A Study of the Significance of Business Communication in the Hotel Industry of Dubai

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Abstract

In today’s world of globalization and borderless economy, effective communication is crucial for successful functioning of any industry. English has emerged as the language of business and trade and is accepted as the standard for communication. Effective communication, therefore, ensures a balance between organizational objectives and each party’s views leading to streamlined actions as well as organizational success and profitability. Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors and a major revenue earner, not only in the Middle Eastern emirate of Dubai, but of various economies all over the world. Hotel industry, which is an integral part of the tourism industry, is diverse in nature as it accommodates employees and guests, with different language, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Hotel industry is a core service industry which revels in people interaction and experiences. As English is the language of the globalized business world, effective and excellent communication and adequate English language competency is essential for better guest experience and hence better efficiency, productivity and, in the long run, profitability of the hotel industry.

Though, effective communication is significant in the hotel industry, workplace communication in the hotel industry has over the years remained an issue which urgently needs to be addressed today. This paper therefore discusses in depth, communication in the hotel industry as well as its importance. Additionally, it seeks to highlight the significance of proper business communication methods in the hotel industry of Dubai and to understand the contribution of English language competency skills of employees towards organizational efficiency and productivity.

Key Words: Globalization, Tourism industry, Productivity, organizational efficiency, competency skills
1. Introduction

Hospitality is a harmonious mixture of tangible and intangible components—food, beverages, beds, ambience and the environment; and the behavior of staff (Cassee and Reuland, 1983). With the growth of hotel industry in Dubai communication competence of the staff requires scholarly attention today. The scope of the present study is focused on the hotel sector of the hospitality industry.

1.1. Nature of the Hotel Industry in Dubai

In the past few years, Dubai has been recognized for the growth trend of its hotel industry, primarily due to its upscale qualities in terms of tourism destinations. There is an increasing need for educating staff in communication skill to enable the industry to forge ahead. The need for proper communication is also important since the United Arab Emirates is a common destination for many tourists around the world. It is therefore important that the correct skills are put towards the overall management and profitability of the hospitality industry is ensured.

Towards the beginning of the 21st century, Dubai experienced a significant departure from its reliance on hydrocarbons for revenues as most people moved towards the service-sector economy (Baum, 2006). Tourism has been the greatest contributor to economic growth in Dubai since the early 1990’s and the trend has continued (Oxford Business Group, 2008).

Various developments, aimed at improving the hospitality industry in Dubai in the previous years, and efforts were made to appeal the outside world to increase revenues. In terms of growth of its hospitality industry, Dubai can be described as an Emirate that always possesses the desire to be ‘bigger’ and ‘better’ icon in the whole world (Baum, 2006). The developments in Dubai reflect world’s experiences, with a careful combination of shopping, hotel and entertainment opportunities in a single location, appealing to consumers’ needs. As such, Dubai has acted as the pioneer of the post-modern recreational tourism and hospitality industry.

1.2 Different Levels of Communication in the Hotels
The employment of proper communication strategies in the hospitality industry all over the world is an important aspect that ensures satisfaction of the management, staff and customers alike (Oxford Business Group, 2008). Communication is vital to the customer because it imparts a feeling of satisfaction as he pays for the product and for the service being offered. Communication in hotel industry covers mainly two areas: customer service and the interactions between the staff and management (Barrows & Powers, 2008). A proper coordination between both is therefore essential for high quality services expected of the industry.

Proper hospitality communication between the staff and the management also adds value to the services and products being offered. Good communication between staff and management is the epitome of communication in this sector because it is passed to the level of communication between staff and guests (Andrews, 2007).

