

Leveraging Employee Engagement for Competitive Advantage in the Hospitality Industry. A Comparative Study of Hotels A and B in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is to explore whether employee engagement contributes to competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. The researchers were inspired to carry out a study in the hospitality industry because of the need to understand how best to place employee engagement as a human resource initiative, as a source of competitive advantage. Of concern was the need to increase the knowledge base on the benefits of good service provision that comes as a result of having a fully engaged workforce. The research is mainly qualitative since it is in descriptive format. However, quantitative approaches are also used through graphs and tables to illustrate data. The research equally used cross case analysis, by comparing Hotel A and Hotel B. A total of 78 respondents participated in the study. The study revealed the contribution of employee engagement to competitive advantage and highlighted how employee engagement acts as a key determinant of competitive advantage. Hotel B is better placed in terms of employee engagement as compared to Hotel A and as a result it enjoys a competitive edge over Hotel A. Hotel B employees are highly satisfied, motivated, committed and fully engaged as compared to Hotel A hence offer better services giving the hotel strategic advantage over A as evidenced by the 43.7% market share against Hotel A's 17.3% market share.

Keywords: employee engagement, competitive advantage, hospitality industry, hotels A and B, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

The growing currency of engagement has generated a large number of studies from academics, consultancies, and organisations that look at the impact of high levels of engagement on outcomes for most business organisations worldwide. Notably, these authors include the leading employee engagement group, the Gallup Organisation, which in 2006 examined 23,910 business units, the Institute of Employment Studies in 2004 and the Tower Perrins-ISR 2006 that undertook a survey of 664-000 employees from over 50 companies around the world. From a Zimbabwean perspective, research on employee engagement was carried out by The Institute of People Management Zimbabwe IPMZ in 2010 and some of the findings were that most workers felt disempowered and that their ideas were being overlooked, some also felt that business performance was not effectively communicated, thus resulting in employee disengagement. Indeed the Zimbabwean organisations have suffered a great deal in the past decade, and with the dollarisation of the economy competition for survival has been the order of the day. Confronted with this harsh reality employee engagement has emerged as a crucial driver of business success in today's competitive market

place. Thus to gain a competitive edge, organisations are turning to HR to set the agenda for employee engagement and commitment. This trend is cutting across all sectors and industries in Zimbabwe.

This study focused on the hospitality industry in Zimbabwean that has gone through a serious phase of economic hardships, ranging from poor room occupancy and covers (which have affected the expected revenue) to a serious skills flight problem, leading to poor service delivery and customer satisfaction. However, due to the dollarisation of the economy and the coming in of the inclusive government in 2009 which mitigated the problems highlighted above, competition in the hospitality industry is now intense as companies compete for local, regional and external clients. It is against this background that employee engagement has been observed to be the main source of competitive advantage. Organisations that truly engage and inspire their employees produce world class levels of innovation, productivity and enhanced performance, which result in competitive advantage. The paper focuses on leveraging employee engagement for competitive advantage in the hospitality industry with particular reference to Hotels A and B.

Kahn (1990:694) defines employee engagement as, “the harnessing of organisation members themselves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during their role performances.” The cognitive aspect of employee engagement concerns employees’ beliefs about the organization, its leaders and working conditions. The emotional aspect concerns how employees feel about each of the three factors identified above and whether they have positive or negative attitudes towards the organisation. The physical aspect of employee engagement concerns the physical energies exerted by individuals to accomplish their roles. Kahn (1990) concludes that engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organisational role.

