

The Description of Character Strength of Four-Star and Five-Star Hotel Employees in Bandung

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Abstract—Bandung will be enacted as one of the historic tourism sites in the world since it is known by the Asia- Africa countries as the inspiration of independence. Hotel is one of the tourism potentials with high business prospect as well as a significant facility to introduce West Java culture that is well- known for its hospitality. Beside the hotel facilities themselves, the quality of human resources becomes a priority in order to give excellent service to the customers. This investigate intended to describe character strength of four-star and five star hotel employees in Bandung. Character strength theory developed by Seligman was employed in this study. The method used was descriptive that describes and interprets objects they way they are. It was revealed that there were 5 dominant characters found in the employees. They were integrity, gratitude, fairness and kindness and those are also called signature strength.

Keywords—Character Strength, hotel employee

I. INTRODUCTION

TOURISM is a significant economic sector in Indonesia. In 2009, tourism contributed as the third position in terms of foreign exchange reception after natural gas & crude oil and palm oil. Based on the data gathered in 2010, there were more than 7 million foreign tourists coming to Indonesia. This data show that there was a 10, 74% growth compared to the previous year and it granted USD 7.603,45 to Indonesia's foreign exchange [7]

Based on the data gathered by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) there are 11 provinces with the highest number of visit. They are Bali, West Java, Central Java, East Java, Jakarta, North Sumatra, Lampung, South Sulawesi, South Sumatra, Banten and West Sumatra. About 59% of tourists came to Indonesia for vacation; the other 38% came for business. Singapura and Malaysia are the two Southeast Asia countries with the highest number of tourists coming to Indonesia. In Asia, Japanese tourists are in the first position followed by China, South Korea, Taiwan and India respectively. From Europe, the country with the highest number of visitors is the Great Britain followed by France correspondingly [7]

Whichever purpose it is, either vacation or business, the tourists need decent and comfortable accommodations. Besides, the accommodations have to provide the tourists with all facilities they need during their stay. Thus, one of the promising tourism potentials with the highest business prospect is hotel. Hotel industry in Indonesia has come to a magnificent growth. Indonesia' economically stable growth in the past few years has increased both foreign and domestic investors' investment in hotel business. Almost all big cities in Indonesia concurrently build hotels either those in the management of international or domestic chain hotel or independent hotels managed directly by the owners.

The prospect of hotel business in Indonesia is claimed to be promising. Even Indonesia is the global investors' favorite location. A survey result released in the last August by Trip Advisor, a worldwide traveling site, placed Indonesia as the most wanted placed by investors. Indonesia was number one and followed by Russia, Brazil and the USA. Before this, the three countries mentioned had dominated the world's hotel business.[8]

The minister of Tourism and Creative Economics of the Republic of Indonesia, Mari Elka Pangestu states that Indonesia places the third position in Asia in terms of hotel investment and its growth. This is a proof that Indonesia is the most wanted destination for hotel investment [9]. Indonesia's hotel industry is growing, especially the upper- middle class hotel with international standard. This growth happens because of more domestic tourists stay in four-star or five-star hotels. Based on the research of **HVS Global Hospitality Service**, the number of tours in 2012 reached 253 million. 245 million tours out of 253 million were done by the domestic tourists. And the rest 8 million were done by the foreigners and there was a 5 % increase compared to 2011. In 2013, 8.6 million visits were targeted. By the estimation of China & Southeast Asia HVS, the number of tours in Indonesia would reach 400 million in 2023. By that estimated number, 800 brand new hotels would be in great demand. There were 1.623 hotels in Bandung. This hotel growth would create 200.000 new job opportunities. [10]

So would Bandung, Bandung is the biggest metropolitan city in West Java and furthermore the capital city of the province. This city is situated 140 km to the southeast from Jakarta and is the third biggest city in Indonesia after Jakarta and Surabaya by its population. The metropolitan area of Bandung is the third biggest in Indonesia after Jabodetabek and Gerbangkertosusilo. In this historic city, stands the first engineering institute in Indonesia (Technische Hoogeschool te

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Bandoeng - TH Bandung, now Institut Teknologi Bandung - ITB). This city was also a battlefield in the era of independence struggle and was the host city of Asia- Africa conference, an assembly to voice anti- colonialism, in 1955. In his speech, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, stated that Bandung is the capital city of Asia- Africa.

As the capital city of West Java, Bandung has some productive epithet as the city of education, commerce, government and tourism. Bandung has become a magnet not only for the people from West Java but also from all around Indonesia. For international tourists, the name of Bandung is a guarantee [10]

Flower city is its other nickname. The city gained this name for its well- known beauty in the past. There were many trees and flowers grew. Bandung is also called *Paris van Java* because of its prettiness. Now, Bandung is also famous as shopping city with its many malls and factory outlets. Gradually, Bandung has recently become a culinary city. In 2007, British Council awarded Bandung the most creative city in East Asia. Nowadays, Bandung is one of the main education and tourism destinations [10]. The former Vice Mayor, Ayi Vivananda, in the occasion of Asia- Africa 57th commemoration in 2012 stated that Bandung would be enacted as a historic tourism site in the world since it is known by the Asia- Africa countries as the inspiration of independence. In this commemoration, he set off a cultural parade.[13] . Therefore, necessitate of hotel service becomes a priority. Because hotel can provide not only a comfortable accommodation with good facilities, it is also able to introduce the culture of West Java that is well-known for its hospitality.

Nowadays, there are 250 hotels in Bandung ranging from one-star to five-star hotels. This many numbers create a very tight competition in the industry. This increasing hotel industry growth increases the need of the human resources. This phenomenon creates job opportunities at the same time, so the employment of employees is better. Hotels in Bandung have various facility offers. This enables customers to choose whichever they like. Thus, to constantly win the competition and be the first customers' choice, all hotels have to continuously improve their facilities and services. The emergence of new star hotels sometimes makes some old hotels less competitive and at worst shut down their business. Meanwhile some others keep doing their best to be able to compete by improving their facilities and services through some special interesting offers. The hotels themselves are standing by to service the customers 24 hours a day, to make them comfortable and satisfied. The employees are demanded to develop their ability and skill, creativity as well as customer service orientation. Therefore, those can attract customers and keep the hotel competitive and survive in the business. Employees are not only required to be creative, hardworking, innovative and customer- oriented, they are also asked to be patient in facing the customers (the customers are kings) and they have to be ready for complaints. Hotel employees have to be always prepared for giving service to various customers' requests. They have to be ready to be criticized, compared with other hotels' employees and even they have to always be

able to give the best services in any circumstances including under-pressure condition.

Service problems often emerge in the hotel industry. In the guest comment section at the Trip Advisor website, services given by hotel employees are things that always become problems yet at other times, services are also things appreciated the most by the customers. Hospitality is something all hotel employees must have regardless their job title.

Some requirements of hotel employees, especially in the guest-contact units are cheerful, willing to please others, friendly and sincerely helpful. Those are absolute things the hotel employees have to equip themselves with so they can work optimally. As hotel employees whose main duty is to give excellent service, they have to do their job gladly and cheerfully. The quality of service will be reflected in the employees' performance directly shown by the individuals working in the hotel industry.

Those personal requirements have to be acquired by the hotel employees- cheerful, capable of pleasing others, having high hospitality and capable of sincerely serving all belong to character strength in the study of positive psychology. Recently, positive psychology has been developed. It is more oriented towards the humans' potentials in which they are seen as individuals with positive characters. Those characters can be developed in order to help them achieving success and emotional satisfaction both in working and in life in general. Based on the explanation above, the authors wanted to study the description of character strength of four-star and five-star hotel employees in Bandung. Considering those characters can be developed. The other objective of this study was to develop hotel human resources in order to have appropriate character strength for their job descriptions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is a scientific study on human happiness. Sheldon, Frederickson, Rathunde, Csikszentmihalyi, and Haidt (2000) define positive psychology as a scientific study on optimum human's functioning. The aim of this study is to find and promote some factors that might enable individuals, communities and peoples to grow and develop rapidly.

The history of psychology as a science shows that fundamentally, this area of study is concentrated in mental illness not in mental benefit. Research programs and application models always lead to how human behave badly or not, it doesn't lead to how they behave well [6]

Generally, positive psychology employs theories, research and intervention techniques of psychology to comprehend the emotional fulfillment of positive, adaptive and creative elements of human behaviors. Positive psychology is a branch of psychology paying attention to individuals' strong aspects compared to their weaknesses. Besides, it also focuses on constructing the best in their lives compared to fixing their mistakes. It is also more focused on how individual can fill

their lives as normal human being instead of how curing individual suffering from a disorder [3].

In order to nurture talent and make humans' lives more fulfilling, positive psychology focuses on three areas of human experience that can help people define the scope and the orientation of positive psychology's perspective. Those areas are as follow.

(1) At the subjective level, positive psychology looks at positive subjective state or positive emotions such as happiness, joy, satisfaction with life satisfaction, love relaxation, intimacy and contentment in general. 2) At the individual level, positive psychology focuses on positive individual traits or more sustainable behavioral patterns. This includes individual traits such as courage, persistence, honesty or wisdom. So, positive psychology belongs to studies on positive behaviors and traits. Historically, they can be used to define virtues and character strengths. 3) At the group or society level, positive psychology focuses on the development, formation and maintenance of positive institutions.

B. Character Strength

Peterson and Seligman, introduce character strength as one of the areas of investigation in positive psychology. Character strength is a positive trait that consists of good character. It is a quality in an individual that makes him or her seen morally well [5]. That positive character can be seen from their feeling, thought and individual behavior [5].

Peterson and Seligman create Values in Action (VIA), as a qualification that is made up by 24 character strengths as follow.

1) Creativity: it leads individuals to achieve their objectives by means of a new, unique and original way. The idea, that they produce, is adaptive and able to give positive contributions both for themselves or others.

2) Curiosity: it is related to individuals' curiosity that leads to the emergence of openness to new and challenging things, topics and experiences.

3) Open-mindedness: individuals with this character strength will think holistically and view things from various point of views or considering proofs so they don't jump into conclusions.

4) Love of learning: this character strength leads individuals to constantly learn new things to improve their skill and enrich their knowledge.

5) Perspective: it enables individuals to view the world holistically so they are capable of understanding themselves and others as well as realizing their weaknesses and strengths. This strength is used to help themselves and others in accomplishing welfare.

6) Bravery: by having it, individuals will not pull back from the threats, challenges, obstacles or pain in achieving their objectives.

7) Persistence: individuals with this character strength will always finish everything they start, although they face various obstacles.

8) Integrity/ Authenticity: honesty and ability to present shelves as they are (*genuine*), without pretending.

9) Vitality/ Zest: vitality refers to passion and enthusiasm in performing every activity. An individual with this character strength show themselves as energetic, cheerful, passionate and active.

10) Love: it involves a relationship with others, shares and cares each other and tries to be close to others.

11) Kindness: a strong desire to be kind to others and sincerely help them.

12) Social Intelligence: it is a knowledge related to an individual and others. Here, individuals are able to recognize others' feeling and motivations as well as give good and correct responses to others.

13) Citizenship/ teamwork: it is individuals' ability to work hard as a part of a group, become loyal to their group and do their obligations a member of a group.

14) Fairness: treating others equally, not discriminating. Individuals will not let their feeling cloud their judgment on others.

15) Leadership: It directs individuals to be good leaders. They are able to organize group activities and make sure everything goes well.

16) Forgiveness and mercy: Individuals with this character strength are able to forgive others who has made mistakes and mistreated them. They can forget their unpleasant experience in the past without pressure from others.

17) Humility and Modesty: Individuals don't brag about their accomplishment. Humility also makes someone able to see their weaknesses and imperfections. Modesty is more external in nature, it means being modest either in behavior or in attire.

18) Prudence: it is a kind of self- management to help individuals achieve their long-term objectives.

19) Self-regulation: individuals are able to hold themselves, their emotion, passion, as well as other drives.

20) Appreciation of beauty and excellence: individuals are aware of and appreciate beauty and excellence.

21) Gratitude: it is thankfulness as a response to a gift. Individuals are aware and grateful for everything happens in their lives. They always make some time to say his/ her gratitude.

22) Hope: individuals think about their future, expect the best results in the future and are confident about results and objectives.

23) Humor: individuals can bring cheerfulness for everybody around them. Individuals that love to laugh, fool around, make some jokes or entertain others.

24) Spirituality/ Religiousness: it makes an individual believe in something greater in this universe.

Seligman [3] also introduce the term 'signature strength', it is somebody's exceptional character. According to him, an individual can accomplish success and the deepest emotional satisfaction by employing and developing his/ her signature character in his/ her daily life instead of fixing his/ her weaknesses. Signature strength is said as a conscious strength and often being shown in daily basis. The use of signature

strength will make that individual feel happy and more prepared in facing activities.

The Application of Character Strength

Character strengths can be created, improved, maintained and shown [5]. According to Aristoteles (2000) in [5], virtue (character strengths) can be taught and gained through practice. Characters must be developed through practice, not only by talking and thinking about it (Maudsley, 1898 in [5]). Those thoughts mean that character can be nurtured by good parents, schools and socialization thus it can be internalized through habitual action [5].

The application of positive psychology includes helping individuals and organizations to properly identify their strengths and use them to promote and set their happiness.

III. METHODOLOGY

This investigation employed descriptive method that describes and interprets the object they way it is. The objective of this kind of study is to make a systematic, factual and accurate description about facts and nature of a population [14].

The VIA Survey of Character Strengths, a scale developed by Martin E. P Seligman (2004) was used as the measurement. In this study, the investigators used only 18 characters as the measurement. This decision was taken since based on previous researches, the other six were never found as signature strength, especially for the population whose business in social area or service. The six characters are perspective, persistence, humility & modesty, self-regulation, appreciation of beauty & excellent and humor. The population of this study was some supervisors and operational staff in four- star and five- star hotels in Bandung. Then they were chosen by suing cluster sampling technique.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The profile of character strengths was gained by calculating the mean of each character then it was ranked, so the profile of signature Strength was gained based on the highest five characters in the subjects.

TABLE I
SIGNATURE STRENGTH OF FOUR-STAR AND FIVE- STAR HOTEL
EMPLOYEES IN BANDUNG

RANK	CHARACTER STRENGTH
1	Integrity
2	Gratitude
3	Hope
4	Fairness
5	Kindness

TABLE II
SIGNATURE STRENGTH OF MANAGERIAL STAFF AND OPERATIONAL STAFF

RANK	MANAGERIAL STAFF	OPERATIONAL STAFF
1	Gratitude	Integrity
2	Citizenship	Gratitude
3	Integrity	Hope
4	Vitality	Fairness
5	Hope	Kindness

TABLE III
SIGNATURE STRENGTH OF EMPLOYEES BY THE ASSESSMENT OF HIGH AND
AVERAGE PERFORMANCE

RANK	HIGH PERROMANCE	AVERAGE PERFORMANCE
1	Gratitude	Integrity
2	Integrity	Hope
3	Kindness	Fairness
4	Hope	Gratitude
5	Fairness	Citizenship

Since hotel employees work in service field, having signature strength will give them foundation in performing their duties. Giving excellent services to customers is not an effortless thing, not everybody is ready to provide service since in this case it is more exclusive in nature. Based on the tables presented above, it could be seen that integrity, gratitude, hope, fairness and were found in all employees. This meant that they were able to perform their job well because of honesty and ability to show themselves they way they were (*genuine*), without pretending. They were also capable of treating others wholeheartedly, being responsive to the need of others and helping them with what they need (integrity). This was also supported by the strong willingness to behave well and help others sincerely (Kindness) and they would treat customers equally without discrimination (fairness). The other thing belonged signature strength was improving gratitude and thankfulness as a response to a gift (gratitude) and they always thought positively about future and expected the best result in the future, and developed optimism (hope). Meanwhile, in the managerial level, the employees had vitality as the signature strength in which they had to keep passionate and enthusiastic in doing all activities. An individual with this character showed that they were energetic, cheerful, passionate and active. On the other hand, they were also loyal to their group and prioritize the group interest over their personal interest (citizenship), this off course was needed considering their position as the leaders for their teams. The signature strengths of employees with high performance and those with average performance were not too far different. Thus, it is intriguing to investigate further whether or not this signature strength significantly influences performance.

V. CONCLUSION

Four-star and five-star hotel employees who prioritize comfort and giving excellent service had some signature strengths; integrity, gratitude, hope, fairness and kindness. By

those characters they could perform their job as it was required in four star and five star hotels.

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