

PERSONALITY PROFILE OF F&B STAFF IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Being part of the 'people oriented' industry, hotel organizations are to abide by the fact that their performances are measured through customers' satisfaction. Due to this, human capital has been identified to be one of the key factors in determining the success or failure of a business. Hence, it is crucial for hotel organizations to select the right people with the right personality to represent the organizations. This study sought to investigate the personality profile of hotels' Food and Beverage employees in Malaysia. A total of thirty-six (36) 4-star and 5-star hotels in Kuala Lumpur were involved and 165 employees participated in this study. Data were collected through self-administered survey questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis were used in the data analysis. According to the empirical analytic results, among the five personality traits, four (4) of the sub variables scored moderately high mean score with Extroversion ($M=3.51$, $SD=.69$), Openness ($M=3.62$, $SD=.68$), Agreeableness ($M=3.51$, $SD=.53$) and Conscientiousness ($M=3.54$, $SD=.83$) while Neuroticism scored moderate mean ($M=3.37$, $SD=.60$).

Keywords: *Personality, food and beverage employee, hotels*

1. INTRODUCTION

Frontline employees play a critical role in linking tourism and hospitality firms with customers to maintain long-term relationships (Kusluvan, 2003). Indeed, successful service firms have invested resources into programs in order to increase their employees' performance and job satisfaction (George & Weimerskirch, 1994). Paradoxically, frontline employees are still undertrained, underpaid, and overworked (Singh, 2000). In apparent recognition of this, tourism and hospitality managers need to seek effective ways to be able to enhance the performance and job satisfaction of frontline employees. In an internal marketing perspective, tourism and hospitality managers need to do a great job with their frontline employees, before expecting them to deliver superior services to customers (George, 1990). Therefore, identification of employees' personality is imperative in determining the type of motivation that may influence their job satisfaction level, hence, this study sought to investigate the personality profile of Food & Beverage employees in hotels in Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Personality

Personality has been defined in a very broad manner by those who have done thorough studies on it. Some of the studies include Allport (1961) and Ryckman (1997) who have defined personality as the dynamic and organized set values of an individual that exclusively influences his/her cognitive drives and behaviors. While Cattell (1995) concluded that personality refers to psychological and physical behavioral patterns shown in any diverse circumstances and they are stable over time. A studies by Tellegen (1991) defined traits as a psychological (therefore) organismic structure underlying a relatively enduring behavioral disposition, i.e., a tendency to respond in certain ways under certain circumstances. Additionally, personality was defined by Guthrie, Coate and Schoewer (1998) in their studies as one's tendency to react or behave in a distinguished manner as to respond to his/ her environment. Furnham (1990) classified personality theories into three schools: benevolent eclecticism which describes a long and venerable line of personality theories; partisan zealots who present only one theory in which they believe and enthusiastic taxonomists who classify theories according to their epistemological origins. Ryckman (1997), who belongs to the third school (enthusiastic taxonomist), categorized personality theories into five perspectives such as psychoanalytic perspective, trait perspective, cognitive perceptive, existential perspective and social behavioristic perspective. The psychoanalytic

perspective is biological in nature and based on the unfolding of a series of stages in which particular behaviors occur (Ryckman, 1997). The trait perspective assumes that there are dispositional factors that regularly and persistently determine conduct in a variety of everyday situations (Furnham, 1990). The cognitive perspective assumes that people's personality is never completely determined; people are changeable and always free to reinterpret their experiences in idiosyncratic ways (Ryckman, 1997). The existential perspective postulates the existence of an innate growth that moves individuals toward realization of their potentialities if environmental conditions are right (Ryckman, 1997). Lastly, the social behavioristic perspective assumes that most of our behavior is learned and purposive; we are guided by our motives to attain certain goals (Ryckman, 1997). Unlike psychoanalytic and existential perspectives, the social behavioristic perspective is not interested in the growth stages. In contrast, it is similar to the trait perspective which assumes that personality refers to regularities and consistencies in the behavior of individuals (Snyder and Ickes, 1985). However, the social behavioristic perspective asserts that our personality or behavior is learned, rather than innate. People's experiences and interactions continually influence one another (Rotter et al., 1972), and behavior occurs as a result of complex interplay between inner processes and environmental influences (Bandura, 1971).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection and analysis

