

Human Resource Management Practices, Service Climate and Service-Oriented Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Review and Proposed Model

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Abstract: In light of the increasing dominance of service businesses worldwide and given that the effectiveness of service delivery is often linked with the qualities of customer-contact employees, service organizations need to motivate these employees to perform behaviors that go beyond their call of duty. Such behaviors are generally known as Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs). Due to the peculiar nature of services and the central role played by customer-contact employees, specific form of OCBs labeled as Service-Oriented Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (SO-OCBs) are considered more appropriate. Despite its beneficial outcomes, conceptual and empirical work on the antecedents of SO-OCBs remains scarce. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to propose a framework linking Human Resource Management (HRM) practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as predictors of SO-OCBs of customer-contact employees. Since work climate perceptions have an impact on behavior, service climate has been identified as a potential moderator in the above-mentioned relationship. A review of the literature to support the model within the context of the Malaysian hotel industry is given.

Key words: SO-OCBs, human resource management practices, service climate, customer-contact employees, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Service organizations today face an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing environment characterized by rising costs, diminishing resources and demanding customers. To these organizations, having a loyal base of satisfied customers will be able to increase revenue, mitigate costs, build market share, enhance reputation and improve profitability (Babakus *et al.*, 2003; Wang *et al.*, 2003). To gain customer satisfaction, the delivery of superior quality services becomes imperative. Past research suggests that the actions and behaviors of frontline customer-contact employees is a critical determinant of customers' perception of service quality and their satisfaction (Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Desatnick and Detzel, 1993; Yoon *et al.*, 2001). Customer-contact employees who engage in OCBs such as assisting co-workers who are temporarily overloaded with work, offering informal mentoring to new recruits and lesser skilled staff, giving suggestions for service improvements and displaying acts of courtesy and goodwill to customers are bound to contribute to better service. These behaviours which are beyond those specified by formal job prescriptions and not directly and explicitly measured and rewarded are termed as Organizational

Citizenship Behaviours (hereafter labeled as OCBs). Yoon and Suh (2003) argued that customers are likely to observe OCBs displayed by customer-contact employees during their physical and social interactions which subsequently affect the former's evaluation of the service provided. Given its pivotal role, a substantial amount of empirical work has focused on the antecedents of OCBs. These variables include job satisfaction (Williams and Anderson, 1991; MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998) organizational commitment (Williams and Anderson, 1991; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986), fairness (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Erturk, 2007; Konovsky and Pugh, 1994; Moorman, 1991), perceived organizational support (Armeli *et al.*, 1998; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), transformational leadership (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1996; Piccolo and Colquitt, 2006), task characteristics (Podsakoff *et al.*, 1996) and dispositional factors such as positive affect (George and Brief, 1992).

Nevertheless despite this recognition, there is limited research on specific organizational practices that may encourage OCBs. This observation was made based on two reasons first an organization's approach to its Human Resource Management (hereafter labeled as HRM) is instrumental in fostering high levels of OCBs as suggested by Morrison (1996); second how an

organization manages its human resources sets the tone and conditions for the employee-employer relationship (i.e., psychological contract) (MacDuffie, 1995; Rousseau and Greller, 1994). Favorable and supportive HRM practices will be perceived by employees as inducements on the part of the employer which in turn, establishes a high-quality long-term employment relationship. Blau (1964) termed this form of relationship as social exchange. Under such condition, employees are likely to develop long-term commitment and trust and they are obliged to reciprocate the employing organization by engaging in unspecified but organizationally-beneficial behaviors in the form of OCBs. For service organizations, a constellation of OCBs exhibited by customer-contact employees during personal interactions with customers which in some small or large ways make customer feel important are particularly critical in ensuring high service quality. Thus, it makes economic sense for service organizations to promote such behaviors.

