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The Impact of Employee Engagement on Customer Satisfaction and financial Performance in Services Oriented Enterprises

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Abstract
Using a service-profit-chain framework as the theoretical basis, this paper aims to investigate the relationship between employee happiness and customer satisfaction as well as their effects on the financial performance of a hotel. This paper investigates four main correlations: (1) the direct relationship between customer satisfaction and financial performance; (2) the direct relationship between employee satisfaction and financial performance; (3) the direct relationship between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction; and (4) the indirect relationship between employee satisfaction and financial performance. Moreover, this paper investigates the mediating function of customer happiness on the indirect link between staff satisfaction and financial success. Data for this study came from three- and four-star hotel management, staff members, and consumers. The hypothesised hypotheses and the correlations between the constructs were empirically tested using a two-stage structural equation modelling (SEM). Results imply that although employee satisfaction has no direct major influence on financial performance, customer satisfaction has positive considerable influence. Rather, consumer satisfaction moderates an indirect link between employee satisfaction and financial performance. In the direct relationship, customer satisfaction has significant effect on financial performance. While in indirect relationship, financial performance has significant effect on employee happiness.

Introduction
Numerous studies indicate a favourable correlation between employee satisfaction and consumer satisfaction. Employee satisfaction has become a significant concern over the past two decades, garnering considerable interest from researchers who have suggested a favourable association between the two variables. The intrinsic characteristics of the service industry render employee happiness increasingly vital. Employee happiness seems to correlate positively with customer satisfaction. Employee happiness has emerged as a pressing issue in the last 20 years, drawing a lot of attention from scholars who have postulated a positive correlation between the two. The nature of the service business makes employee satisfaction all the more important [1-3]. According to "the service-profit chain," offering employees an exceptional internal working environment is likely to result in satisfied employees who exhibit loyalty to the organisation and are capable of delivering an outstanding customer service experience [4]. Customers will acknowledge and appreciate the exceptional service provided

to them. Eventually, they will demonstrate loyalty behaviours, including sustained purchasing and heightened referrals. These loyalty behaviours will yield growth in both market share and profitability for the service firm [5,6]. Service firms have been devoting large resources for employee and customer satisfaction and retention since they assume satisfied employees will produce satisfied and loyal consumers, which will increase sales and, consequently, higher financial returns [7]. Some studies, however, express grave questions regarding the strong focus on employee and customer satisfaction as well as whether or not they have bearing on basic performance [7,8]. In the hotel and tourism sectors, attention to service and customer satisfaction is regarded as a "given" element, which is anticipated and normal for daily operations. While having satisfied clients does not ensure the success of any hospitality and tourism company, hospitality and tourism businesses cannot thrive without satisfied consumers [9]. Success depends on a company's ability to provide consumers with better experiences than its rivals, therefore benefiting both staff members and customers. Although research on employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction as well as their retention has been conducted in great detail, effects of these factors on financial performance indicators have not attracted much attention [10,11]. Globalization and free trade persist in transforming the corporate landscape and intensifying global rivalry. In the current company landscape, to maintain competitiveness and provide sufficient financial returns to owners and shareholders, managers rely significantly on their ability to efficiently navigate continuous and unforeseen changes [12]. The capacity for rapid and efficient response (time-based competition) and the fulfillment of client requirements have emerged as important traits of competitiveness and success for numerous companies. Consequently, client happiness has emerged as one of the most extensively analyzed subjects in hospitality and tourist literature. Previous research indicate that staff significantly influence customer satisfaction [13,14]. Workers in the industries are often more hands-on when it comes to providing guests with services. Quality perceptions and customer satisfaction are greatly influenced by their involvement and interaction with customers. This is because products in the services-oriented enterprises are often complex and represent a culmination of interactions, exchanges, and performance between employees and customers [15]. According to Matzler and Renzl (2007), the services-oriented enterprises are currently grappling with the pressing issue of employee satisfaction and retention. This is because, as any service company's intangible assets are the knowledge and skills of its employees, and the future of the company is highly dependent on both the employees and the quality of the interactions between employees and customers [16]. The majority of services-oriented enterprises experts and academic studies agree that reducing employee turnover can have a substantial effect on a company's bottom line, which is why service providers have been investing heavily in retention efforts in recent years. According to the literature, there is a strong correlation between client retention and employee retention [16,17]. Staff members who enjoy and thrive in their workplace are more likely to remain employed by the organization. With fewer staff leaving and less money needed to train new ones, this should lead to better financial performance. Research also shows that customers are more likely to have a positive experience when dealing with businesses whose personnel are happy and fulfilled [18]. In consequence, this kind of satisfying service experience is likely to greatly affect client retention and referrals. Research also shows that keeping customers is good for business. This is because keeping an existing customer is far cheaper than finding a new one [18,19]. According to a study, the service-profit chain delineates the connections among profitability, customer loyalty and satisfaction, as well as employee satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity. The paradigm asserts that profit and growth are primarily driven by client loyalty, which directly stems from customer happiness [20,21]. Satisfaction is predominantly determined by the value of services rendered to clients, which is generated by content, loyal, and efficient personnel. A study contends that the service-profit chain can be characterized by a distinctive form of leadership that underscores the significance of every employee and client. An in-depth analysis of the model substantiates the assertion that contented personnel are inclined to deliver superior services, which is expected to yield a gratifying service experience for clients and enhanced financial success for the organization. This study concentrated on the correlation among employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial performance, as the prior discussion indicates that the fundamental principle of the service-profit chain posits that content employees tend to generate satisfied customers, which in turn leads to pleased shareholders [22,23]. Despite the service-profit connection and other studies indicating that satisfied employees and customers tend to enhance financial success, empirical examination of this relationship has been largely overlooked [24,25]. A limited number of empirical research have established a connection between satisfaction and performance. Nevertheless, the studies investigating the relationship between satisfaction and performance metrics yielded incongruous results [26,27].