Konrad (2006) suggests that disengaged employees often force or hurry through interactions with the customers, provide inadequate or incomplete service, complain in front of the customers, and fail to put forth anything but the minimal effort. Employee disengagement can be the result of several different factors, however attention needs to be focused on what is often the main culprit; poor relationships between the front-line staff and the supervisors and managers. Vance (2006) came up with ten common themes on how companies can measure employee engagement and these include pride in the employer, satisfaction with the employer, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform well at challenging work, recognition and positive feedback, personal support from one’s supervisor, effort above and beyond the minimum, understanding the link between one’s job and the organization’s mission, protection of the future growth with one’s company and the intention to stay with one’s employer. These ten indicators as advanced by Vance (2006) are used in the likert scale to measure levels of employee engagement in the organisations under study. The economic challenges of 2000 to 2008 affected a number of industries in Zimbabwe. One such industry that faced a serious challenge is the hospitality industry which saw more than 70% of experienced staff leaving for Dubai and South Africa as cited by the Cresta Calling Incentive Debate issue 01 of 2011. The coming in of the Government of National Unity, in 2009 resulted in the economy stabilising significantly and this induced investor confidence, and the tourism industry has thus recorded a significant increase in terms of performance as evidence by an increase in revenues earned between 2009 and 2010. In 2009 the country earned US\$523 million with 2 million arrivals and in 2010 the earnings increased to US\$770 million from 2, 3 million international arrivals as reported by the Financial Gazette of Thursday 31st of March 2011. Engaged employees work harder, are more loyal and are more likely to go an “extra mile” for the corporation. Barney (2002:9) suggests that, “a firm

experiences competitive advantages when its actions in an industry or market create economic values and when few competing firms are engaging in similar actions”. Barney (2002:10) ties competitive advantage to performance arguing that, “a firm obtains above-normal performance when it generates greater than expected value from the resources it employs”. Competition is at the core of the success or failure of firms. Competition determines the appropriateness of a firm’s activities that can contribute to its performance, such as innovations, a cohesive culture, or good implementation.

The Zimbabwean economy has improved remarkably owing to the dollarisation of the economy in February 2009. This improvement has witnessed the country’s tourism sector gaining regional and international tourist confidence, which equally resulted in the mushrooming of new players, like the fast food, lodges and guest houses. As a result of this, competition for clients by various players in the hospitality industry is intensifying greatly. Customer satisfaction is increasingly becoming a major driver to organisational effectiveness and competitive advantage. Consequently employee engagement is becoming a critical human resource component in predicting future employee performance and hence customer satisfaction. Most companies that are failing to attract and retain clients are attributing their failure to their human resources. As service providers, customer satisfaction is at the core of the business and having an engaged workforce adds value to different organisations. This paper examines how employee engagement can increase levels of customer satisfaction through enhanced performance and eventually gaining competitive advantage. Thus the main objective of the paper is to explain the major determinants of competitive advantage in the hospitality industry, from the perspective of the two organisations under study by critically comparing the engagement levels in the two companies, determining their competitive advantage.

The paper is theoretically guided by the Gallup Model of Engagement (1992:99) which was developed by Harter, Schmidt and Keyes (2003) and it is based on Maslow’s 1970 Hierarchy of Needs. Starting at the bottom of the hierarchy basic needs involve clarity of expectations and provision of basic materials such as, function PCs, faxes etc. At the next level, employees need to feel a sense of belonging. This involves participative decision making and having meaningful relationships with co-workers and supervisors. Such resources reinforce communication and creativity. The peak of this hierarchy – in line with Maslow’s (1970) notion of self actualisation is self-development. For this to occur, employees need to be allowed to discuss their progress and be given the opportunity to learn new skills and develop existing ones. When these factors come together,

Harter et al. (2003) argue that they create the type of environment in which employees became engaged and therefore more productive, hence a competitive advantage.

METHODOLOGY

The research is mainly qualitative in design to develop the level of understanding required for evaluating whether a variable is relevant or not to a given situation. Quantitative techniques are used for data presentation. It's equally a comparative study of Hotel A and Hotel B. The research used two procedures for senior managers and non-managerial employees. Convenience sampling was used for senior management and for the rest of the participants stratified random sampling was used to ensure a more representative sample. For both hotels the sample size was 78. The research used both primary and secondary sources of data, through semi- structured interviews, questioners, secondary analysis and review of relevant literature. Graphs and tables are used to present the data diagrammatically. Thematic

analysis was also employed by way of identifying a number of themes which adequately reflect their textual data, since the researcher was extremely familiar with the data. Data familiarization is key to thematic analysis since the researcher carries out the data collection by himself through conducting in-depth interviews and also transcribes the data by himself.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following Likert scales indicate the scores for both companies. The scale was developed from Vance's ten common themes of measuring employee engagement in any organisation. For every question employees were ticking in any of the five sections as provided for by the key. In order to show clear levels of engagement the negative strongly disagree and disagree were merged to show disengagement, neutral remained independent and finally agree and strongly represent engaged employees as shown in Table 1. The scores are for both companies:

Table 1: Likert scale for Hotel A

DETERMINANTS OF ENGAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. I am proud of my employer	5	10	3	5	6
2. I am satisfied with my employer	6	4	8	2	9
3. I am satisfied with my job	3	4	6	7	9
4. I have the opportunity to perform well	5	5	3	6	10
5. I am recognised and given positive feedback	8	7	3	7	4
6. I have personal support from my employer	6	6	5	5	7
7. I am prepared to exert effort beyond the minimum	10	7	3	3	6
8. I understand the link between my job and the mission	7	1	2	10	9
9. I protect the future growth with my employer	4	3	8	5	9
10. I have the intention to stay with my employer	12	3	5	3	6
TOTAL	61	49	51	53	80

KEY 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree

Table 2: Likert scale for Hotel B

DETERMINANTS OF ENGAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. I am proud of my employer	2	2	6	9	12
2. I am satisfied with my employer	3	1	5	12	10
3. I am satisfied with my job	3	2	7	8	11
4. I have the opportunity to perform well	1	2	5	9	14
5. I am recognised and given positive feedback	2	4	3	8	14
6. I have personal support from my employer	4	5	6	7	9
7. I am prepared to exert effort beyond the minimum	4	4	5	11	9
8. I understand the link between my job and the mission	3	2	7	14	5
9. I protects the future growth with my employer	1	2	5	8	13
10. I have the intention to stay with my employer	2	3	5	7	14
TOTAL	25	27	52	79	107

KEY 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree

Pride in the Employer

Figure 1 shows comparisons of employee engagement for both companies on the first question on the likert scale. Through interviews that were carried out and questionnaires that were distributed and probing questions asked unearthed the reasons for the employees' feelings.

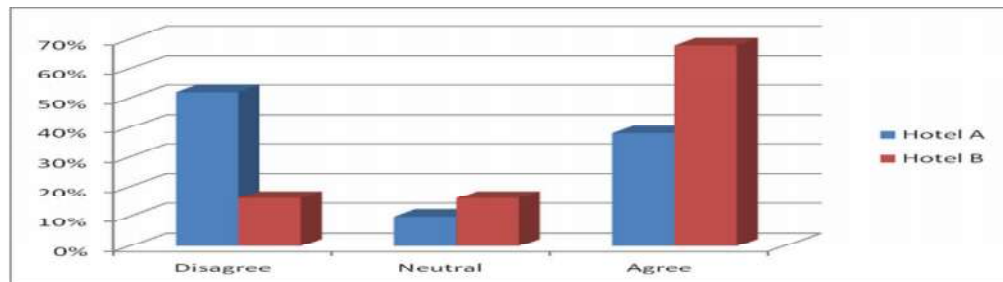


Figure 1: Pride levels for both hotels

As indicated in Figure 1., Hotel A has 52% of employees on the negative and the main reason for this is the retrenchment of workers that was being carried out. Currently, Hotel A is reducing its staff compliment and the employees are vulnerable to both voluntary and compulsory retrenchment. As shown 10% are neutral 38% proud of their employer. It can be concluded that hotel A employees are not proud of their employer a situation that can greatly compromise service and much needs to be done to convert the 52% into engagement. Hotel B seems to enjoy a competitive edge with 68% employees fully engaged and proud of their employer. It appears they enjoy job security. This has propelled hotel B to where it is today, but much can be done to ensure that the 16% disengaged employees are engaged. Fully engaged employees have pride in their employer. Hallberg, (2005.45) suggested that engaged employee who have pride in their employer can best be described through vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor is described as being fully charged with energy and resilient in one's work even during a regular 'dull' day when nothing particular happens. Dedication is being proud of one's work and convinced that what one performs is significant. Finally, absorption is the concept of, "being carried away by work, forgetting everything in one's surroundings, looking at your watch and finding that you have missed your coffee break without even noticing." Once employees behave as such service improves and good service will guarantee continuity of customers utilizing the facilities because what matters is good quality and excellent service. Once this happens a company gains a positive image hence

increased performance and customer satisfaction, a tool for competitive edge.