This study used self-administered questionnaire in order to examine the study variables; personality in the context of hotel industry. The respondents were the hotel employees of Foods and Beverages Department who work in the coffee house. Since lunch hour is always busy, this present study opted for only one working shift that is from 7.00am to 3.00pm. Self-administered questionnaires were used in this study for the purpose of data collection. This method is much known for its advantages that could be fast and economical as well as provides wide coverage of range of situation (Zikmund, 2003; Sekaran, 2004). The questionnaires were printed in the form of booklet for the convenience of the respondents and were hand delivered directly to a representative of each participating hotel. These representatives assisted in distributing the questionnaires to the employees who work in the coffee house of the hotel. The respondents were given an approximate time frame of two weeks to complete the questionnaire and return them to the representative. Follow-up calls were made to these representatives as to monitor on the progress of the responses and prior to collection of the questionnaires, final telephone calls were made in order to confirm the date of collection. The completed questionnaires were self collected by the researcher. The total duration of data collection was approximately three months.

3.2 Measurement

3.2.1 Personality

The personality profile was assessed using 44 item Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991). These 44 items were utilized in this study to measure neuroticism (8 items), extroversion (8 items), openness (10 items), agreeableness (9 items) and conscientiousness (9 items). All of the personality items were used to enable respondents to choose the level of agreement or disagreement of each item to reflect themselves at given situations in the constructs using Five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-disagree strongly to 5-agree strongly. The reliability of the instrument has been tested in many previous researches (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John & Srivastava, 1999). This was supported by Gosling et al. (2003) in which their study had consistently yielded coefficient alpha ranging from .76 to .83 while the Cronbach's alpha value by Plaisant et al. (2010) ranging from .77 to .84. Soto and John (2009) in their studies had tested the instrument in three different samples. In the community sample, the alpha reliabilities averaged .72 (range = .63 to .84) while in the student sample, the alphas averaged .70 (range = .53-.83). Meanwhile, their final retest reliabilities averaged .80 (range = .71-.88).

3.2.2 Demographic Profile

The demographic profiles such as job tenure, organizational tenure, education level, race/ethnicity, gender, age and marital status were also measured in this study.

4. RESULT

4.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Profiles	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Job tenure	Less than 1 year	62	37.6
	2 – 5 years	63	38.2
	6 – 9 years	29	17.6
	More than 10 years	11	6.7
Organizational Tenure	Less than 1 year	78	47.3
	2 – 5 years	54	32.7
	6 – 9 years	19	11.5
	More than 10 years	14	8.5
Education level	Less than high school	16	9.7
	High school	92	55.8
	Diploma	30	18.2
	Bachelor degree	20	12.1
	Others	7	4.2
Race/ Ethnicity	Malay	104	63.0
	Chinese	31	18.8
	Indian	18	10.9
	Others	12	7.3
Gender	Male	98	59.4
	Female	67	40.6
Age	Below 20	10	6.1
	21 – 25	48	29.1
	26 – 30	58	35.2
	31 – 35	28	17.0
	36 – 40	18	10.9
	41 and above	3	1.8
Marital status	Single	86	52.1
	Married	73	44.2
	Separated	1	0.6
	Divorced	5	3.0

Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of the respondents. It includes details consisting of job tenure, organizational tenure, education level, race/ ethnicity, gender, age and marital status. The table outlines the frequency of each profile and their respective percentage values. Job tenure of the respondents in which those have been in the position for 2 – 5 year ranked the highest with 63 of them which represents 38.2 percent. The ranking followed by 62 of employees with less than 1 year experience, with a percentage of 37.6 percent. 19 respondents which is equivalent to 17.6 percent have 6 – 9 years tenure and lastly there were 11 respondents representing 6.7 percent of the total respondents held the position for more than 10 years. In contrast, 47.3 percent which equivalent to 78 respondents have less than 1 year organizational tenure while 32.7 percent representing 54 employees with 2 – 5 years tenure. The duration of 6 – 9 years is represented by 11.5 percent which represented 29 employees and the remaining 8.5% are those been working with the hotel for more than 10 years. The majority of 92 respondents representing 55.8 percent were high school leavers, followed by 18.2 percent which equivalent to 30 respondents with diploma and 12.1 percent which representing 20 respondents with bachelor degree. Next, 9.7 percent or 16 of the respondents attended less than high school and the last 7 employees with the remaining 4.7 percent are represented by other qualification such as certificate holders. The Malays were the highest respondents with significant percentage of 63 percent or 104 respondents while the

Chinese, Indians, and others followed by 18.8 percent (31 respondents), 10.9 percent (18 respondents) and 7.3 percent (12 respondents) respectively.