Potential clients in any hotel setting expect to find a cool and lovely environment so as to willingly spend their money on such a facility. A happy and relaxed atmosphere assures the management and staff that their guests will return and recommend their facility (Baum, 2006). Communication skill in the hotel industry, therefore, plays a big role in the establishment of relationships between members of organizations and those that visit these organizations. Organizations rely on culture and communication methods to ensure trust and satisfaction among their members (Andrews, 2007). Proper communication helps reveal possible problems and ensures that tasks are made smoother, creating quality services and products for their customers. In a service-oriented sector such as the hotel industry, it is important that communication skills are emphasized for both written and spoken aspects, so that the sector can run smoothly because its service delivery depends on how information is passed to its customers. Dubai’s hotel managements agree on the importance of communication in the sector and are willing to spend adequate sums of money to ensure that all employees are trained in written English language skills, but only a small percentage of employees undergo in-house training. However, there is one another setback that is the lack of a system that could ensure English language competency of all the hired employees.

1.3 Usage of Business English Communication in Hotels in Dubai

The hospitality industry in Dubai primarily relies on oral communication for making sales because it involves convincing potential clients about the uniqueness of the services and products available in the hotel. Oral and written forms of communication in hotels in Dubai are not used in similar proportions. In
this regard, the hotel industry in Dubai relies heavily on oral form of communication (Andrews & Andrews, 2007)

Effective communication helps increase job satisfaction, safety, productivity and profitability and increases overall business turnover. Effective communication should therefore be aimed at starting from the lowest level if information is to reach everyone.

It is important to note that the two broad groups of communication in an organization will employ either oral or written skills to pass information from one person or point to another. In Dubai hotels oral communication is the most common form of passing information. Whether it is a new customer being introduced to a menu or giving details about a guest room, oral communication is most in practice. Also, it is vital for passing data to colleagues and calling people to an urgent meeting. Sometimes the urgency required to pass information across employees does not allow the use of other ways of communication (Harris, 2007)

Effective written English Communication skills are of key importance in the hospitality and tourism industry, as guest satisfaction is the key driver to revenues. Employees in this sector must develop the necessary communication skills to fulfill tourist requirements. In return, efforts employed on communication are analyzed according to their impression on guest satisfaction. For hospitality organizations, internal written English communication serves as the nerve center, which if not functioning properly leads to loss of guests and eventually the organization fails. Additionally, advanced internal solutions to communication form the basis of a wide range of guest services, enhancing guest motivation to stay. In return, satisfied guests lead to a stronger and more competitive market position, customer loyalty and increased profits. Achieving tourist satisfaction requires an understanding of performance expectations. Hence proper written English communication skills are of high importance to hospitality practitioners in different position levels. To ensure quality and performance standards in this industry, the supply and demand side should be able to communicate effectively (Guffey & Loewy, 2009). Besides oral communication, written communication skill also plays an important role because if properly used in the organization, it enhances effective performance of its employees, which in turn results in growth and development from high productivity and efficiency. Oral communication smoothen the speedy functioning while written communication creates working environment by eliminating misunderstanding, confusion and distortion of information. Written English communication also enhances a sense of work satisfaction and promotes interpersonal relationship through the use of powerful words, messages and presentation. Efforts need to be made to bring written English competency equally in practice.
1.4. Contribution of Business English Methods of Communication to Organizational Efficiency and Productivity

As guest satisfaction is the key driver to revenues in the hotel industry, efforts are underway to develop necessary communication skill in hotel industry in Dubai. The objective is to create stronger and more competitive market position. Proper written English communication skills are of primary importance to hospitality practitioners in different position levels. To ensure quality and performance standards in this industry, the supply and demand side should be able to communicate effectively (Guffey& Loewy, 2009). Oral and written communication skills play an important role because if properly used in the organization, it will enhance the performance level of its employees, which in turn results in growth and development from high productivity and efficiency. Effective written and oral English communication skills in the hospitality industry are used to promote the organization and the services offered for maximizing revenues. Communication is necessary for exchanging information, making plans and proposals, reaching a consensus, executing decisions, sending and fulfilling orders and for sales and promotions. It is necessary, therefore, for those working at the operational level in the company to communicate effectively among themselves, with the management and with guests to achieve stated goals.

