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An Analysis of Challenges Faced by the Hospitality Industry in Implementation of Employee Productivity Management System

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Abstract:

In the recent years, the word productivity has gained popularity in the business world. However, productivity management is a big challenge to organizations especially when the product is in the form of a service. Hospitality industry being a part of service industry faces a similar problem. This study aims at analyzing the challenges faced by the hospitality industry in implementation of employee productivity management system and to identify the methods to overcome them for effective implementation of the Productivity Management System in hotels. In an effort to do so, a survey in the form of a questionnaire and interviews was conducted from a sample comprising of 365 employees representing various hotels from five star to serviced apartments was selected on random basis to conduct the study. The responses received were analyzed using appropriate analytical tools. The findings of his research states that the major challenges in implementation of the PMS is the lack on parameters like "Just & Fair management of productivity system", "Involvement of employees in designing / modifying the system", "Efficiency in measurement of employee productivity" and "Productivity measures are linked to salary". Measurement of productivity in Hotels is a challenging task and the major reason being that the industry is characterized by an "Intangible Product" i.e. "Service"

Key words: "Hospitality Industry", "Hotels", "Employee Productivity", "Service Industry", "Productivity Management System"

1. Introduction

In the recent years, the word productivity has gained popularity in the business world. The problem of scarcity has a deep rooted impact on the economies of each and every business unit. Almost all organizations, either reactively or proactively, have become serious on their productivity. Moreover, in today's world of cut-throat competition, every organization is striving hard to have an upper edge over their competitors. The organizations have realized that enhancing their productivity goes a long way in success of their business operations and thus productivity has become a matter of great concern amongst them.

"Productivity is an average measure of the efficiency of production. Productivity is a ratio of production output to what is required to produce it (inputs of capital, labor, land, energy, materials, etc.). The measure of productivity is defined as a total output per one unit of a total input." (Source – Wikipedia)

Although there are various inputs that needs to be studied under productivity management, this study concentrates on labor as a parameter of measurement of productivity. Thus we are indeed talking of labor productivity or employee productivity or workforce productivity.

Employee Productivity Management is series of interlinked activities or tasks right from formulating a productivity management model to suit the organization to taking measures in enhancing the employee productivity. This study aims at analyzing the productivity management system adopted by the hotels and the challenges faced by them is implementation of the same.

Although it looks simple from the face of it, productivity management is a big challenge to organizations especially when the product is in the form of a service. The characteristics of service industry make productivity management in such industries more difficult and challenging. Hospitality industry being a part of such a service industry faces a similar problem. Problems pertaining to measurement of productivity, lack of awareness about the importance of tracking employee productivity, lack of knowledge and initiative of management in implementation of the Employee Productivity Management System are a few challenges that are faced by the hospitality industry in implementing the PMS.

This study aims at analyzing the challenges faced by the hospitality industry in implementation of employee productivity management system and to identify the methods to overcome them for effective implementation of the PMS in hotels.