A synthesis of the literature reveals that one common shortcoming of previous studies on OCBs relates to their focus on general forms of OCBs that are applicable across different types of organizations and positions (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001). To address this limitation and bearing in mind the specific requirements of service organizations and the central role played by customer-contact employees in service creation and delivery, Bettencourt *et al.* (2001) urge future researchers to focus on specific forms of OCBs which include Service-Oriented OCBs (hereafter referred to as SO-OCBs). Hence, exploring this construct is able to extend prior knowledge of citizenship research. Moreover in the case of Malaysia, understanding the possible predictors of SO-OCBs is considered essential given the increasingly prominent role played by the services sector as the growth engine for its economy over the past decade. For instance, the sector's contribution to Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (hereafter labeled as GDP) in 2010 was 57.7% compared to 53.4% in 2000. The strength of the services sector is expected to become enlarged where it has been envisaged that the said sector would contribute as much as 70% to the country's GDP by 2020 (MICC, 2011). Within the services sector, tourism has been acknowledged as an important income generator for Malaysia, generating RM36.9 billion in Gross National Income (GNI) in 2009 (MICC, 2011). Increase in tourism receipts is consonant with the rise in the number of tourist arrivals into Malaysia from 7.4 million in 1990 to 24.6 million in 2010 (Tourism Malaysia, 2008). Endowed with a plethora of natural attractions, the country is being recognized as one of the leading tourist destinations in the world

(Tourism Malaysia, 2008). It is anticipated that by 2020, the tourism industry will be able to contribute as much as RM103.6 billion in GNI with 36 million inbound tourists (MICC, 2011). The influx of tourists into Malaysia over the years has generated multiplier effects in other sectors of the economy, particularly the hotel industry since about 31% of tourist expenditures is spent on accommodation (Tourism Malaysia, 2008). This changing tourism landscape has resulted in the rapid development and construction of hotels. Statistics reveal that in 2010, Malaysia has 2367 hotels compared to 2296 establishments in 2005 (Tourism Malaysia, 2008). As the number of hotels in Malaysia becomes larger competition for market share becomes greater. This increase in competition is likely to force hotels to find ways to retain current customers and create new ones. As recommended by Hartline and Jones (1996) one viable alternative for hotels to remain competitive would be to increase their level of service quality through higher employee performance. This line of argument is also consistent with that of Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000). According to Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), one plausible strategy for a hotel to gain competitive edge over another would be to develop their own circle of loyal customers through the provision of unique and differentiated services. The labor-intensive nature of hotels (Baum and Mudambi, 1999), the fact that a hotel's core product is intangible service (Ma and Qu, 2011) and that evaluation of service quality is subjective and lies primarily with the customers (Tsaur and Lin, 2004) have accentuated the importance of customer-contact hotel employees.

Research has shown that the attitudinal and behavioral responses of customer-contact employees during the service encounter positively affect customers' perception of service quality (Bitner, 1990; Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Lee *et al.*, 2006). Recently, Ma and Qu (2011) reiterated that the provision of high quality service is the starting point of creating satisfied customers which will ultimately lead them to become loyal patrons of the hotel. Because SO-OCBs can directly and positively affect service delivery performed by customer-contact employees, it would be beneficial for hotels to devote more efforts to motivate and manage such behaviors. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to review the literature and propose a model linking a set of human resource management practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) and SO-OCBs. The discussion is tailored toward SO-OCBs of customer-contact employees working in the Malaysian hotel industry. Besides, it has been suggested that an individual's work climate can influence the

employee-organization exchange and subsequent work outcomes since climate reflects the employee's perception of the environment where the work behavior occurs (Rousseau, 1988). According to Wang (2009), employees' judgment about service climate may affect their role definitions when they are handling customer demands. Within a strong service climate customer-contact, employees are likely to view service-orientation as a more legitimate avenue to reciprocate their employing institution resulting in greater display of SO-OCBs. Hence within the realms of social exchange (Blau, 1964), employees who feel valued and cared for as a result of the organization's supportive HRM practices are more likely to reciprocate their employer by expanding their roles to include SO-OCBs as part of their job responsibilities when service climate is perceived to be strong. Based on the preceding discussion, service climate has been identified as a potential moderator in the proposed HRM practices-SO-OCBs relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

OCBs and SO-OCBs: The importance of OCB for organizational functioning has been well-documented. In fact, empirical research suggests that OCB accounts for an effect as great as that of in-role performance in evaluation ratings (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). Organ (1988) in his seminal work defines OCB as a type of discretionary individual behavior that is beneficial for an organization but falls outside of an employee's formal role requirements. Employees are typically not rewarded for engaging in organizational citizenship behavior nor are they punished for a lack of such behavior (Organ, 1988). This form of behavior plays a key role in enhancing organizational productivity because organizations cannot forecast the entire spectrum of subordinate behaviors that are needed for accomplishing goals through stated job descriptions. Organ (1988) conceptualized OCB as a multidimensional construct consisting of five dimensions altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue. Although, Le Pine *et al.* (2002) in their meta-analysis identified the existence of other taxonomies of OCB-like behaviors, empirical research in a variety of settings has mostly relied on Organ (1988)'s five-dimensional framework.

