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## PERFORMANCE COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT FOR OPERATING STAFF OF LODGING BUSINESS IN RANONG PROVINCE

CHOLPASSORN SITTHIWARONGCHAI<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research aimed to study the performance competency development for operating staff of the lodging business in Ranong Province by collecting data from a sample of 400 people, and the questionnaire was used as the research instrument. This questionnaire was composed of content validity and reliability, and the data was analysed by using frequency, percentage, average, standard deviation test, t-test, and the analysis of variance.

The results revealed that: 1) the core competency for operating staff in the lodging business in Ranong Province were female, aged 36–45 years, had working experiences of 1–5 years, had average income less than 15,000 Baht per month, had educational level under bachelor's degree, and worked at operating staff level; 2) an overall and three dimensions of performance competency development for operating staff of lodging business were at the high levels – the first dimension was the working functional competency, the second was the managerial competency and the third was the core competency; 3) male and female operating staff of lodging business had different performance competency development, especially in working functional competency at a statistical significance level of .05, while male operating staff had better working functional competency than female; and 4) operating staff of lodging business who had different monthly income also had different performance competency development especially in working functional competency, at least one pair at statistical significance level of .05. In detail, the operating staff of lodging business who had average monthly income over 45,001 Baht had less working functional competency than the ones who had monthly income under 15,001-25,000 baht and those who had income of 35,00–45,000 Baht per month.

**Keywords:** performance competency development, operating staff, lodging business

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout 40 years of the Thailand tourism development, the tendency of tourism in the ASEAN region, the travel styles of tourists and the change of the groups of foreign tourists who came to visit Thailand, the situations of hotel business and navigation business, in 2002, considered as the business sectors which takes crucial roles towards tourism industry, and the recommendations about the potential development orientation to increase incomes for Thailand further, from all of these mentioned, it can be seen that the tourism industry is essential to the domestic economy. Moreover, the structural revenues of Thai tourism from have been improving, namely, the tourism revenues which were concentrated only in Bangkok are expanding to various regions that enhance civilisation and convenience to the localities and tourists towards investment and development of utilities and facilities, such as roads, electricity and water supply, and telephone, etc., with the support and attention of government sectors. Thailand has beautiful and interesting tourist attractions scattered all over the country. They can be categorised into various types based on the outstanding characteristics and tourism

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resources of that area, such as health tourist attractions, agricultural tourist attractions, ecological tourist attractions, and cultural/historical tourist attractions.

Ranong Province is located on the upper Andaman coast of southern Thailand; its routes can connect to other provinces in the southern region and it has various potential for tourism, such as natural tourist attractions, artificial tourist attractions, and historical and cultural tourist attractions, including famous natural minerals. In addition, Ranong Province has been determined its provincial development strategy, which is, the enhancement and development of health tourist attractions. The development guidelines are, for example, to organise activities for tourism enhancement, to publicise tourism through various media consistently, to enhance the efficient production of gifts and souvenirs, etc. Therefore, developing and enhancing the tourism of Ranong Province is considered as important to help increase the incomes to local people in the communities. This will drive the economy of Ranong Province and the nation.

The lodging business is regarded as a crucial factor among the tourists for their stay, and it takes a direct role in supporting the tourism activities. This is because most tourists prefer to travel to destinations far away and that offer them relaxing opportunities for travel. Not only should the residences facilitate the rooms and provide food for the tourists, but they should also have been designed and decorated beautifully, the location should be outstanding, and the service staff should be provided appropriately since they come into contact with the tourists directly. The service staff has to maintain the service culture by focusing on good service, satisfaction, and appreciation of the customers. If the customers have good competency on their service such as good language skills, good problem-solving skill, etc., then they will be able to satisfy and attract the tourists to stay at their residences.

Developing human resources in the organisations to reach a level of competitive competency will be able to increase the quality of products or services which can respond to the customers' needs. Therefore, several organisations today have to apply the concept of competency-based management to use for evaluating the performance of their personnel because this can respond to the strategic management and develop the competency of the organisations to enter into competition effectively (Rennie, 2003, p. 18; Wollard and Rocco, 2006). This is in accordance with Kanvalai Nontakaew (2003), who said that developing the competency from self-evaluation and the needs of human resources administrators would lead to the competency development of the human resources administrators concordant with the real needs in order that this can be applied by the administrators for their success based upon their goals or missions. This relies on staff knowledgeable and competency, with their suitable characteristics and competencies in their performances.

With these reasons, it is essential for the research staff to do the research into performance competency development for operating staff of lodging business and strategies for human resources development in the tourism industry: this will take as a case study Ranong Province, in order to analyse the competency for operating staff of lodging business, and analyse the perception of the tourists towards the service competency to improve the lodging staff in Ranong Province so that their work is concordant with the efficient services.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Purposes of Research**

1. To study the performance competency development for operating staff in the lodging business.
2. To compare the performance competency development for operating staff in the lodging business classified by personal factors.

## Hypothesis of Research

The operating staff of lodging business with different personal factors would have different performance competency development.

This study was carried out by survey research. The population was 4,449 operating staff of the lodging business in Ranong Province. The sample size was calculated by using the formula of Yamane (1970) (at the 0.05 significance level and received samples of 367 persons. The researcher selected the samples group from 400 operating staff of the lodging business in Ranong Province by using accidental sampling. The variables used in this research included independent variables: personal factors; gender, age, work experience, monthly income, educational level, and functional level, and dependent level, which was performance competency development for operating staff of the lodging business in terms of three element aspects – core competency, management competency, and functional competency.

The instruments used for this research was questionnaires divided into two parts as follows:

- Part 1: Personal factors: this was the questionnaire of checklist type. The respondents were asked for basic information, which consisted of six items.
- Part 2: Performance competency development for the operating staff of lodging business. The questionnaire was about five levels of Likert's Scale, with 33 items.

The research instrument was examined by the three experts for its content validity and reliability, by trying it out with the group of 30 people who had the characteristics similar to the sample group. The reliability was equal to .98.

The data analysis was used by using the instant programme, and the data analysis was divided as follows:

- 1) Descriptive statistics; this was used for describing the personal information for the operating staff of lodging business in Ranong Province by using frequency and percentage, while the performance competency development for operating staff of lodging business used mean and standard deviation.
- 2) Inferential statistics; this was used for testing the hypothesis as follows:
  - To analyse and compare the performance competency development for operating staff of lodging business by using the analysis of difference between the mean of two sample groups with t-test (independent t-test), the testing of two population groups. Each sample group was independent of the other. At the first stage, the difference between the two sample groups was tested by the statistics of Levene's Test. If the test result was found that the variance of these two groups was not different, then the t-test by equal variances assumed was used, but if the variance of these two groups were different, the t-test by equal variances not assumed was used.
  - To analyse and compare the performance competency development for operating staff of lodging business by using the difference analysis the mean of more than two sample groups to analyse the one-way analysis of variance. after analysing the difference of the sample groups, the least significant difference would be carried out if the difference of the sample groups were found.

## FINDINGS

1. The operating staff of lodging business in Ranong Province was mostly female, aged between 36 and 45 years old, the work experience was between one and five years, the monthly income was lower than 15,000 baht, the educational level was lower than bachelor's degree, and the functional level was operating staff level.

2. According to the performance competency development for the operating staff of lodging business, it was found that the overall image and each of three aspects were at a high level. Firstly, this applies to the functional level, secondly the management competency and core competency.
3. The operating staff of lodging business both female and male had the performance competency development of functional level by statistical significance at .05 level. The male operating staff of lodging business had the performance competency development functional level higher than female (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Comparison of performance competency development of the operating staff of lodging business classified by gender

Performance competency development	Gender	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t	df	p-value
1. Core competency	Male	4.09	.364	-.470	398	.638
	Female	4.10	.299			
2. Management competency	Male	4.13	.345	-.442	398	.359
	Female	4.15	.380			
3. Functional competency	Male	4.24	.469	2.146*	398	.032
	Female	4.13	.505			
Overall image	Male	4.15	.286	.952	398	.342
	Female	4.13	.286			

\*The statistical significance was at 0.05 level.

4. The operating staff of the lodging business who had different monthly incomes had the performance competency development of functional competency differently of at least one pair by the statistical significance at .05 level. The operating staff of lodging business that had the average monthly income more than 45,001 baht had the performance competency development functional competency lower than the operating staff of lodging business who had the monthly income lower than 15,001–25,000 baht and 35,001–45,000 baht, respectively (see Table 2).

**Table 2 :** Comparison of performance competency development of the operating staff of lodging business classified by monthly income

Performance competency development	Variance	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
1. Core competency	Between the group	4	.164	.041	.389	.816
	Within the group	395	41.525	.105		
	Total	399	41.689			
3. Management competency	Between the group	4	.395	.009	.729	.573
	Within the group	395	52.705	.135		
	Total	399	53.100			
4. Functional competency	Between the group	4	2.412	.603	2.503*	.042
	Within the group	395	95.184	.241		
	Total	399	97.596			
Total	Between the group	4	.480	.120	1.472	.210
	Within the group	395	31.745	.082		
	Total	399	32.225			

\*The statistical significance was at 0.05 level

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

For this research, the researcher discovered the crucial issues to be used for the results discussion as follows:

1. According to the findings of the performance competency development for the operating staff of the lodging business, it was found that as overall image and all of the three aspects were at the high level; first, the functional competency, secondly, management competency, and core competency, respectively. This is in accordance with the concept of Scott Parry (1998 cited in Sukanya Rassameethammachote, 2006, p. 5), which indicated that competency was the cluster of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the individuals and was influenced towards the achievement of each individual's performance. It is regarded as the role or responsibility related to the contribution. Moreover, it could be measured as the comparison value with the standard criteria, and could be developed by training courses. In addition, the concept of Dale and Hes (1995, p. 80) identified that the competency was about the findings that created the excellent performance or superior performance. Moreover, they defined the occupational competency that it was the ability to do various activities in the vocational field to be in accordance with the expected standard. The word "standard" here refers to the elements of ability combined with the criteria of performance and explanation of performance scopes. In addition, the Office of the Civil Service Commission (2008) defined the competency that was the behavioural characteristics that resulted from the knowledge, skill, and competency, as well as other characteristics. Some parts of these characteristics were composed of the skills and knowledge, ability, attitude,

personality, individual's value, or behaviours of the persons who had the great results on their performance. The competency could be divided into two groups; (1) the attributes of the persons who reflected their knowledge, skills, attitudes, belief, and trait; and (2) the groups of knowledge, skill, and attributes of the persons reflected by their expressed performance behaviours which could be measured and observed.

2. Regarding the findings, both male and female operating staff of the lodging business had different performance competency development of the functional competency by the statistical significance at the .05 level. The male operating staff of the lodging business had the performance competency development of the functional competency higher than the female staff. It could be identified that the male operating staff were more enthusiastic and paid attention to their performance, as well as being responsible their own goals, had the skills, knowledge, and ability to use the information technology to manage the information, and communicating the information more than female staff. This is in accordance with the concept of Arporn Puwittayapan (2004), who which said that the functional competency included knowledge and ability which reflected the knowledge, skills, and specific characteristics of various jobs, for example, an electrical engineer had to have the knowledge of engineering, and an accountant had to have the knowledge of accounting, etc. The persons who reflected their knowledge, skills, behaviour, and individual's attributes which occurred authentically based upon the duties or responsible work, although each person had the same functions, it was unnecessary that he or she was had to have the same ability. Moreover, the concept of Angkana Tangkrajang (2007) indicated that the management skill depended on the position. If a person held the position of manager, he or she had to sell the room and be able to manage the performance perfectly according to the customers' needs. This was because the hotel work might include the organising of various kinds of work, such as exhibitions, conventions, etc., which had to be organised appropriately based on the customers' status, as well as trade shows, international conferences, such as Medical Conference, etc.
3. Concerning the findings, the operating staff of the lodging business who had the different monthly income had the performance competence development of functional competency differently, at least one pair by the statistical significance at .05 level. The operating staff of the lodging business that had the monthly income more than 45,001 baht had the performance competency development of functional competence lower than 15,001–25,000 baht and 35,001–45,000 baht. This indicated that the operating staff had the knowledge and ability as well as the bravery to share their opinions based on their own knowledge. Moreover, they understood the principles of performance based on their functions. This is in accordance with the concept of Yaemjauang (2015), which was found that the potential of the three-star hotel staff was at the moderate level, and the general knowledge and ability standard included the communication and co-ordination ability, and they could solve the problems and could use the computer and technology appropriately. This is in accordance with the concept of Jiraprapa Akaraboworn (2006: 68), which identified that each competency consisted of three types: 1) core competency – this was good behaviour which everyone in the organisation had to maintain in order to express the cultures and principles of the organisation; 2) professional competency – this was the qualification of management ability which all personnel in the organisation had to maintain for their performance to make the work successful in accordance with the strategic plans and visions of the organisation; and 3) technical competency – this was a vocational skill necessary for achieving the performance. It was a difference based upon the work characteristics. It could be divided into two sub-parts: core technical competency and specific technical competency. Moreover, McClelland (1993) said that the competency was about the personalities hidden within the individual. This could drive that individual to

create the good performance or in accordance with the determined criteria as they were responsible for.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from using the research results are as follows:

- Integrated strategies of performance competency development objectively and widely should be determined;
- The staff should be supported to realise the significance of the performance competency development; and
- The performance competency development for the operating staff of lodging business: case study of Ranong Province.

## Recommendations of Further Research

- Comparing the performance competence of the staff towards the realisation of service for the tourists should be studied;
- Synthesis research about the future of orientation/tendency of marketing competition for the hotel and residence business should be carried out.

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