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Business Strategic Analysis among Hotels in Malaysia

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the differences of integrated business strategies used at different hotel star ratings. Quantitative research design was conducted to collect data for this study. A total of 222 hotels registered with Tourism Malaysia participated in this study. The results show that hotels in Malaysia use different business strategies at different hotel star ratings. The objectives of the study fills the gap about different hotel star ratings using different strategies, although previous studies have suggested that a universal theory of strategies was used. This study has suggested that hotels should use contingency theory. Finally, theoretical, practical, and methodological contributions as well as directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *Integrated business strategies, star rating, quantitative*

1. Introduction

Competitive advantage can be gained and retained if businesses reinvent themselves in today's dynamic business environment (Hilman & Mohamad, 2011). In order to comprehend this, organizations need a proper strategy in place across the board. Strategy pertains to developing plans of how an organization will achieve its targeted goals and survive prosperously. In brief, strategy is needed to ensure and enhance an organization's growth in a rapidly changing business environment.

In the hospitality industry, acquiring the right strategy has become more crucial as hospitality firms are facing strong competition from the rapid technological turbulence, frequent changes in customer's needs and expectations, external environmental complexity and volatility (Bordean, Bonza, Nistor, & Mitra, 2010; Kaliappen & Hilman, 2013; Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2012; Shahrin, 2015). In response to these demands, hoteliers are expected to practice continuous improvement by making appropriate strategic alignment, which if employed properly can help the hotels in accelerating and sustaining their businesses.

As the nature of hotel operations is usually labour-intensive, it is imperative that hotels focus on their business strategies in order to increase employees' satisfaction, especially to facilitate activities that ensure hotel performance (Mullins, 1992). It is believed that once the satisfaction of employees is ensured, in return they will guarantee the satisfaction of the hotel guests (Berry, 1982; Chi & Dogan, 2009; Yunus & Ishak, 2012). Thus, the hotel management needs to understand and implement strategies that focus on employees and their overall performance.

2. Problem Statement

Inappropriate usage of strategies resulted in the closing down of hotels despite the rapid growth of the Malaysian tourism industry. The inappropriateness of strategies used (e.g. pricing) by hotels has triggered the Tourism Malaysia to give extra attention to the industry since it contributed significantly to the extent of RM69.3 billion (7.3 percent GDP) mainly through hotel businesses, travel agents, airlines and other transportation-related (excluding commuter) economic activities (WTTC, 2013). This issue has been voiced out by Malaysian Hotels Operators (MaHO), mentioning that the average room rate in Malaysia is the lowest among the South East Asian countries (Utusan, 2010). This seems to result in a limitation among hotels towards making revenue contributions. This issue occurs potentially due to strategic differences and due to a lack of thorough discussions and studies on the same towards formulating a commonly beneficial mechanism and guideline. In addition to that, since 2009, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism has voiced his concern during the World Travel and Tourism Organization (WTTO) conference that Malaysia needs to revisit its strategies for accelerating the Tourism industry growth. As such, there is a need felt to understand the nuances of strategies used by hotels in Malaysia. In short, this study focused on solving two research questions: 1) What are the types of business strategies adopted by Malaysian hotels? and 2) Are there any differences in the strategies adopted by hotels with different star ratings?.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Integrated Business Strategy Model

Integrated business strategy means that various businesses strategies are being integrated to improve business performance. Without doubt, in any type of business or even in life, one needs to have strategy. Hence, researchers found that by integrating strategies, it helps organizations measure overall organizational performance by accumulating not only through one perspective (Hasliza, 2009; Purcel, 1989). On the other hand, strategy has been portrayed as a plan, which is defined as a direction, a guide, or course of action into the future; it is also considered as a pattern – that is, a consistency in behaviour over time (Boxall & Purcell, 2011; Miller, 1987; Mintzberg, 1994).

Most organizations begin their strategic planning cycle by updating and revising their business objectives in relation to performance (Schaffer, 1996; Porter, 1985; Miles & Snow, 1974). The reviews are mostly in key areas such as people, standards, and business development (Mintzberg, 2005). Since a critical factor of an organization is its labour force or human resource, a number of authors had attempted to integrate appropriate human resource (HR) practices and policies into different business strategies (Boxall & Purcell, 2011; Boxall & Sparrow, 1997; Budhwar, 2000a, 2000b; Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Miles & Snow, 1978; Miller, 1987; Mintzberg, 1973; Porter, 1985; Pucell, 1989; Schuler & Jackson, 1987).

