Journal of Tourism & Hospitality

Editorial   **Open Access**

Human Resource Management in Tourism and Hospitality Industry-Using Situational Interview Based on Person-Organization Fit

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Tourism and hospitality employment has vastly accounted for over 219 million jobs worldwide in 2009 to over 275 million jobs in 2019 [1]. MacDonald and Sirianni [2] found that the labor structure in a servicing industry mainly consists of two kinds of service jobs: large numbers of low-skill, low-pay jobs and a smaller number of high-skill, high-income jobs, with few jobs being in the middle of these two extremes. Those being labeled as "McJob" are relatively low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity and no-future. It conflicts with rhetoric of most business leader that human resources are the most important assets in a firm. Such a situation leads labor analysts to ask what kinds of jobs are being produced and who is willing to fill them.

In fact there are gaps between employee and employer. According to International Labor Organization, senior executives in the tourism and hospitality industry generally regard that the turnover in the industry is caused by the transient workforce, namely students, young mothers and young people, as well as the general difficulty in retaining staff. Employees, on the other hand, frequently consider low pay as the main reason for changing employment, though a lack of career structure and benefits would appear the most important concern. Hence, the human resource management in tourism and hospitality industry seems to be underdeveloped.

In order to close the above gap, there would be a potential research trend on employment fitness in the tourism and hospitality industry. It would lay on the person-organization (P-O) fit, which is broadly defined as the compatibility between individuals and organizations [3]. For matching purposes, this P-O fit dictates a need to select persons whose personalities are consistent with (or complementary to) the distinctive features of the employer's culture or personality. Research suggests that P-O fit can be used to allocate employee based on the degree to which they demonstrate congruence with organizational values [4-6], support organizational goals [7], match the organizational climate [8,9] and possess preferences or needs that are fulfilled by the work environment [10].

The next level of fit, person-group (P-G) fit, is important to allocate employee into situations where success is often determined by the degree of match between an individual and his/her work group or organizational subunit (e.g. department, geographic division) [3]. Werbel and Gilliland [11] argued that P-G fit makes the new joiner integrate with his/her immediate supervisor and coworkers. It is because the performance of other group members whose job performance is partially dependent on the newcomer's ability to effectively interact with them [12]. The need to screen employee based on P-G fit is suggested by growing use of project teams [13] and by evidence that new joiners often perform on teams responsible for tasks such as system development, management of projects, and customer service [14].

The notion that employers seek to allocate employees based on their "fit" to job and organizational characteristics has been recognized in the management literature for more than 30 years [15]. With the dynamic nature of tourism and hospitality industry, the perspective of using fit as a screening criterion for employee arrangement would be more preferable. It is because a company needs to wisely allocate tasks to employee in order to be competitive. This screening approach suggests that organizations try to fit persons whose knowledge, skills, abilities, interests, values, etc. into certain teams or tasks to supplement the values or organizational leaders (i.e. supplementary fit) or make the environment "whole" by filling an existing void (i.e. complementary fit) [16].

For the evaluation of P-O and P-G fits, we would rely on situational interview (SI) which has shown practical and psychometric support for the usefulness of this behavioral interview method [17]. Past studies of structured interviews have shown great promise for increased validity over unstructured interviews [18,19] with situational interviews (SIs) in particular having criterion-related validity [20,21]. Beside SI also demonstrated free from the influence of race, gender, and age bias, and is resistant to gender based effects on reliability and accuracy [22]. These features strongly support the confidence in the quality and appropriateness of SI based staff-allocation decisions. Moreover, studies cited by Maurer [23] proved that the SI to be a highly valid predictor of performance in a broad array of entry level managerial and professional jobs in a variety of employment settings. There are some studies investigating whether situational interview (SI) from Latham et al. [17] can be used to examine the extent to which a candidate fits to an organization, its group as well as the job within the organization [24].

The SI is among the few interview techniques grounded in theory, namely, goal setting theory. Goal setting theory is situationally specific and cognitively based. Goals and intentions are said to be the immediate precursors and regulator of much, if not most, human behavior [25]. The SI presents job-related situations to applicants and asks them what they would do if they were in that situation. The SI is designed to measure intentions by presenting interviewees with a dilemma that requires them to state what they believe the interviewer wants to hear them say. A scoring guide is developed to assist interviewers in evaluating the interviewee responses. The interviewers are trained to ask each interviewee the same questions using the same tone of voice [26].

Criterion-related validities can be expected to differ for situational and past behavior interview questions. Several authors [27,28] have suggested that situational questions are likely to have higher validity

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than past behavior questions due to higher inter-rater reliability. With situational questions, they argue, all interviewees respond to the same situations, without the need for further probing, leading to less variation in interviewees' responses and thus less difficulty for interviewers to arrive at consistent judgments about interviewees' answers. Two other reasons for expecting situational questions to have higher validity than past behavioral questions have also been suggested: (1) that interviewees with no prior experience may be unable to respond to some past behavior questions [28]; and (2) that past behavior questions may be more susceptible to social desirability responses, as interviewees reveal past incidents that place them in the most favorable light [27].

With regard to person-organization (P-O) fit, the goal is to determine the elements of individual and corporate culture that need to be examined in a SI. The P-O analysis might use [29] O'Reilly, et al. eight elements of organizational culture as a basis for designing SI questions to examine the degree to which the individual's innovation (e.g. willingness to take risk and to experiment), attention to detail (e.g. concern with results and achievement), aggressiveness (concern with competition and pursuit of opportunities), supportiveness (willingness to praise and support others and to share information), emphasis on monetary/professional rewards, team orientation (e.g. desire to work in a team and promote collaboration), or decisiveness (respect for decisiveness, predictability, and low decision conflict) matches the organization.

Yet studies also show that employers continue to be challenged in their efforts to find people in high value jobs that possess leadership competency (e.g. leadership and interpersonal skills) [30]. Together, these factors call attention to P-G fit as an allocation criterion because a high level of individual fit with the group has been found to be related to individual performance in teams [10] and a key factor in creating effective group behaviors, attitudes, goals, values, and personality [31,32]. These findings are consistent with the similarity-attraction hypothesis [33] and its promise that agreement in group attitudes will enhance team member attraction and thus improve group-socialization, cohesion, and affiliation. Hence, the senior executives are going to identify goals typically held by teams/groups and to develop scenarios that test the employee's understanding and acceptance of such goals in situations where critical conflicts between individual and group might arise.

Past researches showed that interviewers are less likely to be affected by gender or racial bias for those African-American applicants in making fit assessments by Hispanic, White or mixed panels. The SI interviewers exhibited significantly less race similarity in ratings of White and Hispanic applicants [17,34]. However, it is interesting to test the framework in the tourism and hospitality industry where people may be of different value and culture.

For the management of P-O and P-G fits which are essential for job assignment and job training, it is nice to record these data in the e-portfolio within the human resources department. Besides skill sets, the P-O and P-G fits would be another perspectives in the allocation of employees to certain tasks/groups. Furthermore, the corresponding fit data need to be update in a regular period and be parts of the evaluation for an employee. Nowadays, a multi-national hotel chain has usually various ad-hoc events relying on talents of different expertise fitting together. With the enhanced employee portfolio, the human resources executives would manage the employees in a better and dynamic way.

With the e-portfolio related to employee's organizational fit and group fit, it would enhance the job allocation and a better management of employee. This research trend will establish a theoretical examination on SI for P-O and P-G fits and carry much practical value on future HR practice in the tourism and hospitality industry.

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