Materials & Methods:

Data for the current investigation were gathered from staff, guests, and management of three- and four-star hotels situated in five destinations. In each location, 50 three- and four-star hotels were enlisted to partake in the study utilizing a snowball sampling procedure. A member of the research team gave a packet of materials to each hotel. Each package comprised 10 employee surveys, 20 consumer surveys, and 1 manager survey. Prior to data collection, each property was designated a code to ensure that replies from employees and customers were accurately attributed to the corresponding property. Customer satisfaction data were gathered via a series of surveys administered at each facility. The financial data were obtained from the managers of specific properties. Surveys were administered to a randomly selected group of 10 employees who had been employed at the hotel for a minimum of 6 months. Anonymity was assured to all personnel to ensure precise responses. Employees were directed to complete the surveys, place them in envelopes, seal them to ensure anonymity, and subsequently return them to the interviewer. A total of 2023 out of 2500 eligible employees submitted valid surveys, resulting in a response rate of 81%. Twenty randomly selected customers at each participating hotel were given self-administered survey forms. At the time of each eighth guest's checkout, a member of the study team contacted them and questioned. If they would be interested in doing a little survey to rate their overall experience. After customers finished the brief survey, they were asked to put it in the envelope that was provided, seal it, and then return it to the member of the research team. A response rate of 67% was achieved from 3346 valid consumer surveys. Financial performance surveys were filled out by managers of all 250 hotels since all managers had already consented to participate in the study. Each property's financial, customer, and employee data was collected, and then a combined measure for customer and employee satisfaction was calculated for each property. In the case of Property A, for instance, nine valid surveys measuring employee happiness and sixteen valid surveys measuring customer satisfaction were obtained. To start, we averaged all nine answers to the first item of the employee satisfaction survey to get a summed metric for that section. Every item (question) on the employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction survey questionnaire was scored using the same approach until all items had been added together. Subsequently, a single line was produced by entering the summated responses for Property A, which included the financial performance data provided by the management, the summated scores for each variable (question) measuring employee and customer happiness, and the data from a single data file. For every single property, we followed the exact identical steps. The data file now includes the outcomes of all properties. Researchers were able to reduce the measurement error associated with all of the assessed variables by using the sum of employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction scores. Ensuring that individual ratings are reasonably constant within each firm set was required because this study summarized individual data into firm level data via a cross-level data transformation. Hence, the interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was used to evaluate the within-group interrater reliability of multiple-item scales. This was done to verify that individual ratings were reasonably stable within each firm set and to check for consistency between employee and customer perceptions. This reliability coefficient is understood in the same way as others. A Study found that a dependability score of .70 or higher implies a strong level of within-group interrater reliability. The results showed that the constructs of customer satisfaction (.81) and employee satisfaction (.68) had acceptable levels of interrater reliability. There was a determination that the employee satisfaction construct's interrater reliability score of.68 was close enough, even though it was below the acceptable range of.60 to.70. Combining the two-stage process advised by Hassab (2012), the LISREL 8 structural equation analysis package with maximum likelihood (ML) method of estimation was used to test the features of the items of the constructions in the proposed model [28,29]. First tested was a confirmatory measurement model specifying the proposed relations of the observed variables to the underlying constructions, with the constructions let to freely interact. Reliability and validity tests helped one evaluate the fit of the individual components as well as the composites. Calculated with LISREL estimations, the composite reliability is computed by the method given by and corresponds analogously with coefficient alpha. Assessed also were convergent validity and discriminant validity. From the measurement model, convergent validity was evaluated by finding whether the estimated pattern coefficient of each indicator on its proposed underlying construct factor is significant (more than twice its standard error). Constraining the estimated correlation between every conceivable pair of constructs to 1.0 and then running an x 2 difference test on the values obtained for the constrained and unconstrained models assessed discriminant validity for each. In an unconstrained model, a much smaller x 2 value shows that discriminant validity is obtained. Then the structural model was evaluated. The structural part of the structural equation modeling (SEM) makes it possible to test several equations with several dependant variables. For every suggested relationship, this statistical approach yields parameter values—that is, path coefficients—which also establish their respective importance. Furthermore evaluated using the causal step method advised by was the mediation effect of consumer satisfaction.