The distribution of gender was higher for male respondents with a total percentage of 59.4 percent while female respondents were represented by 40.6 percent of the total respondents. The age range shows that the most respondents were of the age 26 – 30 years (35.2 percent), followed by those aged 21 – 25 years (29.1 percent), 31 – 35 years (17.0 percent), 36 – 40 years (10.9 percent), below 20 years (6.1 percent) and the least was 41 years and above (1.8%).

The marital status of the respondents was distributed into the highest percentage of 52.1 percent (86 respondents) to single respondents, 44.2 percent which equivalent to 73 respondents are married, 3.0 percent or 5 are divorced and the lowest was separated with 0.6 percent (1 respondent).

4.2 Descriptive analysis of the Personality Dimensions

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis for Neuroticism

No.	Scale Item	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	Is depressed	165	2.95	.95
2.	Is relaxed	165	3.53	.98
3.	Tense	165	3.40	1.00
4.	Worries	165	3.39	.97
5.	Emotionally stable	165	3.39	.93
6.	Moody	165	3.40	1.08
7.	Remain Calm	165	3.60	1.02
8.	Nervous easily	165	3.30	1.12

Based on Table 2, the mean score for eight (8) items on Neuroticism ranges from 2.95 to 3.53, which indicated moderate scores for seven (7) items and one (1) item with low mean score. The highest mean score among all the items was 'I see myself as someone who is relaxed' (M=3.53, SD=.98). The item 'I see myself as someone who is depressed' had the lowest mean score of M=2.95, SD=.95. The probable reason for this low mean score could be that these respondents could not measure how depressed they could be and believed that they are capable of handling critical situations.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis for Extroversion

No.	Scale Item	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	Is talkative	165	3.34	1.15
2.	Is reserved	165	3.27	1.07
3.	Is full of energy	165	3.81	.94
4.	Generates a lot of enthusiasm	165	3.80	.96
5.	Tends to be quiet	165	3.19	1.06
6.	Has an assertive personality	165	3.56	.93
7.	Is sometimes shy	165	3.40	1.06
8.	Is outgoing	165	3.70	1.00

Table 3 stated the mean score of all items in the second dimension of Personality that is Extroversion. Among the eight (8) items, 'I see myself as someone who is full of energy' (M=3.81, SD=.94) had the highest mean score. In contrast, 'I see myself as someone who tends to be quiet' (M=3.19, SD=1.06) was the lowest score among all. From the score of Extroversion, it could be seen that the eight (8) items had a moderate mean score. The probable reason for the lowest score could be due to the fact that the actual work environment in Food & Beverage Department requires employees to communicate hence it is rare to see quiet people in the department since they are not suitable for the position.

Table 4: *Descriptive analysis for Openness*

No.	Scale Item	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	New ideas	165	3.58	1.00
2.	Curious	165	3.70	1.05
3.	Deep thinker	165	3.76	.88
4.	Active imagination	165	3.62	.95
5.	Inventive	165	3.50	.77
6.	Values artistic, aesthetic experiences	165	3.71	.80
7.	Prefers work that is routine	165	3.56	.98
8.	Likes to reflect, plays with ideas	165	3.56	.93
9.	Has few artistic interests	165	3.55	.87
10.	Is sophisticated	165	3.66	.87

Based on the analyzed data, Table 4 shows the mean scores of ten (10) items in Openness of mean score ranges from 3.50 to 3.76 indicating a moderate score. The item with the highest mean score M=3.76, SD=.88 is 'I see myself as someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker'. On the other hand, 'I see myself as someone who is inventive' gained the least score with M=3.50, SD=.77. The least score may be driven by employees' belief that the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) they have to adhere to while at work would restrict this capability hence it is to no avail to be inventive.