This study attempted to integrate business strategies from four different gurus (Miles & Snow, 1978; Miller, 1987; Porter, 1985; Schuler & Jackson, 1987). The integration of business strategies needs to be conducted due to the nature of this study. These four gurus' strategies were adapted as they were among the earliest strategy gurus in business environment studies. This study attempts to examine the relationship between integrated business strategies and hotel star ratings, while comparing in depth the similarities and differences among integrated business strategies employed at each hotel star rating. The integration of business strategies was deemed vital due to its originality – as each guru's strategy focuses on different areas. However, few were found to be similar, which will be consolidated and renamed appropriately as suggested by Hasliza (2009). For example, Miles and Snow's (1978) and Miller's (1987) strategies focus more on the marketing perspective. Porter's strategy discusses management, and Schular and Jackson's strategy views management from the human resource perspective. There are other dimensions as well that are focused by all four gurus, as such the success posture or the innovation – and this dimension will also be consolidated. Notwithstanding, if only three gurus agreed at one dimension but the dimension would be renamed appropriately based on its popularity among gurus.

On the other hand, it has been claimed that different organizational level or size would practise different strategies. These practices somehow have deemed to be explored because it should help make knowledge available to the academicians as well practitioners about the similarities or differences in strategies utilized by different hotel star rating managements.

Integration of scholars' strategies is made by discovering the most popular strategies discussed by scholars in the business area (Hasliza, 2009). This will help to gather attention and focus more on overall business as a whole rather than on one specific area. The measurement will be produced through a typology, which compares all four sets of gurus' measurements in one typology and extract the most popular strategies; this is tabulated in Table 1. It is believed that integrating the gurus' strategies would help develop the most popular strategies discussed by different gurus and these strategies are compressed into a single one. This will ensure that the strategies become more dominant. Furthermore, there are research activities that integrate strategies from different authors in order to fine-tune the strategy to meet the organizational needs (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Beer, 1985; MacDuffie, 1995; Wright, McMahan, McCormick, & Sherman, 1998). Most of the authors agreed that businesses need to have a proper guideline to achieve their goals at organizational performance.

Through this integration, four dimensions of strategies have been found (refer to Table 1). The integration process starts from comparing dimensions that have at least three gurus focusing on one dimension. Once the dimensions are identified, it indicates the popularity of the dimensions among the four gurus, and these dimensions will then be renamed similar to the original dimension named except for dimension which all four gurus focus on it, the original name shall be maintained or altered as per dimension focus activities. These strategy measurements were focused on Superiority, Differentiation, Breadth and Cost. The details of the integration of business typology are shown in Table 1.

Miller (1988)	Schuler and Jackson (1987)	Porter (1980)	Miles and Snow (1978)	Integrated Business Strategy
Innovation	Quality Enhancement			Superiority-based
Differentiation	Innovation	Differentiation	Prospector	Differentiation
Focus / Breadth		Focus	Analyzer	Expansion
Cost control	Cost reduction	Cost leadership	Defender	Cost Efficiency

Table 1: Integrated Business Strategy Model

3.1.1. Theoretical Underpinnings

This study has considered contingency theory and universalistic approach in developing the study framework. These two theories were considered due to the objective of the study pertaining to the hotel industry, which involved strategies integration in facing the dynamic hotel industry development and the various rankings of the hotel classification. Contingency theory was employed due to an argument that organizational performance or effectiveness resulted from fitting certain organizational characteristics to contingencies that reflected the situation of the organization (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Galbraith, 1973). Furthermore, Jennings, Rajaratnam and Lawrence (2003) found that contingency theory fits in examining service firm strategy-performance relationship.

On the other hand, there are disputes in hospitality studies on a universalistic approach (Singh, 2012; Rafi & Wong, 2013). These conflicting statements about strategies have given opportunity to this study in exploring the similarities and differences of strategies employed by different star-rated hotels in Malaysia. In summary, the construct developed through observation of contingency theory and universalistic approach is important, and needs to be considered while examining the similarities and differences of strategies employed by the hotels.

4. Methodology

A quantitative research design was employed in this study. Quantitative design allows the researcher to collect the data from the respondents in a numerical format to exercise objective judgment and achieve a high level of reliability and accuracy (Kumar, 2010; Matveev, 2013). Furthermore, quantitative design also allows the researcher to generalize research findings when the data are based on random samples of sufficient size. Hence, the research results are relatively independent of the researcher (e.g., statistical significance). In this study, quantitative design aimed to analyze sets of variables by using surveys.