Satisfaction with the Employer

Hallberg (2005) suggested an employee who is satisfied with his or her employer is always pleasurable with a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Satisfaction with one's employer propels an employee to work hard for the achievement of organisational goals. Notably (34%) respondents from hotel A are not satisfied with their employer due to job insecurity and belittling from the senior management team, and on the other hand 28%, are neutral and only 40% of the respondents being satisfied by the employer. On the other hand hotel B has 71% employees very proud of their employer, which is evidence enough to show that hotel B employees are satisfied with their employer and always prepared to offer the best service, which is a fundamental tool for a sustainable competitive advantage. Wilson et al (2008) concluded that most companies teach their customer-contact employees need to be friendly and courteous to customers. However, customers have no obligation to return empathy or courtesy. Therefore, employees haven't the status as equal as the customers who have the privilege of 'the customer is always right'. In this situation, employees face real challenges because they cannot express their true feelings. Thus is employees are not satisfied with their employer they can even challenge the customer who is perceived to be always right, a situation that can compromise service. From this observation more can be done by hotel A to ensure effective employee engagement. Figure 2 shows the levels of employee engagement for both companies.

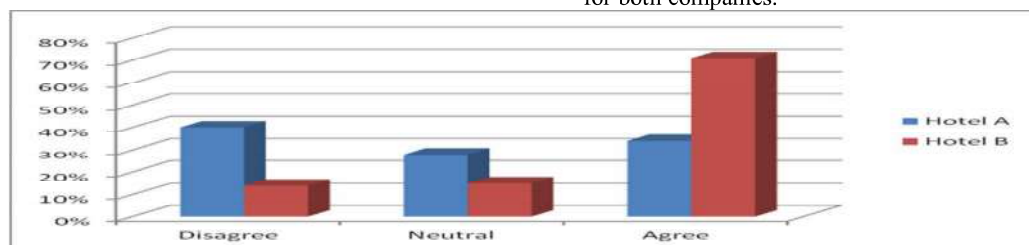


Figure 2: Satisfaction with the employer Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction is closely linked to that of engagement. Job satisfaction refers to the attitudes and feelings people have about their work.

Positive and favorable attitudes towards the job lead to engagement and therefore job satisfaction. Negative and unfavorable attitudes towards the job indicate job dissatisfaction (Armstrong 2009). It can

be noted that 24% respondents from hotel A indicated that they were not satisfied with their job a situation that affect their engagement levels and 55% respondents fully satisfied with their job. At hotel B 16% employees are highly dissatisfied with their job a lower figure compared to hotel A and 61% fully satisfied with their job a better position still compared to hotel A. Wilson et al., (2008) suggest that the service employees, who represent the organization in the customers' eyes, can have an impact on image and reputation of the company. When the service

employees provide the accurate service the customer's desires can be met, the company gains a positive reputation hence attaining the higher market share. This state may be difficult to achieve if employees are highly dissatisfied with their job and as such both organisations should ensure more has been done to ensure job satisfaction for them to achieve excellent service though hotel B is better placed. Likewise the following graph indicates the comparisons for the two companies.