Table 5: *Descriptive Analysis for Agreeableness*

No.	Scale Item	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	Tends to find fault	165	2.97	1.10
2.	Is helpful and unselfish with others	165	3.85	.91
3.	Starts quarrels with others	165	2.63	1.05
4.	Has forgiving nature	165	3.64	.98
5.	Generally trusting	165	3.85	.93
6.	Can be cold	165	3.50	1.19
7.	Is considerable	165	3.81	.94
8.	Sometimes rude	165	3.19	1.03
9.	Likes to cooperate	165	4.18	.81

Referring to Table 5, the nine (9) items of Agreeableness has a mean score ranging from 2.63 to 4.18. From the results, it could be seen that seven (7) items had moderate scores while two (2) items had low scores. The highest mean score was the item 'I see myself as someone who likes to cooperate' ($M=4.18$, $SD=.81$) while among the two (2) items with low scores, the item 'I see myself as someone who starts quarrels with others' was the lowest ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.05$) and the second lowest item ($M=2.97$, $SD=1.10$) was 'I see myself as someone who tends to find fault'. The probable reason for this is that it is not easy to find people who are willing to admit that they are the cause of unintended incidents as everyone realizes that it is not a good attitude that one may want to acknowledge.

Table 6: *Descriptive analysis for Conscientiousness*

No.	Scale Item	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1.	Thorough job	165	3.73	1.09
2.	Somewhat careless	165	3.59	4.15
3.	Is a reliable worker	165	3.79	.94
4.	Tends to be disorganized	165	2.95	1.22
5.	Tends to be lazy	165	2.78	1.17
6.	Perseveres	165	3.73	1.01
7.	Efficient	165	3.83	.98
8.	Makes plan	165	3.90	.97
9.	Easily distracted	165	3.53	1.06

Table 6 outlines the mean scores for the last nine (9) items of Conscientiousness dimension under Personality variable. Based on the results, the score ranges from 2.78 to 3.90 and indicated seven (7) items had a moderate score while two (2) items are found to have low mean score. 'I see myself as someone who makes plan and follows through with them' was the item with highest mean score ($M=3.90$, $SD=.97$) and 'I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy' ($M=2.78$, $SD=1.17$) was the least scored item. Another item with low mean score was 'I see myself as someone who tends to be disorganized' ($M=2.95$, $SD=1.22$). The probable low score may be due to the fact that the employees felt that they have never stood a chance to be lazy and not doing any work since they had to work very hard especially during peak hours at the coffee house. On the other hand, being disorganized may be impermissible in the hotel work environment hence respondents are aware that they must be good at self and work management.

5. DISCUSSION

The objective of the study to investigate the personality profiles of Food and Beverage employees who work in hotels in Malaysia. The findings have shown that the overall mean score for personality measures was moderately high ($M=3.52$, $SD=.56$) with the entailing five sub-variables; Neuroticism scored moderate mean ($M=3.37$, $SD=.60$) while the rest of the sub variables scored moderately high mean score with Extroversion ($M=3.51$, $SD=.69$), Openness ($M=3.62$, $SD=.68$), Agreeableness ($M=3.51$, $SD=.53$) and Conscientiousness ($M=3.54$, $SD=.83$).

Table 7: Overall Mean Score and Standard Deviation

Variables/ Sub-variables	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Personality	165	3.52	.56
• Neuroticism	165	3.37	.60
• Extroversion	165	3.51	.69
• Openness	165	3.62	.68
• Agreeableness	165	3.51	.53
• Conscientiousness	165	3.54	.83

The results of this present study are able to provide both theoretical and practical implications. The findings of the study enrich the body of literature by demonstrating empirical evidence of the role of personality types in hotel. The personality measures have been a popular tool for personnel selection and placement of employees in hotel industry (Worsfold, 1989). Therefore, the results of this study are able to strengthen the use of personality testing in the hotel industry by validating the impact of individual personality. For the lodging industry, it continues to be important to find the right personnel who can interact with guests in a friendly and charming manner (part of the agreeableness dimension) at all times. Hiring employees with this trait can be even more critical for the success of up-scale lodging properties than budget hotels because of guest higher expectations of personalized services. As a result, in order to find suitable applicants for hotel positions, human resource managers should pay close attention to agreeableness as well as extroversion, which is often regarded as more of the influential positive affectivity on occupational behaviors.

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