

Title of the Paper

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## Abstract

Increasing competition in the global marketplace demands hotels to develop a competitive advantage by ensuring innovate services. The rapid increase in the scope of service providers within various facets of Malaysian tourism and hospitality sector has not only limited the process of innovation performance but also the commitment of the managements' general practices to manage service innovation. Focusing on the Malaysian hotel industry, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of team culture and knowledge sharing behavior on service innovation performance. Based on the literature review, team culture and knowledge sharing behavior are hypothesised to have a significant impact on service innovation performance. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed amongst 300 employees working in luxury hotels of Klang Valley, Malaysia. Data was analysed using partial least squares (PLS) based structural equation modelling (SEM). All the hypothesised relationships are supported and the findings indicate that team culture and knowledge sharing behavior have a significant effect on the service innovation performance. The hotels need to develop a strong team culture and knowledge sharing behavior to accelerate the process of service innovation performance while providing the consumers better experiences. Implications, limitations of the study and future research suggestions are also discussed.

*Keywords:* Service Innovation Performance; Team Culture; Knowledge Sharing Behavior; Hotel Services; Malaysia

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## 1. Introduction

Globalization and growth of the hospitality industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which includes the restaurants, accommodation, entertainment and transportation businesses faces an increasing competition and requires a distinct measurement of their services (Monica-Hu, Horng, & Christine-Sun, 2009). Service level and scalability features of hospitality services are continuously introduced while simultaneously achieving certain level of service quality and sustainable growth (Evangelista, Lucchese, & Meliciani, 2013; Parasuraman, A. Zeithaml & Berry, 1994; Tseng, Lin, Lim, & Teehankee, 2015). The major focus of the traditional hotels are towards promotional development, cost-competitive and customer-focused-services those continuously driving them towards service innovation for a profitable business process (Möller, Rajala & Westerlund, 2008; Lance, Bettencourt, Brown, Sirijanni, 2012). Driving a consistent high performance service the service innovation and its accompanying dynamic capabilities (Orfila-Sintes & Mattsson, 2009) are the key drivers for the current generation hospitality business practices, some hotels focuses on introducing new products while others now focusing on improving customer services to achieve competitive advantage. The importance of the service innovation is to provide measurements of

service performance, service problems and service delivery; to gain a competitive edge over current competitive market service innovation is an essential concern for improving business service capabilities and quality upgrade of services (Orfila-Sintes, Crespi-Cladera, & Martínez-Ros, 2005; Tseng et al., 2015).

Customers as particular always seek for new and unique experiences (Ali & Omar, 2014), to meet the requirements of the customers a recent emphasis has been put in 'knowledge sharing' between hotel employees and organization's soft elements such as 'team-culture' relationship to influence the service innovation performance (Monica Hu et al., 2009; Yu, Yu-Fang, & Yu-Cheh, 2013). The dynamics of the service industry are moving in a fast pace where the products or services with a greater degree of innovation tend to accomplish higher satisfaction performance for consumers and higher financial performance for organization (Tseng et al., 2015).

In this race of service innovation Malaysian hospitality industry is no far behind (Parnian, Hosseini, & Shwu, 2013) and with a continuous improvement in service performance of hotel services may able to satisfy the customers' novel demands. In 2013, Malaysia has attracted a huge number of tourist and a receipt of US\$ 21.1 billion from the tourist considered as a huge impact on nations' economy as well on the tourism industry of Malaysia (Ali, 2015), while a 2.7% of growth in tourist arrival has been indicated by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) where majority of the studies claimed that Malaysian hospitality industry is one of the key player for such performance (Inside Malaysia, 2012; Nair & Whitelaw, 2009). However, despite the increasing research on product innovation and service innovation, the past researches on the issues of innovation majority of them focuses innovation in manufacturing firms (Monica-Hu et al., 2009; Yam, Lo, Tang & Lau, 2010; Lau, Yam & Tang, 2010) whereas a slight concern has been given to the service industry. A few studies has discussed the implication of service innovation performance in the hospitality and tourism sectors from the perspective of knowledge sharing and team-culture (Kim & Lee, 2006; Wang & Yang, 2007; Karlsen & Gottschalk, 2004; Chen & Cheng, 2012; Monica Hu et al., 2009). Although, these studies have addressed different issues in different context, there not such relevant studies have been found in Malaysian context addressing the assessment of service innovation performance in hotels through knowledge sharing and team-culture. This integration is to understand the relationship between service innovation performance and knowledge sharing in the hotels services and how team-culture can stimulate the ability of service innovation performance.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Service Innovation Performance*