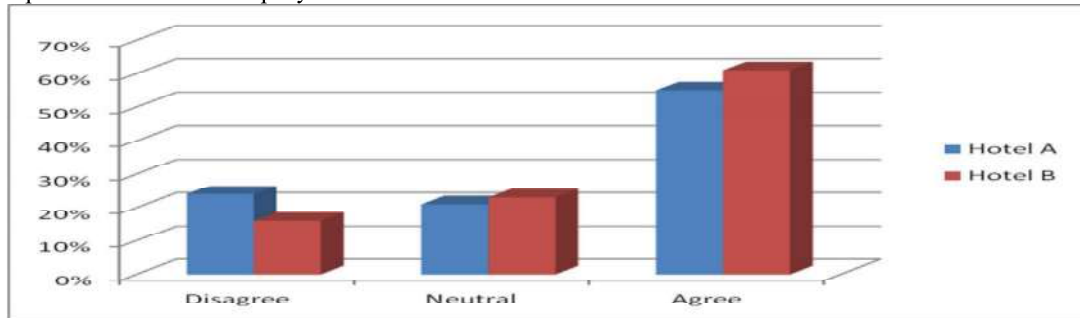


Figure 3: Job satisfaction

Opportunity to Perform Well

In any organisations employees aim for the opportunity to perform well. However, as indicated in the Likert scale above, Hotel A employees have a limited opportunity, as indicated by 34% respondents who showed that their chances are slim. They all concluded that most managers in various departments monitored them tightly and were not free to make independent decisions. Walton (1985) underscored the importance of commitment and believed that organizational performance would change if organizations moved away from control systems characterized by establishing order and maintaining tight controls to systems underpinned by commitment characterized by the employees endeavor to willingly go an extra mile, fully engaged by giving them broader responsibilities. Hotel A employees also maintained that managers were not willing to forgive mistakes, even if they are genuine mistakes which are in total contradiction with the views of Walton (1985) a commitment and engagement guru. Interestingly 55% highlighted that they were given a chance to perform without tight monitoring. However Walton (1985) was of the view that this privilege should be extended to all employees. Unlike hotel A, hotel B employees are accorded a great opportunity to perform well, this is supported by the fact that only 3 (10%) respondents were of the view that they were not given a favorable opportunity to perform but 74% respondents indicated that they had the opportunity to perform difficult tasks which explains why hotel B engagement levels are high compared to hotel B. They justified this through effective induction

programs, in the organisation. They also indicated that management allowed them take errors as a learning curve and employees were not punished for making mistakes as suggested by the Walton (1985) model.

Recognition and positive feedback

Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum (2005) mentioned that the art of giving feedback is an indispensable skill, particularly for managers who must regularly give feedback to employees. Almost 68% of employees at hotel B *agreed* that the hotel communicates regularly with them on all critical issues, and 21% *disagreed*. But the situation is different from hotel A, at which 38% percent of the employees *agreed* to this, and 52% of them *indicated that they were not recognised and given positive feedback*. This shows that hotel B pays more attention on the communication and feedback with its employees than hotel A and yet employee recognition and positive feedback are critical ingredients for effective employee engagement Hellriegel et al., (2005) argue that the art of giving feedback is an indispensable skill. Particularly for managers who must regularly give feedback to the employees. Often this takes the form of performance feedback given as evaluations and appraisals. When poorly done, such feedback can be threatening to the recipient and cause resentment as in the case of hotel A. In the service industry once employees are disgruntled they offload their frustration on customers and once this happens they never call again and it can affect the competitiveness of a firm. In this case for effective competitiveness recognition and positive feedback is very essential.

