COGNITIVE SCIENCES AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Social Networking of Owner-Managers in Small Accommodation in Malaysia: Implications for HRD

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ABSTRACT

Small accommodation providers are challenged to grow their business due to their limited resources. Although social networking is suggested to assist organization growth, few studies have focused on how owner-managers in the Malaysian hospitality industry network and the value they attach to it. This paper presents findings of 10 in-depth interviews of social networking motivation and barrier of owner-managers of small accommodation in Kuching, Malaysia. The findings show that the owner-managers were motivated by the perceived organizational and personal benefits of networking with others. However, issues such as social competence and business concerns were identified as barriers that may limit their participation in networking. To overcome these issues, it is suggested that educators, policymakers, and trade associations work together with the owner-managers to address their specific development and resource needs.

Keywords: Social networking; small firm; SME; entrepreneur; Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality industry is an important growth area for Malaysia, with emphasis as one of the National Key Economic Areas for Malaysia under the Economic Transformation Program and total earnings increasing from $4.9 billion in 2003 to $15.2 billion in 2013 (Tourism Malaysia, 2015). This industry includes services in accommodation, shopping, and recreational activities. In Malaysia, small medium enterprises (SMEs) in the services sector are defined as those with sales turnover that does not exceed $6.5 million or does not exceed 75 employees (SME Corporation Malaysia, 2013).

While there have been studies in tourism and small hotels (Abdullah, Ishak & Bustaman, 2011; Jaafar, Toh, & M.Sukaron, 2011; Md. Salleh, Abdul Hamid, Hashim & Omain, 2010; Chan &