Results:

Table 1 indicates that all composite reliabilities exceed .70. The overall fit of the final measurement model is represented by the following statistics: $\chi^2(32) = 85.27$ ($P = 0.0$); GFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.98. Additionally, the root mean square residual (RMR) is 0.028, while the standardized RMR is 0.038.

Table I: Measurement Properties based on SEM

Indicators	Completely Standard loading	Indictor Reliability
Financial success		79
1. Return on Investment	0.80	0.64
2. Profitability	0.83	0.69
3. Net Profit	0.58	0.34
Employee Happiness		71
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my job	0.72	0.52
2. I intend to keep working long in future	0.63	0.40
3. As soon as I can find another job I'll Quit	0.58	0.34
4. I often think of quitting the job	0.54	0.29
Customer Satisfaction		83
1. I am very satisfied	0.91	0.83
2. I'm delighted by services	0.77	0.59
3. The Enterprise exceeded my expectations	0.67	0.45

Two types of validity measures were examined: discriminant validity and convergent validity. Discriminant validity pertains to the principle that measures of distinct constructs, which are theoretically expected to be unrelated, are indeed observed to lack correlation [30]. Observed indicators measuring one construct should not correlate with measures of other constructs in the measurement model, provided that the constructs in the proposed model exhibit discriminant validity. Discriminant validity was evaluated for each construct in the measurement model to confirm that they do not measure the same concepts or ideas, by analyzing the constructs in pairs [31]. The "employee satisfaction" construct was evaluated in relation to the "customer satisfaction" construct to demonstrate that these two constructs possess discriminant validity, indicating they do not measure the same concept. The "employee satisfaction" construct was subsequently evaluated in relation to the "financial performance" construct, followed by the assessment of the "customer satisfaction" construct against the "financial performance" construct. Two models were tested for each possible pair of estimated constructs. The initial model was the constrained model, in which the correlation parameter between each pair of constructs was fixed at 1.00. The second model was the unconstrained model, in which the correlation parameter between the two constructs was not manipulated or fixed at 1.00. The x^2 value was produced for both constrained and unconstrained models, along with their corresponding degrees of freedom. A chi-squared difference test was subsequently conducted on the two models. The unconstrained (free) model exhibited a notably lower x^2 value, indicating the attainment of discriminant validity. Table 2 demonstrates that each construct exhibits discriminant validity.

Table II: Results of Discriminant Validity Tests

Parameter	Correlation Value	X^2 with Correlation Fixed	d.f	Significance Level
1-2	0.29	71.45	14	0.00
1-3	0.17	59.22	14	0.00
2-3	0.32	63.80	9	0.00

