

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AVIATION INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF SOME LEGACY AND LOW-COST AIRLINES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

The aviation industry has suffered tremendous turbulence in recent years. Airlines have suffered from a number of key developments and shocks to the external business environment, including the SARS epidemic, the Gulf War and the surging oil prices that accompanied it, and heightened competition between the legacy and low cost carriers. In order to maintain or increase employee performance during such turbulent times, it is necessary for airlines and other aviation companies to manage the organisational culture. However, doing so is no easy enterprise for the culture of organisations pervades the organisational structure, as well as all policies, procedures and working processes, which makes it resistant to change. In this context, the aim of the proposed research study is to examine the management of the organisational culture and its impact on employee performance in the context of the aviation industry. There are three reasons why organisational culture is important to understandings of employee performance. An organization's 'personality' performs three important functions: it influences employee behaviour, it increases the cohesion within the organisation and it can be used to predict and control behaviour and actions. There is a plethora of research on the positive and negative implications of organisational culture. However, there is also some indication from the literature that airlines are unique in terms of the organisational cultures that exist within these companies. A gap does exist in terms of studies that have specifically examined the explicit management of these cultures in the context of strict regulation and pressures placed upon airlines in terms of safety and performance. In this context, a case study is proposed that examines the management of organisational culture and its impact on employee performance. The proposed investigation will draw on publicly available, secondary data. A convenience, stratified sampling procedure

will be adopted. In order to enable comparisons, two legacy airlines (Virgin Atlantic and British Airways) and two new entrants, low cost airlines (Ryanair and Easyjet) will be used as the case studies.

Keywords: *Aviation Industry, Employee performance, Organisational Culture, Legacy Airlines, Low-cost Airlines.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The global economy is changing rapidly and organisations are increasingly being forced to make changes in order to maintain a competitive edge. The aviation industry is one sector that has suffered tremendous turbulence in recent years. The difficulties experienced by this sector probably can be traced back to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which caused a substantial and immediate drop in demand for air travel (Bamber, et, al 2013). However, airlines have also suffered from a number of key developments and shocks to the external business environment, including the SARS epidemic, the Gulf War and the surging oil prices that accompanied it, and heightened competition among the legacy and low cost carriers (Bamber et al, 2013). All of these developments have caused airlines to consider ways to strategically lower their operating costs. In many cases, organisations have been restructured and rearranged with considerable knock on effects on the cultures that pervade and predominate the workplace, with adverse consequences for employee performance. For instance, Kaufman (2013, p. 260) notes that the restructuring that was undertaken by the US airline Delta acted as a kind of “*industry economics lesson, that the size of pay and workforce reductions was linked in a “sliding scale” manner to the price of oil—the more oil went above \$60 a barrel the larger had to be the offsetting cuts in labour cost.*” This was tantamount to communicating to employees that their worth could be measured by the price of oil – the result of such action was disharmonious employee relations and a firm drop in employee performance.

In order to maintain or increase employee performance during such turbulent times, it is necessary for airlines and other aviation companies to manage the organisational culture (Nel 2011). While restructuring visible or tangible elements of organisation such as the product or service the company offers, may be relatively straightforward, there are some aspects to organisations that are so fundamental that they form the organisation’s very essence. This is what is meant by organisational culture. Managers in the industry must be cognisant of this concept because the culture of an organisation has an enormous impact on such issues as employee performance, staff loyalty and turnover, job satisfaction, workplace relations and corporate performance. Furthermore, the culture of organisations pervades the organisational structure, as well as all policies, procedures and working processes, which makes it resistant to change (Nel 2011). At the same time, culture is known to significantly impact on employee performance, either directly or indirectly. Given the importance of high performing employees to the success of aviation companies in the current economic context, the purpose of the proposed investigation is to examine ways in which airlines have managed organisational culture over the period of the

recent challenges in the industry, and whether, and to what extent, this has impacted the performance of employees in that sector.

Aims and objectives

Aim:

The study aims to examine the management of organisational culture with a particular focus on quality oriented service culture of two legacy and two low-cost airlines.