Effective communication means effective handling of the organization’s concerns. The Hotel Industry also must have an organized communication policy and channel it for speedy and effective communication within and outside the organization. This prevents delays and creates harmony and a good working environment by eliminating misunderstandings, confusion and distortion of information.

2. Research Methodology

The study primarily concentrates various local, foreign and international hotels in Dubai. The data was collected through telephone interviews and follow up fact to face interviews. The target sample consisted of ninety respondents who were selected using random sampling method from various hotels in Dubai. The participants consisted of human resource managers and managers working at the top level and middle level in the organization.

Only one set of questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents.

Data collected was analyzed through one dimensional Chi-square test. T-test was used in determining accuracy of data collected and determining minimum errors encountered in tabulation of results. A.01
level of significance was used to test the results of the study after which the results were tabulated in figures, percentages and pie charts. All the research questions were assessed in general and conclusions made.

3. Analysis of Results

3.1. What kind of Business English methods of communication does your organization use frequently?

Table 1: Communication Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage of the response received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly written and partially oral</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially written and mostly oral</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Oral and Written</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question sought to determine the frequently used in Business English methods of communication in various hotels all over Dubai. As indicated in the table above, 93% of the respondents reported that both written and oral communication methods were frequently used in their organizations as Business English methods of communication. Additionally, 7% of the respondents interviewed indicated that the most frequently used Business English methods of communication was oral. The research survey findings, therefore, indicated that many organizations use both written and oral English methods of communication to communicate within their organizations and only few organizations frequently use oral method of communication.
3.2. *In your own opinion, why are these methods important to hotels and what value do they add to your organization if effectively used?*

All were in support of the Business English Communication method as it formed the backbone of the industry across the globe. English has surfaced as the global speech of business communication, mainly in the hotel industry as pointed out by the respondents in the survey. The respondents pointed out that written Communication is essential in modern organizations, which provides clarity to the receiver on communication of details to avoid misunderstanding, promotes business relationships among the hotels and serves as reference and record purposes, such as Memo, Email, Policy, and Posters.

Oral communication was stated as an aspect used on a constant basis in all departments, among colleagues, between leaders and team members, from greetings, briefings, giving instructions, providing feedback up to down and down to up, dialogue sessions and many more. They stated that most of the guests visiting the hotels communicated mainly in English language, an aspect that all the hotels in the industry have adopted as it aids in employee promotion and appraisal by the Hotel management. This was also pointed out that the trend is on rise because of the provision of online services in hotels.

In general, communication forms the backbone of the hotel industry; it enhances the growth of employees and also plays a role in maintaining the image of the hotel in the industry.

3.3. *How do they contribute to organizational efficiency and productivity?*

*Figure 1: Efficiency and Productivity*

Does effective communication contribute to efficiency and productivity?

- Have Contributed (Yes)
- Not Contributed (No)
The respondents provided a positive feedback on the role played by the Business English Communication methods on the aspects of efficiency and productivity in the Hotel Industry. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents reported that effective communication methods within their respective organizations, over the years have contributed to organizational efficiency in various ways. According to the respondents in the survey, coordination of all the departments in the hotel industry on time allows for optimum utilization of the available manpower in the industry. The Business English Communication methods creates an avenue for optimization of hotel’s revenue and productivity where the staff work towards avoidance of any wastes and utilize all the available resources. The respondents recommended that the customers/guest feedback after visiting the hotel is highly valued and aids in improving the hotel standards. They also pointed out that communication of the staff is one aspect in sales that brings more guests to the hotel as this increases the awareness of the services available in the industry.

3.4. What problems do organizations face when using these methods?

One problem reported by the respondents was lack of sufficient English language knowledge among many employees. Given the fact that hotel industry is actually diverse in nature, in most cases employees are of different nationalities. Some employees in particular those who come from non-English speaking countries may not have sufficient knowledge of the standardized phrases or the hotel jargon.