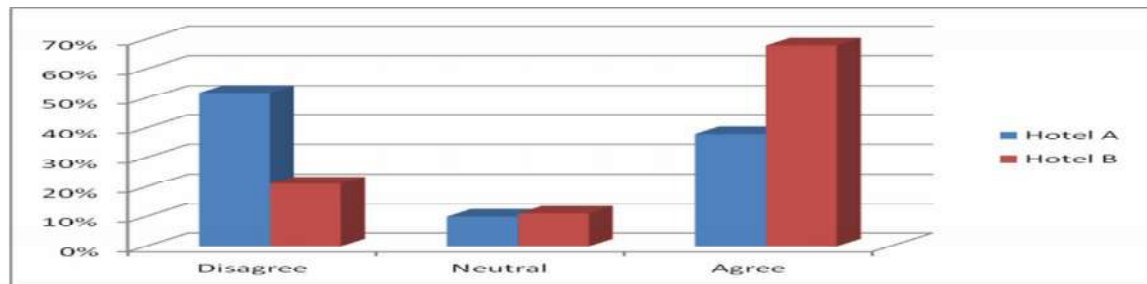


Figure 4: Indicating levels of Recognition and positive Feedback

Personal Support

Wilson *et al.* (2008) suggest that employees can feel frustrated without the necessary technology and equipment. Both organisations recognise the significance of offering employee support for effective task execution. Apparently it appears hotel B management support their employees more than hotel A, as evidenced by scoring 52% against A's 38% support endorsement by their respective employees. Therefore, necessary tools including effective technology and technological support and equipment provided in both hotels, such as internet, computers, phone system, customer information databases, room status system and so on help employees in their day to day activities. However hotel A employees emphasized more on induction and training as other areas they felt management should improve on in supporting them to improve on their basic skills of trade. Thus for effective employee engagement that sustain the competitiveness of the organisations customer-oriented internal support and systems, proper conditions for delivering quality service should exist. Grönroos (2000) puts forward that if the company requires their employees to take responsibility for customer but does not provide internal support systems aligned with their need, they will feel ambiguity, frustration and anger, and which is a situation obtaining at hotel A as 41% of the employees indicated that they were not supported effectively. Thus Wilson *et al.* (2008, p. 285) concludes by suggesting that, 'it is nearly impossible for employees to deliver quality service no matter how much they want to without supportive systems.'

Effort Beyond the Minimum

For success in any business employees have to exert effort beyond the minimum requirement, as evidenced by 59% hotel A employees who indicated that they were not willing to go that extra-mile. They cited the looming retrenchments, failure to recognition and poor remuneration, limited to NEC stipulations as the major reasons. This has none the less compromised service and may explain why hotel B is better placed with 58% respondents willing to exert effort beyond the minimum. Konrad (2006) suggests that disengaged employees often force or hurry through interactions with the customers,

provide inadequate or incomplete service, complain in front of the customers, and fail to put forth anything but the minimal effort. A situation like this disadvantage the company in relation to competitiveness, most interestingly they the customers will leave to competition. Employee disengagement can be the result of several different factors, however attention needs to be focused on what is often the main culprit; poor relationships between the front-line staff and the supervisors and managers a situation manifesting itself in hotel A. Hotel B employees indicated that they were happy with their employer and well motivated and felt that it was morally right for them to honor their organisation and as indicated below they are better placed in terms of employee engagement and competitiveness. If hotel A is to fully engage its employees a lot has to be done to maintain the levels of engagement high.

Link between Job and Mission

An organisation is aligned when all employees have a commonality of purpose, a shared vision, and an understanding of how their personal roles support the overall strategy. Interestingly both organisations understand the importance of linking the individual jobs to the overall mission of the organisation. Hotel A employees scored high as compared to hotel B but following with the same range with 66% and 61% respectively. Organisational alignment requires a holistic, coordinated effort to ensure that a number of key elements or building blocks are in place thus for effective employee engagement to take place employees should be able to link their job to the overall mission. Grönroos, (2000) suggests that including employees in the company's vision benefits both the company it serves and the employees themselves. To remain the effort and motivation of employees in sticking with the organization's objects, they need to share an understanding of the organization's vision. To some extent, employees will be motivated by their pay, reward and other benefits, but the best employees will focus on whether they are committed to the company's vision and its goals. More so communication becomes key in fostering such initiatives, information which hotel A employees complained was not being effectively done to them and hotel B employee better placed but

wishing the company to keep on improving. With a thorough understanding of this link employees will better understand their contribution and level of effort, a situation that will give the company a competitive edge. If the link is weak, then they may fail to provide excellent service as they may underestimate their effort thus affecting the level of competitiveness.

Future Growth with the Employer

Wilson et al. (2008) suggest that the company can attract and retain the best employees if the company takes care of their employees. They suppose that employees who feel they are treated fairly by their companies will treat their customer better, ultimately achieving greater customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. Only 48% of Hotel A employees suggested that they were willing to stay and had a bright future, 24% indicated that they were not recognised and were willing to leave as the first opportunity presence itself. Such employees lack motivation and commitment and thus compromise engagement levels. In other words, satisfied employees make for satisfied a customer which is a critical factor in determining excellent service in the hospitality industry that will ensure a sustainable competitive advantage. Wilson et al. (2008) also suppose that companies can assess the employee satisfaction and needs through using conduct periodic internal marketing research. At the same time, companies should treat their employees as internal customer and meet their needs hence enhancing the employees' loyalty and engagement. Once this is done employees can glow and shine in terms of service delivery. In contrast hotel B employees are 67% engaged as they communicated to, given full support and cherished a situation that hotel A has to improve if it's to fully engage its staff. They indicated that their future was fully bright unlike hotel A employees whose future appears to be bleak, as shown below.