Over the past years the service sector of hospitality and tourism industry has reached new levels and predominantly improving. The most important reason Osborne (1998) identified, that post 1985 studies especially of innovation in services has a strong socio-economic positioning. A scale has been developed by Scott and Bruce (1994) to measure the employee service innovation behavior through interviewing high level managers in the firms'. Through a continuous process of knowledge transfer and Enz and Siguaw (2003) stated that managers can learn through the success of the proven leaders in the hospitality industry and motivate their employees building a positive team innovation culture. Previous many researchers have found that restaurant, hotels and other service based hospitality sectors tend to focus on quality improvement rather than pushing themselves towards innovation, all most majority of the studies had not developed innovation capabilities within themselves. The commodification of any service is quite important, as it helps the service supplier to understand the how the services are been accepted by service consumers and what their extra need and wants. Jeong and Oh (1998) proposed that, to meet the demands of consumers the organizations' should do a quality development through new services and modifications of old services. Service innovation is a notion for enhancement of the services

those have taken into practice. Service innovation performance is progressively measured with a set of criteria to improve the competitive strategy of any organization. As measurement is the primary objective to support the organization to develop their services skills and also define the design stages to develop the services. Berry, Shankar, Parish, Cadwallader and Dotzel (2006) identified that an innovation model that push forward any organization towards service innovation requires two distinctive service innovation approaches: (1) innovation in service delivery process (2) innovation of new service offerings that satisfy the customers wants. These two identified approaches are equally dependent on employees' knowledge sharing behavior and team culture for an impacting firms' performance through service innovation (Hu *et al.*, 2009). Supported by Melton and Hartline (2013) that service innovation performance incorporated with knowledge sharing from customers and frontline service personals which ultimately impacts the sales, costs and competitive performance of the organization. Integrating customers, employees and partners helps in the process of innovation possibilities which is beneficial to organizations' service performance. Hence, service provider plays the most important role to encourage and motivate the employees towards knowledge sharing intentions towards novel way and also creates a harmonious team culture within the organization which is essential for innovation development process towards gaining a competitive advantage.

## *2.2 Knowledge Sharing Behavior*

A performed qualitative research by Mason and Pauleen (2003) has revealed that sharing is the most important component in knowledge management implementation. Previous studies by Cabrera, Collins and Salgado (2006) identified that personality, willingness to share and organizational commitment as factors those determine individual engagement in intra-organizational knowledge sharing. Moreover, Clarke and Rollo (2002) stated that managing the knowledge is a social process, where one must take into consideration social and cultural can be other influencing factors. As majority of big and small companies strategy is to integrate the knowledge, skills and expertise of their employees to gain a better edge in competitive advantage and for effective managerial practices in their daily operations. For an effective knowledge sharing behavior identified factor in previous studies has a strong connection, such as technologies (Malhotra & Majchrzak, 2004), motivations (Ardichvili, Page & Wentling, 2003), leadership and cooperative culture (Yang, 2007) and integrated organizational communication (Moffett, McAdam, & Parkinson, 2003). Knowledge sharing can take place in different way, it may be between employee-customer or employee-employee communications with their own knowledge skills. In a complex environment of hotels, personal and direct communication helps and create possibility for individuals and organization understand each other behavior and culture which can be taken in account of positive or negative aspect (Hu, 2009), from the positive aspect of knowledge sharing behavior sometimes aids the organization in terms of decision making and innovation possibilities, whereas negative aspect can be count as knowledge-reserve and less organization commitment from the employee perspective (Cabrera *et al.*, 2006; Foss & Pedersen, 2002). "Knowledge is the power", employees in hospitality industry may reserve their knowledge for their own personal development due to the strong competition in the hospitality industry itself, an intention towards knowledge sharing behavior within themselves are not often noticed. Partial knowledge transfer are found to be more common (Goh, 2002; Hu, 2009) as organization faces challenges while removing the knowledge-reserve behavior from the employees. Majority of organization try to understand the team behavior towards sharing knowledge between them, which has found to be one the crucial factor to understand the team culture within them and forces the organizations' to create a positive team culture that supports vigorous collaboration between themselves. Furthermore, previous researches showed a need for knowledge sharing and knowledge management for creating new strategies and new innovation possibilities in the