The unit of analysis in this study is at the organizational level and the primary data for this study was collected through the distribution of questionnaires. Since the focus of study is on the kind of strategies utilized by the hotels under study, it is suitable to use organization as a unit of analysis. A total of 415 hotels were spotted and had surveys distributed to them; however, only 222 responded and they are from various star-rating hotels, from one- to five-star hotels).

The data were factorized with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and tested through the test of differences. One-way ANOVA (Pallant, 2005; Tabachnic & Hair, 2007) were conducted to find if there were any differences between groups (hotel star ratings) on some variables (integrated business strategies). Once the results of ANOVA were achieved, the test was then extended with Post Hoc multiple comparison analysis to examine the differences and amount of integrated business strategy utilized by the star-rating hotels under study.

5. Results

There were originally 29 items used to measure integrated business strategy. However, due to the high cross-loading among factors, five items were eliminated from further analysis. Then, the data were rerun for factor analysis. From the results of the EFA on the remaining 24 items, nine factors were available for further analysis. However only five factors were used as the factor loading had been set at 0.50. Each factor carried at least three items and were not cross loaded (0.50); all items were kept for further analysis. Meanwhile, the KMO value measuring adequacy of items resulted at 0.598. This indicated that the items were correlated and they formed common factors. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also found to be significant at $p < .001$ approximately. Chi-Square value was at 2618.295, indicating the significance of the correlation matrix – which therefore provided a reasonable basis for factor analysis. Moreover, the eigenvalue of the resulting factors were greater than 1, which explained 77.18 of variance in the data. The first factor accounted for 10.07 of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 4.31. Factor loading for items in this factor ranged from 0.66 to 0.87. Factor one consists of three items related to two items from product differentiation and one from expansion. As a majority of items were from differentiation, the factor was named as Differentiation.

Factor two (eigenvalue = 2.87) was represented by four items. The items were originally from "Expansion" dimension. Factor loading for this factor ranged from 0.51 to 0.79 and accounted for 10.04 % of the total variance in the data. Since all of the items in this factor discussed product expansion, the factor was named Expansion. For factor three, with eigenvalue of 2.76 and was represented by three items. Two items were originally from the quality dimension and one from differentiation dimension. The factor loading that has been carried by this factor ranged from 0.51 to 0.83 and accounted for 9.07 % of the total variance in data. Since the items discussed premium and differentiation of a product, it was named Cost.

Subsequently, factor four was represented by four items with eigenvalue of 1.89. In this factor, two items are originally from differentiation dimension, while one is from breadth dimension. The factor loading for this factor ranged from 0.583 to 0.855 and accounted for 9.01 % of total variance. Since the items in this factor discussed the innovation of new product, the factor was named Innovation. Factor five was represented by three items with eigenvalue of 1.73. The factor loading ranged from 0.583 to 0.869 and accounted for 8.76 % of total variance. The factor was named Superiority as all the three items discuss being the first mover in the industry's competition.

Factor six was represented by two items with eigenvalue at 1.45. The factor loading for this factor ranged from .812 to 0.847 and accounted for 8.06 % of total variance in data. Since there were only two items representing this factor, this factor will not be used for further analysis. Factor seven has also been represented by two items with eigenvalue at 1.36. The factor loading for this factor ranged from 0.753 to 0.819 and accounted for 8.02 % of total variance in data. Since there were only two items representing this factor and it was not strong enough to explain the factor, this factor was also discarded from further analysis, as recommended by Hair (2006), who suggested that factors having low items to represent them be discarded as they did not carry a high relevancy to that factor.

Further, factors eight and nine were also represented by two items and they were not used for further analysis, as recommended by Hair (2006). In addition, Costello and Osborne (2005) suggested that the lowest number of items to be considered stable in a factor should be three items. With these results, only five factors were considered in the subsequent analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Differentiation</u>					
Avoid competition	.817				
Wait-and-see					
Target niche market	.743				
	.663				
<u>Expansion</u>					
Added new lines of products in 5 years					
Produce differentiated product		.791			
Offers a wide range of product range					
Satisfies customer need		.764			
<u>Cost</u>		.743			
Premium prices for quality products					
Attain success by being first mover		.512			
Upgrading of existing products					
<u>Innovation</u>			.828		
Marketed new lines of products in 5 years					
Innovation of product			.764		
Willing to take risks			.508		
<u>Superiority</u>					
Competition by reducing labour costs					
Meet specific customers' needs					
Ahead of competitors				.855	
Eigenvalues				.692	
Percentage Variance Explained				.583	
Total Variance Explained					
KMO					.869
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity					.671
					.583
	4.31	2.87	2.76	1.88	1.73
	10.07	10.04	9.07	9.01	8.76
	77.18%				
	.598				
	2618.3				