2. Literature Review

- Rajashree Gujarathi, (2013) aimed at analyzing the Productivity Management System adopted and implemented by the hospitality industry with an objective to identify the challenges in measuring productivity in the Hotels and to identify various methods adopted by them to measure the employee productivity and concluded that, the major reasons contributing to the ineffectiveness of the system are lack of management will, lack of common parameters of productivity measurement and intangible nature of the product of the industry i.e. “Service”.
- Juan Gabrie, (2010) used time-series techniques to estimate the long-run relationship between real wages and labour productivity in the Mexican tourism. The finding shows that the average labour productivity depends positively on real wage, and are weakly exogenous and causes labour productivity. Moreover, the impulse-response function shows that a positive shock in real wages produces a small negative effect in productivity for two years followed by a large positive one.
- Christine A. Witt, (2010) discussed problems of measuring productivity, together with specific reasons for low productivity in the hotel sector. It is suggested that increased usage of operations management techniques by hotel management is likely to result in improved productivity, and various examples are presented of situations in which these techniques can be successfully employed.
- Peter Jones, (2009) examining the level of productivity in the housekeeping departments in a chain of 45 hotels. The paper reviews the concept of productivity and the issues relating to its measurement, before reviewing previous studies of productivity in the hotel sector. A number of factors are identified that appear to affect productivity performance. The paper concludes that there is no significant difference in productivity levels according to the size, location, demand variability or age of the hotel, thereby refuting evidence from some prior studies.
- Osman M. Karatepe, (2008) examined the effects of negative affectivity (NA) and positive affectivity (PA) on work–family conflict and family–work conflict and the effects of both directions of conflict on marital satisfaction and turnover intentions. The findings of the study indicated that family–work conflict has a detrimental impact on marital satisfaction. However, this study provided no empirical support for the relationship between work–family conflict and marital satisfaction.
- Ching-Fu Chen, (2007) analyzed the cost efficiency of Taiwan's international tourist hotel sector. A stochastic cost frontier function with three inputs (i.e. labor, food and beverage, and materials) and one output as the total revenue is specified and used to estimate hotel efficiency. The results reveal that hotels in Taiwan are on average operating at 80% efficiency.
- Gunjan M. Sanjeev, (2007) provided exploratory insights on measurement of efficiency of the hotel and restaurant companies operating in India. The study also explores whether there is a relationship between the efficiency and size of the hotel and restaurant companies. The study identifies the top performers in this sector. Also, managers get important insights for their strategic and operational decisions to improve performance.
- Carlos Pestana Barros, (2005) discusses, by means of data envelopment analysis, the efficiency of individual hotels belonging to the Portuguese state-owned chain, Pousadas de Portugal, which is managed by the enterprise, ENATUR. By identifying the efficient hotels in a sample, the slacks in inputs and outputs of the inefficient hotels and the peer group of efficient hotels, the data envelopment analysis stands out as one of the most promising techniques to aid the improvement of efficiency. Managerial implications arising from this study are also considered.
- Hasan Kilic, (2005) report on an empirical research study which investigated the factors influencing productivity in hotels in Northern Cyprus. According to the research findings staff recruitment, staff training, meeting guest expectations, and service quality are the main productivity factors in hotels; while crises, technology, marketing, and forecasting are ranked relatively low.
- Robert Johnston (2005) provides a structure for analyzing productivity in service organizations by distinguishing between operational and customer productivity. The authors also identified some of the problems in measuring productivity, especially in a service setting, and then use a few examples to illustrate the sometimes counterintuitive relationship between operational and customer productivity.
- Marianna Sigala, (2005) aimed to illustrate the value of stepwise data envelopment analysis (DEA) for measuring and benchmarking productivity. The issues and problems regarding productivity measurement as well as the advantages of using DEA in productivity measurement are analyzed. Six inputs and three outputs are identified as the factors affecting rooms division efficiency in three star hotels.
- Bo A. Hu, (2004) proposed Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) as an effective tool to measure labor productivity of hotels. Using the data collected from the hotels in the State of California, the study applies DEA to calculate the labor productivity score of each sampled hotel. The internal and external determinants of labor productivity are examined. Implications of the study's results are also discussed.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To identify challenges faced by the hospitality industry in implementation of employee productivity management system
- To identify the challenges in measuring productivity in the Hotel Industry.
- To identify methods to overcome the challenges for effective implementation of employee productivity management system in hotels
- To suggest suitable methods of measurement of employee productivity in hotels.

4. Limitations of the Study

- This study is purely based on the information given by the employees and management of sample hotels.
- The study is conducted in the current scenario and the opinions, perception and expectations of the respondents may differ with time.
- The study does not differentiate respondents on basis of their demographic factors which may have an influence of their perception thereby identifying scope for further research.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Collection of Data

The data required for the research was collected using the following techniques:

5.2. Personal Interviews

The researcher conducted personal interviews with employees and Human Resource managers of reputed hotel brands to explore the productivity management system followed in their organizations.