hospitality and tourism industry (Sungsoo, 2005; Al-Refaie, 2015; Grisseemann, Plank & Brunner-Sperdin, 2013; Jiménez-Zarco, González-González, Martínez-Ruiz & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2014). Hotels can improve their quality of service by enhancing their employees' knowledge through an understanding of customers' preference and improve their service accordingly. Empirical studies suggest that sharing of knowledge and information within and by the team reflects a well-developed "team process" behavior and results a better coordination and superior team service performance (Finnegan & Willcocks, 2006; Paton & McLaughlin, 2008; Yu et al., 2013). Through a positive knowledge sharing behavior across the organization it can utilize their available resources more strategically to improve their service delivery process and service innovation behavior within the employees (Bon & Mustafa, 2013; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Hu, 2009). The purpose of this study is to provide new insights into the knowledge sharing behavior and service innovation performance of different hospitality teams through a conceptual model. Through an extensive literature review of knowledge sharing behavior, team culture and service innovation performance it was found that knowledge sharing behavior within the organization is considered as one of the major influential aspect to increase the service innovation performance within these teams. Henceforward, our study proposed that knowledge sharing behavior has an impact on service innovation performance.

*Hypothesis 1. Knowledge sharing behavior is positively relates to service innovation performance of employees.*

### *2.3 Team Culture, Service Innovation Process and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour*

Behind a successful hospitality organization the most important element is the teamwork of the workforce. Defined by Earley and Mosakowski (2000) team culture is based on norms, expectations, roles of the team members and share enact to others, this creates a strong identity of a specific group having a common sense or mental constructs. To create a strong team culture an organization must derived from pre-existing culture that drove organizations' success and that same pattern will help the new team members to develop new services for organizational success. Team culture proves through on the basis of members' delegation, self-evaluation and facilitating other team member performance (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). The importance of team culture in service innovation is, team culture creates a strategic commitment of the team members to enhance teamwork with a better communication in form of formal or informal social interaction and motivate others as an overall which results in better service innovation performance (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007; Gaziulusoy, 2015; Goh, Chan, Kuziemy, & Goh, 2013; Hoegl et al., 2007). A team culture consist of set of rules those have been simplified within each other expectations, perceptions and roles to accomplish any work it may enhance the work performance based on the information shared between each other. These values are uniformly shared between service personals and helping them to create a strong team, but as cultural values cannot be uniformly distributed as it depends on individuals personal beliefs. A strong team culture requires a significant degree of overlapping workplace personality which doesn't relates to individuals' cultural beliefs. In hospitality sector, the innovative team has a strong influential team culture as the knowledge sharing behavior from the individuals and within the team is strong (Hu et al., 2009). Successful service innovation implementation depends on the service team performance which comes from individuals' contribution. Gilson and Shalley (2004) identified that most creative teams are those who realize that they are working on highly interdependence jobs those requires high levels of creativity. As a whole team they should realize that shared goals must be fulfilled in supportive problem solving participation from every individuals where they spends time together to improve the performance of the team. In this study we related the team culture with the service innovation performance and proposed that team culture is positively related to service innovation performance. The previous section of knowledge sharing behavior and team

culture literature helped us to identify that there is a relationship between the both as in an organization it affects each other, herewith we are going to test the significance relationship between the mentioned factors.

*Hypothesis 2. Team culture is positively relates to service innovation performance of the employees.*

*Hypothesis 3. Knowledge sharing behavior significantly relates to team culture of the employees.*

### 3. Research Methodology

The target population for this study was limited to the employees working in luxury hotels located at Klang Valley, Malaysia. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interaction with the employees from different departments at the selected hotels. A survey was used to collect the using non-probability convenience sampling technique. A total of 328 questionnaires were distributed and after deletion of incomplete responses, 300 questionnaires were deemed complete to use further showing a response rate of 91.5% from the original target sample population. Out of these 300 respondents, 46% were females and 54% were male. With respect to the educational level of respondents, majority (63%) were graduated from university, 13% went to senior high school and 12% went for technical college. In terms of the working experience 29% had working experience of less than one year, almost 26% had a working experience of 1 – 4 years and 26% respondent had 5 to 10 years of working experience. In terms of working position, 37.3% respondents were first line staff, 23% were grassroots leader or supervisor, 23% unit chief manager and 15% were departmental supervisors. The questionnaire was based on 37-items in total. Knowledge sharing behavior was measured using 10-items, team culture was measured using 16 items and 11 items were used to measure service innovation process are were taken from Hu, Horng & Sun (2009). All the items were operationalized by using 5 point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

### 4. Findings

For this study, hypotheses were tested based on structural equation modelling using a Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. In order to conduct the analysis, Smart PLS M3 Version 2.0 (Ringle, Wende & Will, 2005) software was used. Bootstrapping technique was applied to determine the level of significance for the loadings, weights, and path coefficients. Following the procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), validity and goodness of fit of measurement model was estimated before testing the structural relationships outlined in the structural model (See Table 1).

Table 1: Validity and Reliability for Constructs

Items		Loadings
<b>Knowledge Sharing Behavior (AVE = 0.507; Composite Reliability = 0.918)</b>		
KS1	I am pleased to learn and share knowledge among different teams	0.784
KS2	I believe that members should help each other through teamwork to foster knowledge sharing	0.810
KS3	In a team setting, I would share knowledge with colleagues who had assisted me in the past	0.741
KS4	I want to become a person with professional knowledge in the eyes of my colleagues	0.741
KS5	....	
KS6	....	

<b>Team Culture (AVE = 0.509; Composite Reliability = 0.942)</b>		
TC1	My direct supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing	0.737
TC2	My unit supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing	0.770
TC3	My department supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing	0.752
TC4	In my organization, there is always someone to address work problems	0.564
TC5	This hotel coordinates teamwork through formal rules and procedures	0.758
TC6	....	
TC7	....	
<b>Service Innovation Performance (AVE = 0.551; Composite Reliability = 0.936)</b>		
SIP1	At work, I seek new service techniques and methods	0.706
SIP2	At work, I sometimes come up with innovative and creative notions	0.691
SIP3	At work, I sometimes propose my creative ideas and try to convince others	0.765
SIP4	At work, I try to secure the funding and resources needed to implement innovations	0.801
SIP5	At work, I provide a suitable plan and workable process for developing new ideas	0.758
SIP6	....	
SIP7	....	