Objectives:

- 1) To compare the different quality service culture of the different airlines.
- 2) To examine how and the extent to which the quality service culture has been managed by the different airlines.
- 3) To consider issues of sensitivity in terms of organisational culture as a determinant of employee performance and the quality service culture of airlines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisational culture

Before embarking on a discussion of organisational culture, it is important to define what is meant by the term. This is not an easy enterprise, however, for there is no consensus in the literature as to a precise definition. The notion has a rich heritage in the sociological, anthropological and psychological literature. While a comprehensive discussion of the various definitions is not possible here, a few perspectives are briefly outlined. Hill and Jones (2001) treat organisational cultures as those values, norms and standards that are part of the collective consciousness of an organisation. In this way, culture is highly intangible and may be indefinable or unspoken. Culture encompasses a way of working within an organisation that may be difficult to articulate to an outsider.

Goldhaber and Barnett (1988) argued that organisational culture is comprised of four components: language, values, behaviours and stories and legends. Language is deemed to be the most fundamental aspect of organisational culture. This includes the vocabulary, symbols and jargon used by the organisation's incumbents. It is through this system that the organisation communicates its outlook, behavioural expectations and beliefs. Values are those norms or beliefs that provide individuals with standards for morality and competence and which guide attitudes, judgments and behaviours. Additionally, values help the organisation to define its goals and set standards for the evaluation of success.

Another component of culture identified by Goldhaber and Barnett (1988) is the behaviour of the organisation's members. These are the routine tasks and activities that enable the organisation to accomplish its objectives. Behaviours need not necessarily be tangible: they may be task-related but they may also be socio-emotional. As with organisational values, knowledge of the rules and expectations for appropriate behaviours is expected to be shared by the employees in the organisation. Behaviour includes organisational rituals and ceremonies. These may be task rituals specified in work manuals, organisation-based rituals such as weekly team meetings, or social rituals such as annual Christmas parties. Participation in these events gives members a sense of shared identity, reinforces their membership in the organisation, and provides them with collective experiences through which the culture's value system might be internalized.

Finally, Goldhaber and Barnett (1988) saw stories, myths and legends as essential elements of organisational culture. Every organisation has a collection of folk-tales that are exchanged among existing incumbents and related to new members as part of the socialisation process. These might include such tales as an infamous incident that took place at a company party, or the history and background of the firm's founder. These stories provide newcomers with an easier way to understand the organisation than simply reading guidelines or manuals. In this way, stories and legends are an essential means of describing the "way things are done here" and communicating the organisational experience.

Schein (2001)'s famous conceptualization of culture identifies three distinct layers. At the surface level, the artifacts of the organisation can be discerned. Artifacts are the visible, audible or tangible outcomes of behaviours and include dress codes, technology, office layout, language and organisational structure. Schein contends that the organisation's values and beliefs are to be found at the second level. This includes ethical and moral codes, attitudes, philosophies and ideologies. These values serve important symbolic functions and tend to be deeply ingrained in the culture. Deeper still within the culture, there are basic underlying assumptions. Schein (2001) defines these as those fundamental values that are so taken for granted within an organisation that they are dominant, unconscious and non-debatable. This includes spirit and truths. It should also be noted that organisations rarely have one, universal culture: rather, it is typical to find many different and competing value systems that generate a range of organisational realities and subcultures.

Taking all of these perspectives into account, organisational culture can be thought of as a set of beliefs, assumptions and values shared by members of an organization. In other words, organizational culture is the personality of the organization (Awadh and Saad, 2013).

Organisational culture and employee performance

There are three reasons why organisational culture is important to understandings of employee performance. An organization's 'personality' performs three important functions: it influences employee behaviour, it increases the cohesion within the organisation and it can be used to predict and control behaviour and actions. Guided by this theoretical link, empiricists have sought to demonstrate that organisational culture can be shaped or moulded in order to effect

changes in the performance of employees (Shahzad, et, al 2013). The effect of organisational behaviour on employee performance occurs in several ways. Hill and Jones (2001) note that corporate values control the types of behaviours that individuals must subscribe to in order to achieve the organization's goals. So, from organizational culture arises a series of guidelines or expectations that prescribe the behaviour of employees towards each other as well as to external stakeholders. For this reason, it has been argued that corporate culture is essential for an organizational unit to function effectively, and for harmonious relations in the workplace (Hill and Jones, 2001). The poor labour relations that have been witnessed in some parts of the airline industry in recent years could potentially be attributed to a lack of subscription of the company's employees to new organizational cultures (Gittell, et, al 2009).

Organizational culture helps to establish a sense of community, identity and coherence within organizations. Just as a foreigner arriving in a strange country might be overwhelmed by a sense of isolation or unfamiliarity, so an individual whose values or beliefs are at odds with an organization will soon feel uncomfortable. In this way, organizational culture can impact on a wide variety of behavioural variables including individual career development, job satisfaction, team cohesion and productivity (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). Griffin and Moorhead (2011) viewed organizational culture as fulfilling four basic functions with regard to the behaviour of members. Firstly, it provides them with an identity and sense of togetherness that is necessary for achieving common goals. Secondly, having a shared culture tends to facilitate collective commitment to the organization and its mission. Thirdly, it encourages a lasting cooperation among members and thus promotes the stability of the organization. Finally, it assists members in making sense of their environment, by helping them to understand why things happen in the way they do. Thus, organizational culture acts as a sort of social adhesive reinforcing and stabilizing work relationships.

Organisational culture in the aviation industry

There already exists some empirical work on the organisational culture in the aviation industry (e.g. Mohamadi, et,al 2014; Kaufman, 2013; Quick, 1992). That corpus of research has shown that there are some unique aspects of companies in the aviation sector that produce nuances in organisational culture. Firstly, there are both safety cultures and performance cultures that either exist alongside, or an integrated within the general organisational culture (Glazer, et, al 2005). *Safety culture* refers to the values and principles that are integrated within airlines' processes and working arrangements in order to meet stringent, government-established benchmarks in terms of safety such as hazard reporting, number of fatal accidents and risk management (Glazer et al, 2005). It should also be noted that many airlines are national carriers and hence receive funding, support and subsidy from national governments (Bamber et al, 2013). They are also a major source of national pride. Furthermore, airlines often occupy an integral position in terms of national economies, forming a key part of the country's transportation infrastructure, generating and supporting thousands of jobs either directly or indirectly and are fundamental to ensuring national security. This gives rise to a *performance culture* that pervades airlines and other

aviation bodies, with governments, the general public and other stakeholders expressing firm interest in the effectiveness, success and performance of those companies.

What this means in practice is that there are tight limitations on the type of organisational culture that pervades such companies; furthermore, management of organisational culture to produce employee performance is rigidly controlled (Bamber et al, 2013). For instance, Kaufman (2013) has argued that in practice, only two types of organisational culture can be observed in the aviation industry – the *control* culture and the *commitment* culture. The control culture, which is far more prevalent, is characterised by narrowly defined occupational roles, authoritarian management and rigid hierarchies of control. In such workplaces “employees are expected to come to work and just do their jobs” (Kaufman, 2013, p. 345). In contrast, in commitment cultures, employee engagement, voice and involvement are prioritised. Cross-functional coordination, teamwork, and flexible work are characteristic and efforts are made to develop a deep relationship between workers and the organisation. Kaufman’s qualitative, chronological analysis of the working practices and organisational culture of the American airline Delta argued that the movement to a commitment culture could be credited with saving the airline from bankruptcy following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, Kaufman’s (2013) analysis does not reveal how Delta was able to undertake such a change given the restrictions imposed by the safety and performance cultures.

Summary of literature review

In summary, there is a plethora of research on the positive and negative implications of organisational culture. However, there is also some indication from the literature that airlines are unique in terms of the organisational cultures that exist within these companies. A gap does exist in terms of studies that have specifically examined the explicit management of these cultures in the context of strict regulation and pressures placed upon airlines in terms of safety and performance.

METHODOLOGY

Philosophy

It is crucial that researcher demonstrate that their proposed methods of data collection and analysis correspond with their philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and how best it might be uncovered (Bryman and Bell, 2009). As Theobald (1968, p. 18) cautioned, “research cannot begin until we have chosen, and so our choice must be made without reference to the results of research. In other words, our choice will be extra-empirical, and this is to say that it is ultimately a philosophical choice”. Philosophical assumptions comprise both ontological and epistemological aspects. Ontology refers to the way in which knowledge is conceived and represented to observers, while epistemology refers to the way in which knowledge can be accessed and known (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011). The philosophical stance adopted by the researcher is a social constructionist position. Social constructionism is a philosophical

perspective that argues that there does not exist one universal reality; rather, a number of realities that are dependent upon the position, status and perspective of observers (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). In other words, knowledge is *socially* constructed by those who observe it. The social constructionist position is well used in studies of organisational culture, for the intangibility and dynamism of organisational culture means that it can be differently understood depending on those that observe it (Hatch, 2012).

Research Design

Secondary data refers to data that is already in existence, having been collected and reported for a different purpose (Quinlan, 2011). The use of secondary data is chosen to fulfil the research objectives. This is possible because airlines are publicly held companies; accordingly, key information about their policies, procedures, processes and performance are widely publicised. Furthermore, there are considerable benefits associated with the use of secondary data. Firstly, since the data is already in existence and widely available, the challenges associated with the collection of primary data, especially high refusal rates, can be avoided (Quinlan, 2011). Secondly, the use of secondary data can generate considerable cost and resource savings, which is particularly useful for the lone researcher. Thirdly, secondary data can often be higher in terms of quality than primary data. Indeed, Procter (1993, p. 257) argues that “data obtained in this way is likely to be higher [in quality] than a relatively inexperienced researcher can hope to obtain”. However, the disadvantages and risks associated with the use of secondary data are recognised. Importantly, there may be aspects of airlines’ organisational culture, employee performance or both that are not widely reported. In recognition of this, as well as the social constructionist philosophical position adopted by the researcher, it is acknowledged here that the findings yielded using this methodology may be less than the absolute truth.

Sampling strategy

The extant research on the aviation industry distinguishes between two types of airline: legacy airlines and the new entrant, low cost airlines (Bamber et al, 2013). Legacy airlines are those that were founded before the aviation industry was deregulated in the 1970s and 1980s. These typically offer full service product offerings, fly from primary airports, fly long haul, cater to both business and leisure passengers and offer a wide range of amenities (Bamber et al, 2013). In contrast, new entrant airlines are those that emerged after the deregulation of the market. These airlines typically fly short haul, and offer ‘no-frills’ service as well as a narrower range of product offerings. These companies typically target price sensitive customers, which they are able to do because of their lowered operating costs (Bamber et al, 2013). For instance, low-cost airlines tend to work from secondary, rather than primary airports, which have lower fees, as well as fewer costly delays and congestion.

These types of airline differ considerably in terms of their competitive strategy and their attempts to achieve competitiveness in terms of costs. It is also reasonable to assume that they differ in terms of their organisational culture, for there are links between strategy and culture (Hill and Jones, 2001; Rothaermel, 2012). Accordingly, it is important to recognise the differences

between these airlines in the sampling strategy that is employed in the investigation. Sampling strategy refers to the techniques employed by the researcher to identify and access participants in the study (Bryman and Bell, 2009). The participants in this study – known as the sample – are the airline themselves. A convenience, stratified sampling procedure will be adopted. This means that the researcher will select airlines for inclusion in the study that meet certain criteria, and that have sufficient publicly available information to meet the needs of the study. The unit of stratification will be legacy-low cost. In order to enable comparisons, two legacy airlines and two new entrant, low cost airlines will be used as the case studies for this investigation. A preliminary, cursory review of the available research suggests that Virgin Atlantic and British Airways will serve as the legacy airlines, while Ryanair and Easyjet will serve as the new entrant, low cost airlines.

Data collection method

A systematic search of the literature will be used to collect the data. A systematic literature search is a specific type of literature search that draws on a rigid approach including an explicit and transparent search process and clear inclusion and the use of clear inclusion and exclusion criteria (Greenhalgh, et, al 2009). Firstly, the research aims and objectives will be used to delineate a number of search terms such as: airlines; aviation; employee performance; employee success; organisational culture; values; principles. Secondly, these keywords will be combined into pairs or trios as appropriate utilising Boolean logic. Thirdly, the research terms will be used to probe the key academic databases in business and management (such as EBSCO, JSTOR, Business Source Premier, and Web of Knowledge). In addition, a wider search of the Internet will be necessary in order to access the annual reports of the case study companies, and any industry or other government reports that have appropriate information that is relevant to the study. A number of exclusion criteria will apply. Since the research is concerned with the management of organisational culture over the period that the aviation industry has suffered considerable challenges and difficulties, the literature that is yielded will be restricted to the past 15 years. The papers will also be probed to assess their quality. For instance, unreliable media reports will be excluded from the study. The principle of saturation will be used to ascertain the conclusion of the literature search.

Method of data analysis

A thematic approach to the data analysis will be used, informed by grounded theory (Bryman and Bell, 2009). This involves probing the secondary data to establish patterns which can be grouped according to theme. Following Kaufman's (2013) earlier study, a chronological approach will be adopted to the presentation of the case study data, showing how, if at all, organisational culture has been managed over time, and the contribution that it has made to the performance and effectiveness of employees.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This describes the findings from the analysis of the customer reviews and the document analysis carried out for all the four case study companies. An attempt is also made to use this chapter as a platform to apply some cross-referencing with the objectives of the study originally set out in the introduction chapter.

This study analysed the different aspects of quality service culture from the organisational culture perspective in the case study firms that include two low-cost airlines; Easyjet and Ryanair and two legacy airlines; Virgin Atlantic and British Airways. The analysis was carried out on themes for each airline.

Easyjet

Easyjet is one of the two low-cost airlines chosen for this study. The analysis under EasyJet has a total of five themes which include performance of ground and cabin staff, passenger information, maintenance of flight schedule, condition of the airplane, in-flight services and entertainment, and the perception of passengers from their experience and expectations as well.

The data analysis under the performance of staff theme, suggests that there were both positive (50%) and negative (also 50%) contents of the customer reviews. Passenger information theme under the classification as analysed show that from the total number of observation from the reviews, five out of seven were negative. The management of flight schedule which is also a theme came under a serious scrutiny by one of the passengers who attributed a flight delay during his trip to the lack of good organisation of operational services at the EasyJet's hub. Under this theme, a passenger, however, expressed his happiness with the on-line check-in process and the early departure of his flight. Another area of passengers' sensitivity is the perception of some of the customers that some aeroplanes in the company's fleet are old. This view is evidentially supported in the analysis that indicated 90% of the customers expressed their preference for a new aeroplane. On in-flight services and passenger entertainment, a passenger complained about the lack of certain catering service on-board a plane. On flight delays, two passengers expressed a negative perception of the company on their inability to minimise flight delays which the passengers attributed to the lack of provision of effective ground services at the airports. The documents analysis revealed that airline operates a business model that focus on high aircraft utilisation, quick turn around with the objective of keeping operating costs low. The analysis also shows that there are policy documents that relates to personnel relations, business ethics, equality and diversity. The study also shows that the company has in place policy on business ethics. This company operates a fleet of Airbus aircraft model.

Ryanair

The second case study company under the low-cost airlines is Ryanair. The analysis covered five themes namely: performance of ground and cabin staff, narrated passenger experience, passenger

comfort, passenger confidence/morale and public image of the carrier. The first theme deals with the issue of personnel performance on the job and how it impacted on the delivery of the quality service culture. Five reviews were analysed and four out of the five stated that the cabin crew were friendly, attentive and efficient while discharging their duty. One reviewer was however very critical of the cabin crew attitude on duty.

Passenger experience is one of the themes and there were nine commentaries by passengers, out of which seven are positive and two are negative. The analysis suggests that all the comments are weighty in their connotation. The third classification of the theme covers the area of passenger comfort on the various services provided, for instance, the check-in process, in-flight entertainment, cabin cleanliness, and seating space. A total of 11 comments were analysed out of which five contain positive narrations while the remaining six are negative. On the theme regarding passenger confidence and morale, there are two positive observations. The theme dealing with the public image of Ryanair covers the poor management of information by the airline on a particular issue of a delayed flight. In the instance, conflicting information was given which cause apprehension among families of passengers. Apparently the flight was delayed for 50 hours. Another negative observation was made in one of the reviews that on a flight, passengers were refused transit accommodation without any prior information, and was disheartening, according to some of the comments. The document analysis revealed that this company operate a business model that uses the core competence and capabilities to offer a better value proposition that is unique and that can lead to competitive advantage. The analysis revealed the existence of a code of ethics in the company that allows for 'whistleblowing' with the intention of encouraging good work practices. Also revealed in the document analysis are the improvements on customer information processes by the company with the intention of keeping abreast with the development of information and communication technology.

Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic is one of the legacy airlines selected for this study. The analysis carried out cover four themes that include customer experience, flight comfort which includes seating space and in-flight entertainment, passenger confidence/perception and performance of staff. On customer experience, there is a total of 12 reviews and out of which seven contain positive comments on customer services with respect to catering and early collection of baggage. The negative statements are related to seating space. Customer experience encapsulates the expression of passengers in the general area of customer service offers by the airline. The second theme is flight comfort that covers seating space (legroom) and the in-flight entertainment, for instance movies, games and food and drinks. The analysis shows that 10 out of 12 observations in the reviews are positive and mainly on the good catering services provided. One of the passengers complained of failure of the entertainment system while another observed the inconvenience caused whenever the next seat (front) reclines due to the small seating space. The passenger confidence and perception indicates how the customers perceive the organisation and also the level of confidence they might have on the service offers by the organisation. The analysis suggests that out of the four reviews, three are negative on their perception of the standard of the

services provided by the airline while one is cautiously moderate in his comments on his perception. The performance of ground and cabin staff is another theme that deals with the observations made on staff performance. It includes the analysis of the services provided by the staff during the check-in process, baggage handling, boarding, in-flight service, disembarking and collection of luggage. The majority of the reviews (six out of seven) contain positive observations on the performance of the staff. It shows that only one review contain a negative comment on the staff performance. The content analysis revealed that Virgin Atlantic like that British Airways has put in place policy frame work that is being used to achieve their corporate objectives and day-to-day business operations. The analysis provides evidence that the organisation, in the area of management, corporate responsibility and business strategy has put in place policies they said they are implementing in order to achieve their business goals. The analysis shows that the issue of staff motivation is well-rooted in their management philosophy as evidenced in the style and business practice of the founder of Virgin Atlantic

British Airways

British Airways is the second case study firm under the legacy airlines category. There is a total of five themes that include passenger confidence, morale and perception; staff performance; passenger experience; aircraft condition and passenger comfort. On passenger confidence, morale and perception, the analysis suggests that five statements from the passenger reviews are indicative of high passenger morale and they have a positive perception of the organisation. However, seven other observations obtained from the reviews indicate that the passengers have a negative perception of the organisation. The analysis on staff performance shows that out of the 20 comments from the reviews, 18 are negative and two other comments are negative. Passenger experience is also classified as a theme. The analysis has a total of 17 observations from the passenger reviews and out of that number, 14 statements are negative as against three positive. The negative comments relate to unpleasant passenger experience, flight delays, poor cabin cleanliness, issue of competitive pricing, poor catering and poor seating space (legroom). The aircraft condition is also one of the themes and it is the physical condition of the aircraft as observed by the passengers. The analysis of the passenger reviews indicates that three reviews contain negative statements that are on the seating space while one commented on the physical condition of the aeroplane and said it is old. Another review contain a positive statement on a Boeing 777 airplane that said it has a good and spacious interior. The passenger comfort is the fifth theme under the classification and it consists of issues on catering, delayed flights, passenger information services, spacious seats (legroom). From the analysis, a total of 22 observations were arrived at after the analysis, and out of which 15 are positive while seven are negative. The positive statements mainly addressed the issue of catering services. The negative comments are in respect to poor catering, flight delay and poor cabin staff service on-board the aeroplane. The document analysis for British Airways was based on three units of analysis, i.e., quality service culture, work performance, and management issues. It was observed that the organisation has policies and programmes that address the need for a high-performance workforce, a reward system and salary scheme that are competitive. The organisation also has document that suggests

the organisation is pursuing a high performing work culture that is fashioned to achieve a leaner organisation. They have a mission statement and a change programme referred to as 'Complete 2012'.

CONCLUSION

Organisational culture is known to significantly impact employee performance. However, organizational culture is subject to tight controls in the aviation industry, due to pressures on airlines to meet safety and performance standards. In addition, the industry has suffered tremendous turbulence in recent times. Accordingly, the study that is proposed will contribute to the business and management and aviation literature by examining the ways in which airlines have been able to shape and manage their cultures and the impact this has had on the performance of their employees.

RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are presented:-

- I. With the realisation that all the case study companies had put in place policies and programmes for conduct of their business that particularly relates to employee relations, it becomes necessary for them to comprehensively implement those policies and programmes in order to harness the full potentials of their employees who are required for delivering quality service to their customers.
- II. The need for Top management in all the organisations to vigorously pursue the concept of total quality management in all areas of their operations to achieve the most important goal of customer satisfaction. This is in view of the sensitive nature of airline passengers' demands, desires and expectations. Here, the staff need to be adequately positioned in terms of customer service skills and personal conduct at work to face the challenges of the very high airline passenger expectations.
- III. For the organisational culture of quality service to impact positively on the employee performance, the provision of adequate training on all aspects of their jobs including customer service techniques, a competitive pay and welfare package and the availability of other motivational schemes for the employees need to be sustained in all the organisations.
- IV. There is the need for the continuous alignment of the way of doing things in each of the organisation (organisational culture) with their individual goals and aspirations. This means employee engagement and involvement in the area of communication, motivation, teamwork and all aspects of personnel relations.

- V. The airlines to understand the current reality that there is no longer a clear demarcation between low-cost and legacy airlines in terms of their operation and product features and therefore need to re-assess their business strategies to suit the present business reality for their survival and growth.
- VI. The policy of using only regional airports by Ryanair is a good strategy in lowering cost. However, the company needs to realise the present competitive environment in the industry and possibly consider moving into heathrow and Gartwick airports for certain number of routes.
- VII. The airlines, particularly British Airways and Easyjet to consider the need to do more in the area of refurbishment programme especially the cabin seats and interior of the older versions of their airplanes to appease their passengers.

Recommendation for further research

The suggestion is to conduct an exploratory case study research to specifically measure the sentiments and emotions of airline customers using the e-data from the customer reviews adopted in this study.

To also consider using additional matrix such as age, gender, nationality, profession, status, and the purpose of the journey of passengers to determine if there is a correlation between the comments attributed to a passenger/group of passengers to any or all the matrix listed. There from, the results of the study can be applied by the airlines to evalaute their service offerings to a level of comfort the passengers desires. To also consider applying the method of sentiment analysis which were not used in this research.

Financial Times (2015) defined sentimental analysis as a linguistic analysis technique where a body of text is examined to characterise the tonality of a document. Though the method pre-dates modern technological tools, the use of sentiment analysis has accelerated in recent years with the development of large-scale computational infrastructure that can analyse large unstructured textual data sets. Accordingly, and given the growth of user-generated content, sentiment analysis is useful in social media monitoring to automatically characterise the overall feeling or mood of consumers as reflected in social media toward a specific brand or company.

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