Table 2: Results of Factor Analysis on Integrated Business Strategy

The measurements were then evaluated by reliability analysis, which helped to prove how dependable the measurement scales were that were obtained from factor analysis. Hence, the reliability of measurement tools by internal consistency was verified through Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability coefficient in order to examine the stability, the consistency and the predictability of each factor. If the value is at 0.60 and above, it is generally recognized as a reliable value in social science (Hair et al., 2006). In addition, study focusing on service providers in tourism industry also has utilized 0.60 value as a recommended reliable value for a factor (Sohn & Lee, 2012). The results in Table 3 show that the Cronbach's alpha were in the range 0.63 to 0.73.

Integrated Business Strategy	Mean (M)	Standard Deviations (SD)	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Differentiation	2.06	0.75	3	0.73
Expansion	1.81	0.61	4	0.76
Cost	1.90	0.62	3	0.67
Innovation	1.82	0.56	3	0.63
Superiority	2.06	0.85	3	0.67

Table 3: Reliability Test

Note: $n = 222$

5.2. Differences among Hotel Star Ratings on Survey Variables

Referring to the results presented in Table 4, there was a significant difference of hotel star ratings on the expansion strategy, which was at $p = .05$. Hence, the level for all three conditions were at $F(4, 217) = 8.95$ and $p = .000$. The one-way ANOVA results of IBS also showed that the second IBS strategy (differentiation) also showed a significant difference of hotel star rating at $p < .05$. The level for the three conditions were at $F(4, 217) = 2.83$ and $p = .022$. In addition, cost was the third IBS strategy that has significant difference of hotel star rating at $p < .05$ and the level for the three conditions were $F(4, 217) = 4.62$ and $p = .001$.

However, superiority strategy was found to have an insignificant difference when tested on hotel star ratings with the value greater than $.005$. As a result, this strategy was discarded from further analysis.

		df	Sig.
Expansion	Between Groups	4	.000
	Within Groups	217	
	Total	221	
Different	Between Groups	4	.022
	Within Groups	217	
	Total	221	
Cost	Between Groups	4	.001
	Within Groups	217	
	Total	221	
Superior	Between Groups	4	.243
	Within Groups	217	
	Total	221	

Table 4: IBS Anova Statistical Result

6. Tukey Post Hoc Test Result for IBS

Tukey post-hoc multiple comparison was conducted to discover the location of significant differences between different hotel star ratings after a one-way ANOVA test was performed. The Tukey test was used to determine the nature of the differences between hotel star ratings. The information obtained from it is displayed in Table 5. Three strategies of IBS were examined in this test: Expansion, Differentiation and Cost.

According to Table 5 at Sig. Column, most of the values were greater than 0.05. However, there were six values that are below 0.05. These values corresponded with the comparisons between hotels at three-star ratings with other hotel star rating categories except for the two-star rating – one-star, four-star and five-star. Due to this, we can conclude that hotels at three-star ratings were significantly different in terms of expansion strategy usage when compared with hotels at one-, four- and five-star ratings. However, hotels at two-star rating did not show any significant differences in terms of expansion strategy when compared with other hotels star rating; one, three, four and five-star ratings.

In addition, the Sig. column of differentiation strategy rows at Table 5 indicated that most of the values were greater than 0.05. However, there were two values shown at $p < 0.05$. These values corresponded with the comparison between hotel at three-star rating and hotel at five-star rating. With the result gained, it can be concluded that hotels at three-star rating and hotels at five-star rating were having significant differences when tested at differentiation strategy of IBS. However, the results indicated that one, two and four-star rating hotels did not have any significant difference from one another. This concluded that these hotels (one-, two- and four-star ratings) were not considering differentiation as a strategy.

According to Table 5 at Sig. Column, most of the values are greater than 0.05. However, there are six values that are less than 0.05. These values corresponded with the comparisons between hotels at two-star ratings and hotels at four- and five-star ratings. Hence, the six values that are less than 0.05 also corresponded with the hotels at three- and five-star ratings. However, hotels at two- and three-star ratings did not correspond to each other. Thus, it can be concluded that hotels at two-star rating were significantly different in terms of cost strategy usage when compared with hotels at four- and five-star ratings. On the other hand, hotels at three-star ratings also resulted in significant differences when compared to hotels at five-star ratings in terms of cost strategy. Apart of these, hotels at one-star ratings did not have any significant differences in terms of cost strategy when compared with hotels at other star-ratings.