Since, service firms have special requirements in dealing with unique and unpredictable customers' desires and demands, several scholars (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2001; Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Wang, 2009) have argued that there is a need for customer-contact employees of service organizations to engage in a specific type of OCBs

particularly SO-OCBs instead of the more general form. These scholars reasoned that as boundary-spanners, customer-contact employees have three fundamental roles to play, they act as representatives of the service firm to outsiders which implies that their attitudes and behaviors can affect the firm's image, they act as a conduit between the external environment and the internal operations of the service organization by providing information about customer needs and suggestions for service improvements and their reliable, responsive and courteous behavior directly affect service delivery and ultimately customer's evaluation of service quality all of which necessitated them to focus more on service-oriented forms of OCBs. To address one of the shortcomings in prior investigations and further refine the citizenship domain within service settings, Bettencourt *et al.* (2001) developed a typology of SO-OCBs comprising of three dimensions: loyalty, service delivery and participation. Loyalty OCBs reflects behaviors involving acting as a spokesperson not only of the organization's products and services but also of its image. Participation OCBs relates to actions such as taking individual initiative especially in communications to improve their own service delivery and that of their organization and peers. Service delivery OCBs involves behaving in a conscientious manner in activities surrounding service delivery to customers.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) PRACTICES

Past studies have demonstrated an array of definitions for HRM practices. For example, Schuler and Jackson (1987) defined HRM practices as organizational activities that are directed at managing the pool of human resources and ensuring that resources are employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals. Lado and Wilson (1994) viewed HRM practices as a set of interrelated activities and process that are directed to attract, develop and maintain human resources in the organization. Jackson and Schuler (1995) concluded that HRM practices generally relate to specific practices, formal policies and philosophies that are designed to attract, develop, motivate and retain employees who ensure the effective functioning and survival of the organization. Delery and Doty (1996) conceptualized HRM practices as a set of internally consistent policies and practices designed and implemented to ensure that a firm's human capital contribute to the achievement of its business objectives. Dittmer (2002) viewed HRM practices as an individual's perceptions of the extent of

implementation of the strategies, plans and programs used to attract, motivate, develop, reward and retain the best people to meet organizational goals. Building on these thoughts, it can be summarized that HRM practices relate to specific practices, formal policies and philosophies in an organization for attracting, developing and retaining a high-performing workforce.

Considerable HRM research has been undertaken at both the micro and macro-levels. Traditionally, micro HRM research focus on the effects of HRM practices on individuals. A review of previous studies (Agarwala, 2003; Gould-Williams, 2007; Morrison, 1996; Nasurdin *et al.*, 2008; Ogilvie, 1986) conceded that supportive HRM practices affect employees' work attitudes and behaviors by establishing the tone and conditions of the employee-organization exchange relationships. When such relationship is viewed as that of social exchange (Blau, 1964) employees are more inclined to adopt positive work attitudes and behaviours. At the micro-level, Rousseau and Greller (1994) argued that HRM practices serve as the basis for contract-making between the employee and the organization. Fair and supportive HRM practices provide signals to the employee regarding fulfillment of his/her psychological contract. When employees perceived that the organization has fulfilled their expectations, they will react through greater trust, satisfaction and commitment, all of which are bound to lead to better performance and other positive work behaviors. In essence, it is the employee's perceptions of the organization's HRM practices that is central in determining his/her reaction and subsequent behaviours (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Purcell and Kinnie, 2006). On the other hand, macro HRM research examines the impact of HRM practices on organizational performance. Evidence indicates that sets of HRM practices have an impact on organizational performance and this relationship is not only confined to manufacturing companies but it is also applicable to service firms (Batt, 2002; Huselid, 1995; Tsaur and Lin, 2004; Zerbe *et al.*, 1998). In attempting to explain the missing link in the HRM practices-firm performance linkage which is also known as the black box phenomenon, Gardner *et al.* (2001) argued that HRM practices shape individual performance and in the aggregate, contribute to organizational success through three mechanisms:

- HRM practices ensure that the workforce has the appropriate skills and abilities
- HRM practices energize and motivate the workforce to engage in desirable and apply discretionary behaviors and prevent and resolve process exceptions

- HRM practices help empower employees to contribute their individual and collective efforts towards organizational outcomes. Despite numerous attempts to examine HRM from both the micro and macro perspectives, Wright and Boswell (2002) suggest that for a deeper understanding of HRM there is a need for more research to explore multiple HRM practices and their effects on individual outcomes

Although, two primary perspectives of HRM has been widely acknowledged, the universal or best practices approach has received more empirical support compared to the contingency approach (Huselid, 1995). Researchers that adopted the former approach argued that some HRM practices are always better than others (Delery and Doty, 1996). According to them, employees' perceptions concerning a variety of HRM practices have been shown to affect their attitudes and behaviors in a consistent manner. However, since little consensus exists on what constitutes best HRM practices researchers took a normative approach by including a mix of traditional common HRM practices that are found in the literature. These practices include training (Macky and Boxall, 2007; Meyer and Smith, 2000; Smeenk *et al.*, 2006; Tsaur and Lin, 2004), orientation (Cheng and Brown, 1998; Riordan *et al.*, 2001; Simosi, 2010), performance appraisal (Macky and Boxall, 2007; Meyer and Smith, 2000; Smeenk *et al.*, 2006; Tsaur and Lin, 2004), compensation (Morrison, 1996; Smeenk *et al.*, 2006; Tsaur and Lin, 2004) and employment security (Macky and Boxall, 2007; Marchington and Grugulis, 2000; Mendelson *et al.*, 2011; Pathak *et al.*, 2005; Smeenk *et al.*, 2006). Bearing in mind the peculiarities associated with the hotel industry and customer-contact employees in this study, researchers believe that perceptions of these five distinct practices may be able to elicit higher levels of SO-OCBs.

Training refers to the use of strategies, tools and procedures by the organization aimed at improving the ability and capability of organizational members (Delery and Doty, 1996). Consistent with Wanous and Reichers (2000) orientation refers to organizational programs designed to assist new employees to familiarize and adapt themselves to the new work environment. Performance appraisal refers to the evaluation and feedback process about employees' performance based on some predetermined organizational standards (Tsui *et al.*, 1997). Compensation refers to the financial rewards given to employees based on some criteria relating to individual, team or organizational performance (Pathak *et al.*, 2005). In accordance with previous

researchers (Delery and Doty, 1996; Herzberg, 2003), employment security refers to the existence of a formal or informal policy concerning assurances that employees' employment will be stable and free from layoffs.

HRM PRACTICES AND SO-OCBS

It has been argued that the relationship between HRM practices and strategic outcomes is strongest in service organizations as opposed to manufacturing firms (Zerbe *et al.*, 1998). Schneider and Bowen (1985) proposed that when employees feel well treated by their firm's HRM practices, they are likely to devote their energies and resources to treat their customers effectively. This line of thought is consistent with Ogilvie (1986)'s view of HRM practices which reflect the level of concern that the organization appears to have for their employees. According to Morrison (1996), to the extent that an organization's HRM practices create a social exchange relationship with employees, they will be more willing to perform OCBs.

Morrison (1996) argued that HRM practices that place high value on developing long-term relationships with employees through the provision of continuous education and development programs, promotion opportunities, assurances of job security, individualized orientation activities and supportive benefits are more likely to lead to greater OCBs. In a similar vein, Sun *et al.* (2007) suggested that high-performance human resource practices which include the provision of job security, extensive skills training and promotion from within can collectively affect organizational-level performance in terms of aggregated SO-OCBs through two means:

- These practices signals an organization's intention to establish a long-term relationship with its employees
- Represents an organization's inducements that by satisfying employee goals, fosters employees' perception of a supportive work environment

From a social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964) under these circumstances, employees are likely to become obligated and motivated to reciprocate with SO-OCBs (Sun *et al.*, 2007). On the basis of arguments offered by prior scholars (Fiorito *et al.*, 2007; Harel and Tzafrir, 1999; Sun *et al.*, 2007; Whitener, 2001; Zerbe *et al.*, 1998), it is anticipated that what constitutes best HRM practices will be positively related to employees' SO-OCBs. In this study, researchers postulate that five common HRM

practices comprising of training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security, may foster greater levels of SO-OCBs.