The second problem reported by the respondents was lack of proper communication skills, which makes it difficult for employees to convey ideas and messages accurately and properly in English language. Many respondents reported that written communication requires good English skills, which some employees may not possess. As a result of this many of the employees find it difficult to effectively communicate or pass a message effectively in written English. Moreover, lack of proper written English skillswas reported by top human resource managers to cause information gap, which in turn breaks down the process of communication.

The third problem associated with Business English methods of Communication reported by many of the respondents was the problem of varied perceptions of the meaning of English words. An example of an English word reported by one of the respondents was the word “clean” which in its use doesn’t have level of cleanliness and it varies in employees’ perception.

3.5 In your own opinion do you consider employee English competency skills as an important aspect of communication in hotels?
Employee English Competency skills are vital to the performance of the Hotel industry as shown by the survey conducted in the Dubai hotel industry that has undergone globalization in the last two decades. Respondents stated that communication is a crucial factor that has influenced the establishment of relationships between different levels in the Dubai organization market and also serves as the main avenue of distributing information in all components of the economy. The revelation of any possible problems and issues is facilitated by proper communication skills among the employees of the Hotel industry. English Communication competency helps in revealing possible problems and also ensures that tasks are made smoother thereby creating quality services and products to offer to their customers. It also ensures that all the hotel’s tasks are managed smoothly thereby creating quality services and products for offer to their customers in the hotel industry.

The respondent agreed that English is Lingua franca, so its role is vital in hotel industry in Dubai also. The respondents affirmed that the employee English competency skills play an important role in the customer service in the hotel industry. The personnel include the bartenders, hosts and waiting persons who interact daily with the guests visiting the hotel. They are part of the hotel staff that come in touch with the customers directly, and hence need to be efficient English communication. The staffs’ competency begins the moment a guest arrives and is welcomed into the hotel. The guest’s first impression which is going to last with him should be positive from every angle.

3.6 Can quality time can be saved, if improper communication can be avoided

Figure 2: Time Savings with English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can Quality Time be Save with Proper Communication?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17% | 83%
Time is a key market determiner in the global economy as every industry works towards the maximization of the available time. From the survey conducted in the Dubai’s hotel industry, the respondents agreed with this concept as 83% supported quality time as the key to proper communication while only 17% were not in support. The communication channel is the key to success in the business world today. If the channel is not fully implemented, it will lead to failure of the whole communication system which in turn will give negative result in the industry. The upward and downward communication channels are important in the process of ensuring quality time among the employees and management. Currently, the world is on a competitive nature in the hotel industry, thus need for effectiveness in the communication between the employees and customers in the hotel industry. Quality time management in the communication process is the key aspect that necessitates all the activities in the industry.

3.7. Knowledge of proper written language skills improves the efficiency of your organization

1. Conclusion

Globalization and changing trends in information technology have largely contributed to the communication in hotel industry as well. As Dubai is one of the fastest growing trading countries in the world, hotel industry in Dubai has become the focal point and hence increased its competitive nature. The question of organizational growth and excellence has further brought question of effective communication in its ambit. The research survey revealed that effective use of proper methods of communication results in overall performance, growth and success over a period of time. This type of communication increases levels of organizational growth and profitability, because it provides room to communicate objectives and goals to set, implement and achieve. In fact, without effective communication an organization cannot effectively communicate with its clientele, which in turn can result to various internal disorders affecting the performance of the hotel.

Business communication is the sole factor, which joins the business, its employees, and stakeholders. Business English methods of communication play a vital role when it comes to effective and adequate organizational structuring, successful achievement of organizational activities and pursuance of
organizational goals and objectives. High performing hotels in Dubai which were interviewed during the research study reported that effective communication results in high productivity and profitability because employees tend to know what it required of them at what time without necessarily being supervised.

References: