

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter covers the research methodology employed in this study. The area consists of survey instrument, design of sampling, data collection method and the statistical techniques used for data analysis. For this particular research, quantitative survey methodology has been used to gather the primary data in testing the constructs on several factors influencing employees' brand commitment.

### **3.1 Research Questions**

There are extensive list of research done by scholars on service branding, yet there is insufficient research covers the area of brand commitment by employees in terms of their knowledge and responses towards their own hotel brands. As mentioned by Berry (2000), the image and identity of a service brand viewed by the customers may be significantly different from a physical goods or product brand. Due to the limited coverage on employees' brand commitment in the service sectors, most of the service brand has neglected the role taken by fellow employees in building up the brand.

The research questions which has been mentioned earlier, listed as below:

- What are the several dimensions to be considered in building a successful employer brand?

- Do these employer brand dimensions explain the employees' brand commitment?
- Does leader's personality traits considered as one of the employer brand dimensions?
- What are the elements contribute to leader's personality traits?
- What are the most significant factors in explaining the employees' brand commitment?

### **3.2 Research hypothesis**

In this study, the objective is to determine the extent to which employees experience a sense of identification and involvement with the brand values of the hotels they are working for. By trying to identify the level of brand commitment by employees towards their own hotel brands, it will gain greater brand knowledge to both the employers and employees.

**H1: There is a relationship between employees' brand knowledge and employees' brand commitment.**

**H2: There is a relationship between customers brand image as perceived by employees and employees' brand commitment.**

**H3: There is a relationship between the perception by employees of the employer brand relative to its competitors and employees brand commitment.**

**H4: There is a relationship between employer brand as experienced by employees and employees' brand commitment.**

**H5: There is a relationship between CEO/leader personality traits and employees' brand commitment.**

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design implemented a series of rationale decision making choices.

#### **3.3.1 Type**

Descriptive research is carried out in order to establish and describe the employees' brand commitment towards their own hotel brands. This study has obtained the qualitative data by selecting samples from internal employees of 5 hotel chains, namely Hilton Worldwide, Mandarin Oriental hotels, Shangri-la Hotels, Starwood Hotels and Accor Group of Hotels to discover the interrelations of factors influencing employees' brand commitment.

#### **3.3.2 Sampling Design**

The estimated number of employees working in 10 hotels located in Klang Valley is 8,700. Therefore, it has taken up a significant of time to reach all the 10 hotels for this study, not to involve all 8,700 employees due to time and cost constrain. And also, the study is mainly focused on middle and top

management of the hotels. Considering sampling constraints, a combination of Cluster Area sampling and Convenience sampling method is used in this study, limited to the sample frame of 266 respondents from the 10 hotels. This group of respondent represented Klang Valley as urban geographical cluster sample for the 5 hotel chains which has been selected.

This study is conducted with the belief of targeted employees whom are still working in their respective hotels will give the best input of brand knowledge they have towards their hotels. The middle and top management of the said hotels will be convenient and reliable in approaching this academic research whereby they may not face the problem of understanding the questionnaires given. This, in turn, will higher the rate of the usable questionnaire for the latter analysis and minimal the failure rate of accuracy.

Cluster Area sampling is deemed useful to support this descriptive study in order to ascertain and enable to describe the characteristics of the independent variable dimensions, specifically in Klang Valley. The use of Cluster Area sampling is common practice in other past research (Krishnan & Hartline, 2001).

Minimal interference of correlation study is used in this study to determine the several identifications of the significant factors of employees' brand commitment associated with employer brand, which eventually will lead to a better service satisfaction, be it internally or externally. In order to gauge the responses that are essential to test these hypothesis, the hotel brands would

be used as the brand stimuli. This research believes that, in fact, there is always the existence of multiple factors influencing employees' brand commitment in the service branding issues.

### **3.3.3 Level of analysis**

The level of aggregation of the data collected has been made on employees that work in the 10 selected hotels. Klang Valley has been chosen in this study viewing its location attractiveness for the hotel owners to operate in the said area. In addition, Klang Valley as a centre of significant economic activities in Central Malaysia has always been the potential research vicinity pertaining to its emerging changes in latest service branding trends, especially the upcoming hotels in the near future. This, in turn, will create the group of hotel employees whom are very vigilant and aware of the importance of serving in different hotel brands.

### **3.4 Data Collecting Method**

A set of questionnaire is distributed among the employees who consist of middle and top management of the selected 10 hotels. Questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions whereby the respondents are required to answer within the alternatives given. Personally administered questionnaire is chosen to use in the study as the questionnaire is strictly

confined to the group of employees working in the 10 hotels within the particular geographical area of Klang Valley. The main reason of using such approach in the study is the approach will enable the accuracy of targeted samples within a shorter period of time. This study has, somehow, create the awareness of fellow employees towards the research topic and consequently motivate them to offer their frank answers. Data collection process has involved the researcher to approach the respondents, particularly to determine their qualification such as the terms of at least working in the hotels as a full-timer and holds a position from the middle and top management level. Employees whom are qualified and aware of the consensus of taking the questionnaire will then agreed to complete the questionnaire. The criteria listed for the participation is adopted by similar data gathering method by Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001).

In order to start off the distribution of questionnaire, researcher has to ensure the questionnaire is relevant and related to the indication of responses expected. The method of content validity approach which involved 2 experienced senior lecturers in Marketing Department of Faculty of Business and Accountancy and 1 hotel general manager has been used as a result of additional construct (CEO/ Leader's personality traits) added to the conceptual framework. The pre-test survey results were obtained and feedback was reviewed. It is found that the concrete criteria for the construct can be referred to past research specializing in the area of concentration. The feedback was indeed useful when the respondents assisted in providing the measurement for the quality of a CEO or leader.

Significant face validity on the questionnaire was done by 30 respondents. The result has shown a positive Cronbach's alpha value of more than 0.5 for every of the constructs tested. The questionnaire was then mass distributed among the employees of 10 luxury hotels with assistance from Human Resources personnels from respective hotels.

### **3.5 Instruments and scales**

Personally administered questionnaire on the sample survey has been used as the basis for the information source needed for result analysis. This questionnaire was formed by adopting the recent questionnaire on the research done by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009). Several consultations with research supervisor had further strengthened the questionnaire structure.

The questionnaire firstly measured the employer brand dimensions as perceived by the employees in the means of group characteristics and measurement. Secondly, the questionnaire tested the respondents on the individual characteristics which influence the employees brand commitment. The questions are designed to be structured as closed question. However, the respondents were given the option to choose from a number of defined response choices consisting 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Such scale is used to gauge the consistency of the respondents' answers.

Respondents were required to answer their questions using tick, cross or circle on the intended answer. Closed questions are relatively easy to convert the numerical format required for latter result analysis of SPSS. The questionnaire has been designed with continuous response score of leading questions or statement pertaining to its ultimate implication to some statistical analysis. The respondents will then answer the questionnaire accordingly with their perception whether to be in the state of agree or disagree with the leading statement that has been developed beforehand.

The questionnaire consists of 7 sections. Section 1 was designed to collect the demographic information of the respondents including gender, age, ethnic group, marital status, highest level of education, position in hotel, monthly income and the duration of working in the respective hotel. Due to the nature of the confidentiality, these questions were put as the first section to gauge the significant consensus level needed to complete the following questions. If they are reluctant in providing their personal information, they won't be required to complete the remaining questionnaire. This will reduce the unnecessary time and resources wastage at the very beginning of questionnaire distribution. The demographic variables were measured by using close-ended multiple-choice format for analysis.

Section 2 examined on the current level of employees' brand knowledge towards their respective hotel brands. Section 3 was designed to differentiate the employer brand apart from the close competitors. Section 4 and 5 consist of questions whereby the respondents were asked based on their perception



of the hotel brand as customer brand and employer brand. This is followed by Section 6 which has listed a list of questions to examine the respondents on the level of their brand commitment. The questionnaire ended by questions examined on employer's characteristics or simply known as leader's personalities.

### **3.5.1 Measuring scales**

According to Saunders et al (2009), scale appears to be an internal consistency plan for developing a measure. The concern of all is to develop a valid and reliable set of indicators for the theoretical constructs. Different scale has been used for several sections tested in the questionnaire.

In this study, nominal scale was used to describe the respondents' background specifically on their demographics. In order to gauge the result on the employees' perception towards their own hotel brands, a summated rating of 5-point Likert scales (attitude scales) was used in measuring both the image and identity of hotel brands from the viewpoint of internal employees. However, the respondents were also given option to choose the middle answer which put them in the neutral stand while answering the questionnaire. Ultimately, the scores of the responses are gathered and were averaged to yield an individual's attitude scores.

### **3.5.2 Plan for Data Analysis**

The data collected from the survey will then be statistically analyzed with the analytical tool of Statistical Package for Social Sciences Programme (SPSS) version 16. The analysis will consist of 6 significant parts.

Employees' demographic information will be tabulated using frequencies and percentages. Generally, the analysis will comprise the summary of the respondents' background and identifications.

The level of reliability and validity of a scale often refers to the degree which the items will be seen grouped together. One of the most commonly used separators of internal consistency is obtaining the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient value. However, the nature of Cronbach Alpha sensitivity towards the number of items in the scale makes it more appropriate to report the mean inter-item correlations for the items instead. Ideally, the coefficient of a scale should be above 0.7 (Pallant, 2001).

According to Coakes et al (2010), factor analysis is a data reduction technique used to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller set of underlying factors. This will summarise the essential information contained in the variables. However, an exploratory factor analysis is often used in the early stage of research to gather information on the inter-relationship among a set of variables.

In this study, the main focus has always been investigating the strength of relationships between variables and employees' brand commitment. There are a few of known dimensions contributed in explaining the degree of employees' brand commitment towards their own hotel brands. Therefore, multiple regression is deemed suitable as a statistical analysis tool for the research proposition.

Multiple regression is used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable such as employees' brand commitment and a number of independent predictors such as customer and employer's brand perception, as seen in this study. It is based on correlation among the variables but allows a more sophisticated exploration of interrelationship among them. Eventually, results from multiple regression will provide information about the variables used in the framework as a whole, and the relative contribution of each variables that influencing the employees' brand commitment.