5.3. Questionnaire

A questionnaire bearing straight forward and relevant questions was drafted and handed over to the sample to obtain their responses.

5.4. Sampling Techniques

The population being “employees of hotels” is more or less homogeneous in nature since the characteristics and service conditions of the industry are almost similar in nature throughout the population. With due consideration to this fact, a sample comprising of 365 employees representing various hotels from five star to serviced apartments was selected on random basis to conduct the study. The said sample was collected from Pune, Hyderabad & Bangalore cities due to the similarity of the nature of hotel industry in these cities.

Apart from the above mentioned tools the relevant secondary data for the research was collected from journals, books & internet.

6. Results & Discussion

Labor is the costliest and most critical variable expense in the hospitality business. The most commonly used parameter to calculate the return on labour investment is evaluation of the “Labour Productivity” of the organization. It is imperative that hospitality managers learn to design and effectively implement the employee productivity management system that suits the best to their hotel. However, there are a few challenges faced by hotels for designing and implementation of the Productivity Management System. This paper attempts to analyze these challenges for better implementation of the system and with a view to identify methods to overcome these challenges.

6.1. Challenges faced by the hospitality industry in implementation of employee productivity management system

6.1.1. Management Initiative

Management initiative plays an important role in the effective implementation of the Employee Productivity Management System. Lack of which, is one of the biggest challenge in developing and implementing the PMS efficiently. The management initiative on PMS can be analyzed on the following parameters.

- Keenness on measuring productivity of employees.
- Just & Fair management of productivity system.
- Keenness on improving productivity.
- Keenness on provision of employee friendly practices.

6.1.2. Transparency

The effectiveness of the PMS and its implementation depend upon how transparent is the system. The management, supervisors and the general employee should be aware of the system and its implementation and the absence of which, may become a challenge in the effectiveness of the system. The parameters of transparency of the system can be as listed below:

- Awareness of employees about the productivity measurement system.
- Discussions of productivity results with employees.
- Involvement of employees in designing / modifying the system.

6.1.3. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the system can be analyzed on the following parameters and any flaws in the same may emerge as a challenge in the implementation of the system

- Efficiency in measurement of employee productivity.
- Efficiency in implementation of measures to improve productivity.
- Continuous follow up on the levels of productivity.

6.1.4. Utility

The effective implementation of the PMS lies in the effective utilization of the same for improving organizational efficiency. The findings of the PMS can be utilized in the following way.

- Productivity measures are linked to salary.
- Recognition of highly productive employees
- Identifying measures to improve productivity.

6.2. Challenges In Measuring Employee Productivity In Hospitality Industry

Hospitality industry is a part of service industry and is characterized by certain features that create challenges in designing and implementation of employee productivity management system. These features or characteristics needs to be studied in detail for the effective development of a productivity management system. These features are briefly discussed below:

6.2.1. Intangible Product (Characteristics of Service Industry)

While the term productivity is most often associated with the goods-producing-industries, it is critically important to monitor and manage this aspect of performance in the hospitality sector as well. Productivity is a ratio between input and output at a given quality level. The inputs in the hospitality industry may be in the form of man, money material & machine. All these components can be quantified or measured but this is just half done because the second aspect in productivity management is the output or the product itself and their lies the major challenge for the hospitality industry because its product is intangible in nature which cannot be monitored or easily measured. The product of this industry is service and its measurement is hidden in the perception of its end users that is the customers which in the hotel language are termed as “Guests” Thus intangibility of the product of the hospitality industry is the biggest hurdle in the productivity management process in this industry. Service as an output product cannot be quantified or mathematically measured and thus as per the above mentioned formula of productivity measurement, the ratio of input and output cannot be easily established. The only way to make measurement of productivity in the hospitality industry possible is to make its output measurable and this is the major challenge in front of the industry.

6.2.2. Lack of Knowledge about Productivity Management

The management of hotel industry basically posses expertise in the technical area of hotel operations. They are the masters in the field of hospitality. However, they lack the scientific and technical knowledge required for implementation of productivity management system in their hotel. Moreover, due the hectic and busy schedule of the managers, they are discouraged to acquire any professional training in the area of productivity management. Even if a person who posses the required knowledge is hired, due to his varied duties he is not able to devote sufficient attention towards the said issue.

6.2.3. Lack of common parameters of measuring productivity

As mentioned earlier, measurement of productivity in the hospitality industry is a challenging task. However, experts have suggested a few parameters on which the employee productivity can be measured in hotels. These parameters differ from each other and different parameters have to be used for measurement of productivity in different operational areas of hotels depending upon its suitability. Thus to measure the productivity of the entire hotel a combination of all the parameters have to be used thereby making the process more complex. Thus lack of common parameters of measurement of productivity is a big challenge for the hotel managers.

6.2.4. Lack of scientific approach towards labour management

Hotel managers being originated from the operations, tend to be more inclined towards operational issues. Thus labor management is a lower priority to these operational driven managers. Moreover, their limited knowledge and scientific approach towards labor management becomes a biggest hurdle in productivity management.

6.2.5. Lack of management initiative

Although productivity management is an important management task, hotel managers are not very keen on the same. As discussed earlier, due to the various challenges in implementing the same, managers tend to tackle the issue halfheartedly. Thus lack of management initiative is another challenge of the hospitality industry with regards to productivity management.

6.2.6. Difficulties in measuring customer satisfaction

The most suitable parameter to measure employee productivity in the hospitality industry revolves around the output of satisfied customers. Thus before calculating the productivity, one has to measure the satisfaction level of the hotel customers. This, itself is

a very complex task since every customer has a different perception of being satisfied and measuring the comparative satisfaction level of all the customers is a very difficult task thereby creating a challenge in productivity management.

6.2.7. Diverse operations

The operations of the hospitality industry are diverse in nature. Thus every department is operationally different from each other. Since the nature of work, skill sets required, manpower requirement is different for every department, one cannot have uniform parameters of measuring employee productivity thereby making productivity management in hotels more difficult.

6.3. Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels

In an effort to track the productivity of its employees, hotels have adopted various methods of measuring the employee productivity. However, the suitability and effectiveness of these methods needs to be tested. The following are the widely used methods to measure employee productivity by hotels.

6.3.1. Basis of Revenue generation

- Total revenue generated per employee.
- Total food revenue generated per Food production staff.
- Total food & beverage revenue generated per Food & Beverage service staff.
- Total room revenue generated per Front Office / Sales & Mktg. staff.

6.3.2. Basis of Time frame

- Average number of covers served per worked hours. (Food Production & F & B Service staff)
- Average number of check-ins / check-outs handled per worked hours (Front office staff)
- Average number of rooms serviced per worked hours (Housekeeping staff)

6.3.3. Basis of guest satisfaction

- Average number of guest satisfaction points generated per department.
- Number of guest praises / positive feedbacks received per department / person.
- Number of guest complaints / negative feedbacks received per department / person.

6.3.4. Basis of repeat business

- Percentage of repeat guests generated.

7. Findings

7.1. Frequency Analysis

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Bangalore	122	33.4	33.4
	Pune	123	33.7	33.7
	Hyderabad	120	32.9	32.9
	Total	365	100.0	100.0

Table 1: Sample Respondents

- **Interpretation**

The sample respondents cover uniform representation from Bangalore, Pune & Hyderabad cities and all the responses received have been tested for its validity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Associate	206	56.4	56.4	56.4
	Management	159	43.6	43.6	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Level of respondents

- **Interpretation**

Out of the total responses received, 56.4% belong to the 'Associate category' & 43.6 % belong to 'Management' category and the responses received have been tested for its validity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	217	59.5	59.5	59.5
	No	148	40.5	40.5	100.0
	Total	365	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Whether measuring employee productivity in Hotels is a difficult task?

- Interpretation**

59.5% respondents feel that measuring employee productivity in hotel industry is a difficult task where as 40.5% do not feel so.

7.2. Mean Analysis

Report				
Mean				
	Location of respondents			
	Bangalore	Pune	Hyderabad	Total
Rating of Productivity Management System				
Keeness on measuring productivity of employees.- Rating	4.51	5.70	4.52	4.91
Just & Fair management of productivity system.-Rating	4.73	5.36	4.52	4.87
Keeness on improving productivity.- Rating	4.68	5.51	4.88	5.03
Keeness on provision of employee friendly practices.-Rating	4.52	5.62	5.24	5.13
Awareness of employees about the productivity measurement system.- Rating	4.20	5.28	4.51	4.67
Discussions of productivity results with employees. -Rating	4.35	5.19	4.87	4.80
Involvement of employees in designing / modifying the system. – Rating	4.15	4.97	4.69	4.60
Efficiency in measurement of employee productivity. - Rating	4.40	5.11	4.48	4.67
Efficiency in implementation of measures to improve productivity. - Rating	4.51	5.24	4.51	4.76
Continuous follow up on the levels of productivity. - Rating	4.53	5.12	4.61	4.76
Productivity measures are linked to salary. – Rating	3.82	4.91	4.16	4.30
Recognition of highly productive employees. – Rating	5.11	5.25	4.83	5.07
Identifying measures to improve productivity. - Rating	5.07	5.21	4.88	5.05
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels				
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Total revenue generated per employee.	4.24	5.28	4.25	4.59
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Total food revenue generated per Food production staff.-Rating	4.47	5.00	4.16	4.55
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Total food & beverage revenue generated per Food & Beverage service staff.-Rating	4.59	5.09	4.41	4.70
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Total room revenue generated per Front Office / Sales & Mktg. staff.-Rating	4.53	4.93	4.55	4.67
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Average number of covers served per worked hours. (Food Production & F & B Service staff)-Rating	4.92	5.27	4.11	4.77
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Average number of check-ins / check-outs handled per worked hours (Front office staff)-Rating	5.18	5.32	4.50	5.00
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Average number of rooms serviced per worked hours (Housekeeping staff) –Rating	5.11	5.03	4.36	4.84
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Average number of guest satisfaction points generated per department.-Rating	5.40	5.63	5.54	5.53
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Number of guest praises / positive feedbacks received per department / person.-Rating	5.65	5.64	5.78	5.69

Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Number of guest complaints / negative feedbacks received per department / person.-Rating	5.30	5.19	5.09	5.19
Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in Hotels - Percentage of repeat guests generated. –Rating	5.48	5.75	5.59	5.61

Table 4: PMS & Methods adopted to measure employee productivity

- **Interpretation**

7.3. Productivity Management System

- **Management Initiative**

Based on the satisfaction / level of agreement within this category, “Just & Fair management of productivity system.- Rating” has the lowest total mean of 4.87 on a 7 point rating scale thereby emerging as the biggest challenge for implementation of PMS on the parameter of Management initiative.

- **Transparency**

Based on the satisfaction / level of agreement within this category, “Involvement of employees in designing / modifying the system” has the lowest total mean of 4.60 on a 7 point rating scale thereby emerging as the biggest challenge for implementation of PMS on the parameter of transparency.

- **Effectively**

Based on the satisfaction / level of agreement within this category, “Efficiency in measurement of employee productivity” has the lowest total mean of 4.67 on a 7 point rating scale thereby emerging as the biggest challenge for implementation of PMS on the parameter of effectively.

- **Utility**

Based on the satisfaction / level of agreement within this category, “Productivity measures are linked to salary” has the lowest total mean of 4.30 on a 7 point rating scale thereby emerging as the biggest challenge for implementation of PMS on the parameter of utility.

7.4. Methodology adopted to measure employee productivity in hotels

- **Basis of revenue generation**

Based on the suitability in measuring employee productivity within this category, method pertaining to “Total food & beverage revenue generated per Food & Beverage service staff” has the highest total mean of 4.7 on a 7 point rating scale.

- **Basis of time frame**

Based on the suitability in measuring employee productivity within this category, method pertaining to “Average number of check-ins / check-outs handled per worked hours (Front office staff)” has the highest total mean of 5 on a 7 point rating scale.

- **Basis of guest satisfaction**

Based on the suitability in measuring employee productivity within this category, method pertaining to “Number of guest praises / positive feedbacks received per department / person” has the highest total mean of 5.69 on a 7 point rating scale.

- **Basis of repeat business**

Based on the suitability in measuring employee productivity within this category, method pertaining to “Percentage of repeat guests generated” has the highest total mean of 5.61 on a 7 point rating scale.

Report	Respondents location			
	Bangalore	Pune	Hyderabad	Total
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Intangible Product (Characteristics of Service Industry)	4.62	5.51	5.06	5.07
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Lack of Knowledge about Productivity Management.	4.43	5.15	4.47	4.69
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Lack of common parameters of measuring productivity.	4.83	5.04	4.59	4.82
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Lack of scientific approach towards labour management.	4.62	5.16	3.92	4.58
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Lack of management initiative.	4.38	5.25	3.88	4.52
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Difficulties in measuring customer satisfaction.	4.72	4.95	3.86	4.52
Possible reasons for making measurement of productivity difficult in hotels: Diverse operations.	4.79	5.05	4.37	4.75

Table 5: Analysis of rating challenges in measuring employee productivity in hospitality industry

- **Interpretation**

Based on the importance in making measurement of productivity a difficult task in hotels, the factor pertaining to “Intangible Product (Characteristics of Service Industry)” has the highest total mean of 5.07 on a 7 point rating scale. Thus it becomes a major challenge in measuring employee productivity in hospitality industry.

8. Conclusion

The findings of the research can be concluded as under:

- The hotel industry is concerned about the issue related to employee productivity and most of the hotels have the Productivity Management System in place, however, its implementation is not very effective.
- The major challenges in implementation of the PMS is the lack on parameters like “Just & Fair management of productivity system”, “Involvement of employees in designing / modifying the system”, “Efficiency in measurement of employee productivity” and “Productivity measures are linked to salary”
- Measurement of productivity in Hotels is a challenging task and the major reason being that the industry is characterized by an “Intangible Product” i.e. “Service” and moreover the management of hotels lacks knowledge about Productivity Management.
- There are several identified methods of measuring employee productivity based on “Revenue generation”, “Time frame” & “Guest Satisfaction”. However, the most suitable one is on the basis of “Guest satisfaction” and the same is used by most of the hotels.
- The utility of the Productivity Management System is limited to identification of shortfalls and the same is not linked to the remuneration of the employees.
- Employee productivity is measured on a collective basis and methods of measuring individual employee productivity are not in place.
- The industry lacks common parameters of productivity measurement thus the every hotel has its own model for the same therefore comparison between two hotels becomes difficult.

9. Suggestions & Recommendations

Based on the responses received by the employees of the hotel industry on the issues related to challenges faced by hotels in implementation of Productivity Management System, the following suggestions & recommendations can be made:

- The management of hotels should be keener on the implementation of the “Productivity Management System” by acquiring the necessary knowledge on the same and should hire experts to develop and implement the system for better results.
- Proper parameters to be selected for measurement of productivity so as to get accurate results.
- The employees should be involved in the entire process to strengthen the system and make it more effective.
- Avenues for measuring individual employee productivity should be explored for identification of less productive employees so as to take relevant measures to train and develop them for enhancing their productivity.
- As a part of effective implementation of the system, the management should link remuneration of the employees to their productivity. Thus it will act as a great motivation to the employees to enhance their productivity.

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