Dependent Variable	(I) SR Star rating	(J) SR Star rating	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Expansion	1 1 star	2 2 Star	-.417	.432
		3 3 Star	-.540*	.049
		4 4 Star	-.007	1.000
		5 5 Star	-.028	1.000
	2 2 Star	1 1 star	.417	.432
		3 3 Star	-.124	.952
		4 4 Star	.410	.155
		5 5 Star	.389	.258
	3 3 Star	1 1 star	.540*	.049
		2 2 Star	.124	.952
		4 4 Star	.534*	.000
		5 5 Star	.513*	.001
	4 4 Star	1 1 star	.007	1.000
		2 2 Star	-.410	.155
		3 3 Star	-.534*	.000
		5 5 Star	-.021	1.000
	5 5 Star	1 1 star	.028	1.000
		2 2 Star	-.389	.258
		3 3 Star	-.513*	.001
		4 4 Star	.021	1.000
Differentiation	1 1 star	2 2 Star	-.208	.902
		3 3 Star	.195	.839
		4 4 Star	.031	1.000
		5 5 Star	-.139	.961
	2 2 Star	1 1 star	.208	.902
		3 3 Star	.403	.112
		4 4 Star	.240	.637
		5 5 Star	.069	.996
	3 3 Star	1 1 star	-.195	.839
		2 2 Star	-.403	.112
		4 4 Star	-.164	.482
		5 5 Star	-.334*	.046
	4 4 Star	1 1 star	-.031	1.000
		2 2 Star	-.240	.637
		3 3 Star	.164	.482
		5 5 Star	-.170	.681
	5 5 Star	1 1 star	.139	.961
		2 2 Star	-.069	.996
		3 3 Star	.334*	.046
		4 4 Star	.170	.681
Cost	1 1 star	2 2 Star	-.417	.500
		3 3 Star	-.154	.948
		4 4 Star	.149	.958
		5 5 Star	.250	.807
	2 2 Star	1 1 star	.417	.500
		3 3 Star	.263	.611
		4 4 Star	.566*	.029
		5 5 Star	.667*	.012
	3 3 Star	1 1 star	.154	.948
		2 2 Star	-.263	.611
		4 4 Star	.303	.055
		5 5 Star	.404*	.023
	4 4 Star	1 1 star	-.149	.958
		2 2 Star	-.566*	.029
		3 3 Star	-.303	.055
		5 5 Star	.101	.955
	5 5 Star	1 1 star	-.250	.807
		2 2 Star	-.667*	.012
		3 3 Star	-.404*	.023
		4 4 Star	-.101	.955

Table 5: Tukey Post Hoc Test for Ibs

7. Discussions and Conclusion

Integrated business strategy (IBS) means that various business strategies are being used concurrently to improve business performance. From the strategies integration, it was found that expansion, differentiation and cost strategies of IBS have positive significant differences at different hotel star ratings. Like the findings of previous studies, the current study also found that in the hotel industry, hotels with different ratings used different expansion, differentiation and cost strategies. More specifically, one-star, three-star, four-star and five-star hotels employed significantly different expansion, differentiation and cost strategies. However, previous studies which were conducted in the manufacturing industry had involved a minimal amount of manual workers and consisted of mostly machinery (for examples, see Abdul-Kader & Luther, 2008; Chong & Chong, 1997; Gordon & Narayanan, 1985). Hence, the expansion, differentiation and cost strategy used would be different in labour-intensive and machine-intensive industries. Nonetheless, the results supported studies conducted by Miles and Snow (1978), Miller (1998), Parnell (2000) and Porter (1980) who mentioned that firms needed to consider expansion, differentiation and cost of business strategy – in addition to being effective in managing internal and external factors related to their firms' performance. Subsequently, the result obtained in this study aligned with the contribution of previous studies conducted by Gordon and Narayan (1985), Chong and Chong (1997) and Abdul-Kader and Luther (2008), which indicated that hotels needed to use expansion, differentiation and cost strategies, but different hotels needed to implement different expansion, differentiation and cost strategies.

Based on the overall results, this study has provided empirical evidence on the relationships between integrated business strategy and hotel star ratings. Although there are voluminous studies on the relationship of strategies and hotel star ratings, this study has addressed the gap by recommending integrated business strategy as a prime hotel strategy.

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