For measurement model, all the standardized factor loading of each construct were high (above 0.60) that ensured the convergent validity. Composite reliability for all the three constructs was above 0.50 that ensured the internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) from all constructs exceeded the cut-off criterion of 0.50 (See Table 2), and were greater than the squared correlations between any pair of constructs (See Table 2). Since all these figures and measurement ensure reliability and validity of the measurement items, therefore, this research tested the same measurement model for further testing of the structural model and hypotheses.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Knowledge Sharing Behaviour</b>	<b>0.712*</b>		
<b>Team Culture</b>	0.634	<b>0.713*</b>	
<b>Service Innovation Performance</b>	0.534	0.665	<b>0.742*</b>
<i>Note*: The square root of AVE of every multi-item construct is shown on the main diagonal.</i>			

As PLS does not generate overall goodness of fit indices, a diagnostic tool is presented by Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin and Lauro (2005) to assess the model fit and is known as the goodness of fit (GoF) index. Hoffmann and Brinbrich (2012) report the following cut-off values for assessing the results of the GoF analysis: GoFsmall = 0.1; GoFmedium = 0.25; GoFlarge = 0.36. For the model used in this study, a GoF value of 0.498 is calculated which indicates a very good model fit. The result of the structural model showed that knowledge sharing behavior has a positive and significant effect on team culture and service innovation performance. Moreover, team culture also has a positive and significant effect on service innovation performance. 53.9% of team culture is predicted by knowledge sharing whereas both the knowledge sharing and team culture predict 59.6% of service innovation performance. Hence all the three hypotheses are supported (See Figure 1).

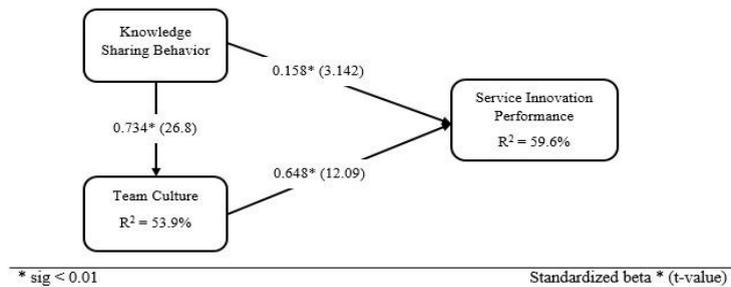


Fig. 1: Hypotheses Testing

## 5. Conclusion

This study has been examined from employees' attitudes towards service innovation in Malaysian hotel industry and to test a model of knowledge sharing behavior, team culture and service innovation performance to identify till what extent knowledge sharing behavior and team culture effects on service innovation performance. Moreover, we also test the relationship between knowledge sharing behavior and team culture. Three hypotheses were positively focused between each variable, the findings sections shows that three hypotheses have positively supported by the empirical data showing that knowledge sharing behavior is positively significant towards service innovation performance (Bank & Millward, 2000), between team culture and service innovation performance (Monica Hu *et al.*, 2009) and knowledge sharing behavior is also positively significant in relation with team culture (Goh C. *et al.*, 2013). As supported by previous research, the knowledge sharing behavior and service innovation performance; team culture and service innovation performance are both positive, as we predicted from the beginning. In recent literature showed that there is a relationship between knowledge sharing behavior and team culture although very few studies have tested that, we tested the relationship in the context of Malaysian hotel industry sector and it has been found to be positively significant with each other which is quite interesting. Through this positive impact researchers' have further discovered the development of new services in the hotel industry while the employees will gain service innovation behavior within their traits. Furthermore, a comprehensive study considering these new service development and employee service innovation behavior as factors would be more relevant towards measuring service innovation performance in Malaysian hotel industry. As for the practical implications of these findings, it is quite obviously noticed that employees' performance depends on few relative factors. To achieve high service innovation performance in the hotel services the organization must have to develop and ensure knowledge sharing behavior; furthermore, a better team culture means increased service innovation performance. The knowledge sharing behavior within the hotel employees' provide a positive effect on the overall team and service performance towards innovation possibilities. As for the managers, they have to focus towards individual employees' encouraging and satisfying their all service needs would defiantly create a positive impact in the organization. The dominant effect of knowledge sharing behavior and team culture observed in this study towards service innovation performance which ultimately leading towards customer satisfaction.

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