1= Employee Happiness; 2= Customer Satisfaction; 3= Financial Performance

Convergent validity is the intersect between several tests meant to measure the same construct but with distinct sources of undesirable variation. Stated differently, if multiple observable indicators are used to evaluate a theoretical construct—that is, latent variable—those observed indicators should have a good amount of variance and converge together. One widely used approach in determining convergent validity for structural equation modeling research is looking at the estimated pattern coefficient of the standardized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) parameters. By use of the measurement model, convergent validity can be evaluated whether the estimated pattern coefficient of each indicator on its proposed underlying concept component is significant. That is so, convergent validity is obtained if the numbers on the off diagonal are significant. Large factor loadings statistically significant point to convergent validity. To assess the mediation effect, zero-order correlations among the variables were computed. Zero-order correlation evaluates the link between two variables without considering the impact of additional variables in the prediction. The zero-order correlation between employee happiness and financial performance was computed, yielding a thoroughly normalized b of .17 and a t-value of 3.50. The zero-order correlation between staff happiness and customer satisfaction, which may serve as a potential mediator, was computed (fully standardized b = .29; t-value = 5.96). The zero-order correlation between customer happiness and financial success was computed (fully standardized b = .32; t-value = 7.19). The findings indicated that all three zero-order correlations were significant at the .05 significance level. The complete model illustrated in Table 1 was evaluated. As illustrated in Table 2, the initially substantial correlation between employee satisfaction and financial success became negligible once the mediator (consumer satisfaction) was considered in the analysis. This research substantiates the fourth hypothesis by unequivocally demonstrating that the correlation between staff satisfaction and financial performance is mediated by customer satisfaction.

Discussion:

In recent decades, consumer happiness has become a critical determinant of financial success in the hospitality and tourism industry. This study, corroborated by others, revealed that customer satisfaction significantly influences a company's financial performance. This study indicates that increased customer satisfaction correlates with improved financial performance. The study's findings indicate that staff satisfaction is a crucial indicator of customer satisfaction and that it indirectly affects financial performance. Customer satisfaction is crucial for service enterprises, as it is a necessity for loyalty and positive word-of-mouth behavior [27]. Retaining an existing customer is significantly less expensive than acquiring a new one, and recurring customers are substantially more profitable than one-time customers. The findings indicate that customer happiness is essential for improved financial performance; thus, delivering great customer service by surpassing customer expectations is likely to create growth prospects. A study propose that high-growth enterprises can thrive in failing industries if they recognize and focus on critical success elements. How does a corporation such as Southwest Airlines manage to endure and even prosper while the remainder of the industry faces financial distress, with numerous competitors nearing bankruptcy? How can a firm such as Krispy Kreme transition from being the "darling of Wall Street" to experiencing financial turmoil and facing an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission? The Steroid Theory posits that certain companies excel in identifying and leveraging internal strategic success factors, capitalizing on external opportunities while mitigating threats; they concentrate on performance-enhancing elements, also referred to as core competencies. The study's findings indicate that customer satisfaction is a crucial internal component for boosting performance in any service organization [23,31]. The findings indicate that customer satisfaction significantly influences financial performance, whereas employee satisfaction does not directly affect financial performance; rather, its impact is indirect and mediated by customer satisfaction. The results unequivocally demonstrate a direct correlation between staff satisfaction and customer satisfaction, as well as between customer contentment and financial performance. This discovery indicates that content professionals are significantly driven to deliver excellent service to customers. The findings of this study align with prior research, indicating that employee happiness is crucial for organizations to attain financial objectives, as attentive care for employees leads to enhanced customer service. The business world is constantly evolving as a result of globalization and free trade, which are also making international competition more fierce. In today's business world, managers must be adept at navigating constant and unpredictable change if they are to keep their companies competitive and offer enough financial returns to owners and shareholders. Fast and efficient reaction (time-based competition) and meeting customer needs have become crucial characteristics of successful businesses. This has led to customer satisfaction being studied more than any other topic in the history of tourism and hospitality. Employees have a major impact on customers' happiness, according to earlier studies. The study's findings indicate that the correlation between staff satisfaction and financial performance is likely mediated via customer satisfaction. Content staff are more inclined to be motivated and exert greater effort in delivering satisfactory service to consumers compared to their dissatisfied counterparts. The service-profit chain indicates that when employees perceive their employer as supportive, they are more inclined to deliver superior service to meet or beyond consumer expectations. This is expected to result in increased consumer satisfaction, therefore yielding larger earnings. This study indicates that, although it is challenging to directly evaluate the impact of employee satisfaction on financial performance, service organizations cannot thrive without satisfied workers, as they are the ones who deliver a satisfactory service experience to clients. Consequently, firms must ensure that their employees are content and fulfilled in their roles. The service-profit link posits a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and financial success, indicating that increased customer satisfaction correlates with improved performance metrics. Nonetheless, whereas certain studies indicate the existence of a positive correlation (Bernhardt et al., 2000; Nelson et al., 1992), others contend that perceptions of customer service quality and satisfaction are occasionally, but not consistently, mirrored in profits (Schneider, 1991). Bernhardt et al. (2000) propose that a positive and significant correlation exists between variations in customer satisfaction and fluctuations in a firm's financial performance. In the short term, this positive and important association may be masked by other factors, although it may be markedly positive in the long term. Various researches propose that the correlation between customer happiness and financial success may not be favorable. Recent research implies that although these findings may appear counterintuitive, they are not entirely unexpected. A study contends that although customer satisfaction is fundamental to hospitality operations, it may not lead to enhanced financial performance, as it is perceived as a "given" factor, an anticipated and inherent aspect of daily operations. Given that the intangible assets of service companies are rooted in employees' expertise and competencies, and that the company's future is significantly influenced by employees and the perceived quality of customer interactions, employee satisfaction and retention have emerged as paramount concerns in the hospitality and tourism sector (Matzler and Renzl, 2007). In recent years, service organizations have invested considerable resources in staff retention, as most hospitality professionals and studies indicate that reducing employee turnover can substantially affect profitability. Literature indicates a strong correlation between employee retention and client retention. Content and fulfilled employees are more inclined to remain with the organization. This will likely lead to reduced attrition and hence improved financial performance due to diminished costs associated with acquiring and training new staff. Moreover, research indicates that content employees tend to deliver superior services, hence enhancing the whole service experience for their clients. This satisfactory service experience is expected to significantly effect repeat business and client retention. Research indicates that customer retention is likely to enhance a company's profitability, as retaining a current customer is far less expensive than acquiring a new one. Consumers anticipate satisfaction when utilizing any service. Moreover, other circumstances may obscure the genuine link between these components. For instance, when a company opts to enhance customer happiness, it may incur substantial expenditures to execute this initiative. The substantial investment in several elements, including training and facility renovations, may enhance customer satisfaction; yet, this could lead to diminished profits. Conversely, internal cost-reduction strategies, such as reducing training expenditures or deferring facility enhancements, may provide an illusion of increased profitability for a firm within a specific timeframe, regardless of customer satisfaction levels. A variety of factors may obscure the genuine correlation between customer satisfaction and financial performance if the analysis relies solely on data from a single organization. Analyzing the amount and direction of the interaction between these two dimensions using data from a substantial number of organizations should elucidate the authentic relationships between them. The data for this study is derived from 250 properties, and the substantial sample size should mitigate the influence of uncontrolled variables, thereby elucidating the authentic correlations between customer happiness and financial success. Despite numerous firm acts falling beyond the realm of customer happiness and potentially affecting earnings, customer satisfaction is likely to remain a crucial factor in a company's financial success. This study posits a substantial positive correlation between customer happiness and financial returns. hospitality and tourism enterprises cannot endure without. This study, like others, has inherent limitations. This study analyzed the correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, as well as their effects on the financial performance of a hospitality company, employing the service-profit-chain framework as the theoretical foundation. As previously mentioned, the service-profit-chain framework offers a comprehensive model for analyzing the relationship between a firm's operational investments in service operations and customer perceptions and behaviors, ultimately linking these factors to profitability. This study focused exclusively on the relationships among employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial performance, given the framework's complexity and the study's objectives. This study did not investigate the effects of additional constructs or variables within the framework, including internal service quality, productive behaviors of service employees, customer value, and customer loyalty. These constructs may significantly influence the relationships among the variables studied, potentially altering both the direction and magnitude of these relationships. Future research should investigate the factors that may impact the relationships analyzed in this study. A primary limitation of this study is the examination of customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction as unidimensional constructs. Other studies indicate that customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction are multidimensional constructs. Measuring them as a unidimensional construct is likely to restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should employ multi-dimensional constructs to accurately reflect the true nature of employee and customer satisfaction. Additionally, a company's financial performance may be affected by various factors, including satisfaction. This study did not consider additional factors that may affect a company's financial performance.

Conclusion:

This study investigated the correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, as well as their effects on the financial performance of hospitality companies, employing the service-profit-chain framework as the theoretical foundation, which connects service operations, employee satisfaction, and customer satisfaction to a firm's financial outcomes. The service-profit chain offers a cohesive framework for comprehending the relationship between a firm's operational investments in service operations and customer perceptions and behaviors, as well as how these factors contribute to improved financial performance. This study examined three primary direct relationships and one indirect relationship between customer happiness and financial performance. This study investigated the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the indirect relationship between staff satisfaction and financial performance. Findings indicated a direct correlation between customer satisfaction and financial performance, as well as between customer contentment and employee satisfaction. Results also suggested that the correlation between staff satisfaction and financial performance may not be readily discernible, as it is influenced by customer satisfaction.

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