Intention to Stay With Employer

One new approach to gain a competitive position to attract and retain the best human resources is to be the preferred employer in a particular industry or in a particular location Wilson et al., (2008.282). Indeed for employees to stay with their employer there is need for the employer to treat them as key stakeholders for the business. Indeed from hotel A employees 52% suggested that they were no longer comfortable with the organization a situation that is very disastrous for service delivery. Hotel B was better placed with 68% employees indicating that they had every intention to stay with their employer. Preferred employers are those organizations that outperform their competition in effectively attracting, motivating, and retaining talented employees as in the case of hotel B which has extensive training, career and advancement opportunities, excellent internal support, attractive incentive that benefit both employees and their organizations ultimately lead to sustained competitive advantage. And if the company fail to fulfill the promise to the customers and fail to live up to its employer brand promises, its employees will also leave a situation very much practical in hotel A. Engaged employees stay with their organisation through good and difficult times, but if you have employees suggesting that if voluntary retrenchment package was favorable they would volunteer, but since they knew that the amounts were suspect, they were looking for alternative jobs, it becomes an eye opener that they fed and the company has to do something. Comparatively hotel B employees are willing to stay with their employer, since their welfare is well catered for. They further indicated that they had an opportunity to grow within the company, and that they are happy with both their financial and non financial benefits. From these responses it is clear that the hotel B employees are more engaged to their company as compared to hotel A.

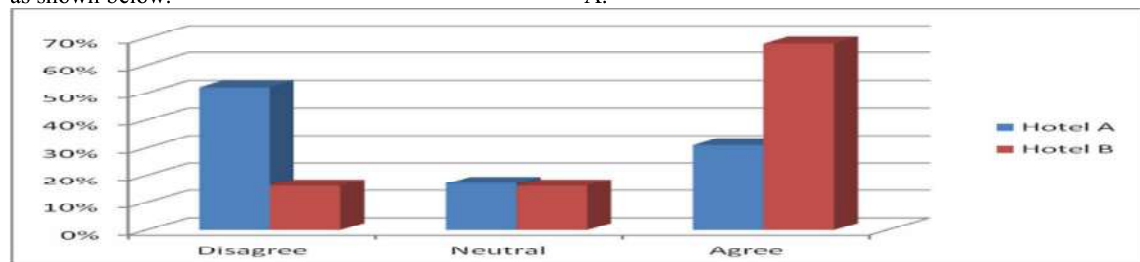


Figure 5: The employee's intention to stay with the organisation

Market Analysis

The information on the market analysis below was obtained through a secondary source. As indicated

the hotel B was on the lead with 43.7% market share, hotel C second with 41.7% and hotel A having 14.6%. This information proves that hotel B has a competitive edge over hotel A, and attributed this to its engaged workforce.

Table 3: Market Share Analysis

MARKET SHARE

Market share comparison October – 2011						
HOTEL	ROOMS MONTHLY	ROOMS SOLD	ROOM OCC %	AVE ROOM RATE	FAIR SHARE %	MARKET SHARE %
Hotel A (50 ROOMS)	1550	1155	75	53	13.19	14.6
Hotel B (172 ROOMS)	5160	3461	65	54	45.38	43.7
Hotel C (157 ROOMS)	4710	3307	70	56.91	41.42	41.7
TOTAL	11370	7923	70	54.63	100	100

