the service performance as efficiency performance, which defined as completing service within set time standards, and quality performance defined as providing a durable solution to customer problems (Schepers, Nijssen, & Heidjen, 2016). Many authors (Arye et al., 2016; Garcia-Buades et al., 2016) classified and mentioned dimensions of the service performance in their works. These dimensions have also been shaped as (1) convenience perception, (2) customer service and (3) resolving complaints, putting as indicators for performance in logical sequence (Hanafi et al., 2018; Hoang et al., 2016).

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Relationship Model



Conclusion

In MFHs segment, there is still no comprehensive framework or model has been found for implementing SSCM practices particularly in Muslim-friendly approach in hotel industry in Malaysia. It is proven by several studies that via the practices of SSCM, the level of employees' behaviour and service performance could be improved. Therefore, it is interesting to look deeper on the effect of MFSSCM towards MFHs service operation. It is important to ensure that MFHs service performance are improved as the better and higher the performance of MFHs services than the competitors, the more optimistic and appropriate picture of MFHs services would be formed in the minds of the both Muslim and Non-Muslim customers. The performance of the services offered by MFHs can be a key factor in attracting and satisfying customers with the services offered by MFHs. Hotels provide services and the provision of regular and appropriate services will lead to an increased positive image among customers. On the other hand, improved service performance would make MFHs customers and guests repeat their purchasing process, which would lead to an improved re-visit of customers' intentions.

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