Training represents forms of human capital investment for individual and organizational improvements (Wentland, 2003). Besides as noted by Guest (2000), the provision of training benefits the employee by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to function responsibly. Hence, employees who have undergone more training are likely to perform better. One such avenue would be to engage in greater SO-OCBs. Following the argument put forth by past researchers (Autry and Wheeler, 2005; Simosi, 2010; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), orientation programs help new recruits adapt themselves to early entry experiences resulting in lower feelings of uncertainty. In such situation, new employees are more likely to become committed to the organization which ultimately lead them to engage in behaviors that would benefit the organization such as SO-OCBs. Likewise when employees perceived that their performance appraisals are based on acceptable organizational standard, they are likely to feel satisfied which in turn lead to greater SO-OCBs (Haynes and Fryer, 2000). It is widely believed that money has the potential to influence one's attitude and behavior (Parker and Wright, 2000). The use of an equitable compensation system suggests that employees' capabilities, efforts and performance contributions are recognized and appreciated (Davies, 2001; Chew and Chan, 2008) which in turn lead to higher satisfaction and commitment. In such situation, employees are motivated to go beyond their call of duty in the form of higher SO-OCBs.

Moreover, a compensation system based on output excellence will further increase employee performance (Delaney and Huselid, 1996). Employment security reduces employees' risk of layoff during an economic downturn and establishes a relationship of trust between employees and the employer (Pfeffer, 1998). As a result, employment stability ensures employees' sense of attachment and responsibility to the organization (Sun and Pan, 2008) which is critical for the exhibition of SO-OCBs.

On the basis of the preceding discussion and from the perspective of social exchange (Blau, 1964), it can be expected that customer-contact employees' perceptions of their hotel's HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) will directly and positively affect their SO-OCBs. Thus, researchers posit that:

P1: The level of HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as perceived by customer-contact employees will be positively related to their level of SO-OCBs (loyalty SO-OCBs, service delivery SO-OCBs and participation SO-OCBs).

P1_a: The level of HRM practices as perceived by customer-contact employees (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) will be positively related to their level of loyalty SO-OCBs.

P1_b: The level of HRM practices as perceived by customer-contact employees (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) will be positively related to their level of service delivery SO-OCBs.

P1_c: The level of HRM practices as perceived by customer-contact employees (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security,) will be positively related to their level of participation SO-OCBs.

ORGANIZATIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SERVICE CLIMATE

Organizational climate reflects a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the people who live and work in this environment and assumed to influence their motivation and behavior (Litwin and Stringer, 1968). These perceptions are assumed to be primarily descriptive rather than affective or evaluative (Schneider and Reichers, 1983). Schneider and Bowen (1985) viewed organizational climate as the perception that employees share about what is important in the organization, obtained through their experience on the job and their perceptions of the kinds of behaviors the employing institution expects and supports. According to Patterson *et al.* (2005), the dominant approach conceptualizes organizational climate as employees' shared perceptions of organizational events, practices and procedures. Nevertheless, Brown and Leigh (1996) advocated that since perceptions of the organization's environment are based on the individual's own interpretation consistent with his/her values, it would be more meaningful to focus on psychological climate instead. Psychological climate refers to an individual's psychologically meaningful

representations of proximal organizational structures, processes and events (Rousseau, 1988). According to Rousseau (1988), since this construct is generally accepted as a property of the individual, it should be analyzed at the individual level. Parker *et al.* (2003) in their meta-analytic review discovered that psychological climate does have significant relationships with a variety of individuals' work outcomes relating to attitudes, motivation and behaviors.

Service climate is a specific subset of organizational climate (Mechinda and Patterson, 2011). A review of the literature indicates that early climate researchers have mostly focused on environmental issues concerning the broader organization. However, since services and goods differ, it would be more appropriate for service organizations to foster a service climate. According to Schneider *et al.* (1998), service climate is defined as employees' perceptions of practices, procedures and kinds of behaviors that get expected, supported and rewarded, with regard to customer service and service quality.

THE ROLE OF SERVICE CLIMATE AS A MODERATOR IN THE HRM PRACTICES-SOCBS RELATIONSHIPS

According to Mechinda and Patterson (2011), for customer-contact employees to deliver excellent service, the service organization's orientation should reflect:

- A concern for customers (which means that all practices and policies should be customer-oriented)
- A concern for employees (which means how employees are treated and supported by the management of the organization)

Thus when the service climate of a service organization is strong, employees especially those at the front-line are bound to receive more frequent social cues for the need to meet customers' expectations (Bowen and Schneider, 1985). In this regard and following the argument put forth by Wang (2009), these customer contact employees are likely to view service-related behaviors such as SO-OCBs as part of their role definitions.

Hence, when employees perceive the practices of their organization (in the form of HRM practices) as supportive, they are likely to feel valued and cared for. Under such conditions and based on the social exchange framework (Blau, 1964), it can be expected that when

service climate perceptions is high rather than low, employees are more likely to reciprocate by expanding their roles to include SO-OCBs. Thus:

P2: The positive relationship between the level of HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as perceived by customer-contact employees and their level of SOCBs (loyalty SO-OCBs, service delivery SOCBs and participation SO-OCBs) will be stronger when service climate perception is high.

P2_a: The positive relationship between the level of HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as perceived by customer-contact employees and their level of loyalty SO-OCBs will be stronger when service climate perception is high.

P2_b: The positive relationship between the level of HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as perceived by customer-contact employees and their level of service delivery SO-OCBs will be stronger when service climate perception is high.

P2_c: The positive relationship between the level of HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as perceived by customer-contact employees and their level of participation SO-OCBs will be stronger when service climate perception is high.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Building on the above-mentioned discussion and considering employee reciprocity based on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), a conceptual framework is advanced as shown in Fig. 1. Both HRM practices are assumed to predict SO-OCBs while service climate perceptions will moderate the relationship between HRM practices and SO-OCBs.

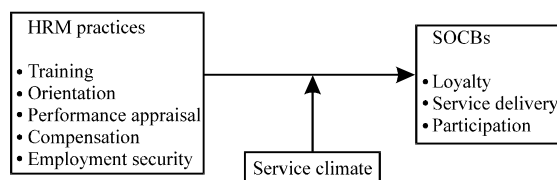


Fig. 1: Proposed conceptual framework

CONCLUSION

In today's competitive marketplace having a loyal base of satisfied customers is a must for the survival and success of service firms. This aspect of strategy emphasizes the central role played by customer contact employees in the delivery of high quality services. As boundary-spanners, the behaviors performed by customer-contact employees will create the first impression of the service organization to customers, ultimately influencing their evaluation of service quality. From the customers' point of view, unsolicited behaviors performed by customer-contact employees that go beyond the call of duty are able to delight them since these behaviors exceeded their expectations. These behaviours which go over and above those formally prescribed by an organizational role and not directly and explicitly measured and rewarded are generally referred to as OCBs. However, a considerable number of researchers have begun to realize that since service is intangible, coupled with the unpredictable nature of customer demands during the service interaction, engaging in SO-OCB is more appropriate in service settings compared to the traditional manufacturing context. The increasing dominance of the services industry at the global level as the 21st century progresses further amplifies the importance of such behaviors.

In Malaysia, the hotel sector represents a key component of the fast-growing tourism industry. The rising trend in the number of tourists into Malaysia and the growing number of hotels has strengthened competition for market share. Hence, it becomes imperative for hotels to find ways to retain current customers and attract new ones. Consistent with Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000)'s suggestion, one promising avenue for hotels to increase its competitive edge would be to boost service quality by offering services that provide unique benefits to customers resulting in their satisfaction. Past empirical evidences illustrate the importance of OCBs performed by customer-contact employees in contributing to better service. Given the peculiar nature of services, researchers believe that the act of performing SO-OCBs by the hotels' customer-contact employees will be able to please and satisfy customers. A review of the literature has demonstrated the critical role that HRM practices play in generating an environment that may motivate greater display of employees' SO-OCBs. Against this background, a conceptual model has been postulated linking a mix of common HRM practices (training, orientation, performance appraisal, compensation and employment security) as possible predictors of SO-OCBs.

In addition, since employees' judgment about service climate may affect their role definitions and exchange relationships, this variable has been posited to play a moderating role in the HRM practices SO-OCBs relationship.

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