Source: Hotel B October 2011 Business Review Notes

CONCLUSION

Employee engagement in the hospitality industry plays a critical role in determining the competitiveness of a company. As such successful organisations can be distinguished by unsuccessful organisation by virtue of looking at the levels of employee engagement. The research also highlighted the other determinants of competitive advantage in the two organisations, but equally indicating the significance of employee engagement, to strengthen these other factors. Conclusively the findings from both hotel A and hotel B demonstrate the differences in overall performance between the two organisations. There is strong evidence that highly engaged workgroups in hotel B outperform groups with lower employee engagement like hotel A. As such hotel A has a greater number of employees that are completely disengaged than hotel B which is better placed in employee engagement. Hotel B employees are strongly satisfied, and are very much willing to stay with their employer as compared to hotel A who are partially disengaged and as a result are willing to leave the organisation. As a result hotel B enjoys a competitive edge with 43.7% markets share against 17.3% market share of hotel A.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication - Constant and honest communication is an important tool for employee engagement. It helps employees to keep them energized, focused and productive. In both cases communication was highlighted as a major concern mainly at hotel A. On a number of questions communication was sighted as the reason why most non-managerial employees felt they were not given enough, which equally affected engagement levels. Thus for effective employee engagement to take place two-way communication is critical, so as to ensure that there is an effective conduit for open and honest input, from the hotel operating team to upper

management and ownership, and that management is responsive to this feedback.

Measure and Reward Strong Service Performers -

Most hotel A employees both managerial and non-managerial employees indicated strongly that they were not happy with the reward system in place. They felt that the company was not doing enough to recognise their effort, which affected engagement levels greatly. Thus the reward system for hotel A need to be aligned to motivate employee performance that is consistent with the firm’s strategy to, attract and return people with knowledge, skill and abilities required to realise the firm’s strategic goals and create supportive culture and structure. Rewards both financial and non financial can equally help to create a climate favorable to employee engagement, for hotel A. However hotel B management should constantly monitor the changes in the organisation and keep on improving on the rewards structure.

Empowerment - Empowerment is basically giving employees autonomy and discretion over the way work is organized. In both cases giving employees broader responsibilities as a result of employee empowerment will make work more meaningful and satisfying hence creating determination and the will to accomplish those goals which is the fundamental basis of the concept of engagement specifically for hotel A it is important to reward that engagement with greater empowerment, particularly in the area of responsibility for their non-managerial employees. For hotel B the HR team should ensure that all managers are empowered since some also highlighted that they are not fully empowered. The companies should be certain to provide clear parameters for what team members are empowered to do to provide for a positive outcome, and encourage them to use the resources available for them to do so. If this is done employees will be greatly engagement.

Stamp out Negativity- At hotel A employees complained about being belittled and felt that they were not appreciated, they indicated that management was always negative, so was other respondents from hotel B. In real terms trust is said to be the emotional

capital of leadership. For success in employee engagement in both cases it must be established early on and reinforced regularly and consistently. Thus both companies should continually look for positive events and achievements to recognize and celebrate. As such for the hospitality industry which operates 24-7-365 the focus should always be forward looking to tomorrow, next week, next month or even next year. For this reason, it is important for both companies to regularly make time to pause and celebrate intermediate achievements, whether team or individual, hence creating an atmosphere of positivity, which will automatically increase the level of employee engagement. In other words, the more positives the companies will be the more they will make time to recognize and celebrate, and equally the less time there is to focus on the negative.

Induction and Training – Hotel B employees indicated that they were interested in pursuing tertiary education in order for them to enhance their skills and increase their knowledge base. As a result the organisation if it's to maintain high levels of employee engagement should encourage its staff to further their education. Self development is a critical component as it calls for personal fulfillment and success which will increase levels of engagement. As such HR should support financially. The same is equally critical for hotel A employees. Proper induction and effective training both on the job and off the job training is necessary. The net effect of such training is it helps employees to increase their basic skills of trade a critical component towards employee engagement and competitive advantage.

Explaining the Vision and Mission of the Organisation- It is important to note that for employees, lack of understanding of how the organization is progressing is intolerably frustrating. Thus, for effective engagement in both organisations management should take time to communicate the vision and mission statement of the organisation. Thus employees become engaged when the vision, mission and goals of the organization are clear and expected behavior is precise. For both companies making time on a regular basis to ensure understanding and alignment of organizational goals, and any organizational changes, is helpful and can be appreciated by the operating team who often feel disconnected from higher-level and longer-term goals.

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