

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT: Organisational Permission Letter



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY PERMISSION LETTER: HOTEL ORGANISATION CONSENT

Research title: The impact of front-end hotel managerial competencies on employee engagement.

Dear Hotel Organisation,

As an institution, you are invited to participate in a research study due to your affiliation with FEDHASA Cape. This study is conducted by Elizabeth Reeves from the department of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University, and contributes to the partial completion of the degree MCom Industrial Psychology.

1. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Due to the national and international growth of the travel and hospitality sector, and consequently the growing public profile of this sector, the impact of travel and hospitality organisational outcomes have received significantly more attention over the last couple of years.

As you are well aware, the travel and hospitality sector has a significant impact on a country's competitiveness, its growth domestic product (GDP) and employment. However, in order to obtain and sustain a competitive advantage, it is required of hotel organisations to consider their internal resources as sources of competitive advantage - such as competencies, capabilities, assets, as well as information and knowledge that drive innovation for new products and services. Thus, one may argue that there exists a need to improve the productivity, service quality and overall organisational performance of these hotel organisations. This led the researcher to ask the following research-initiating question is: **"What are the precursors of customer-contact**

employee engagement in the hotel industry? And specifically, what is the impact of front-end hotel managerial competencies on the level of subordinate employee engagement?"

(please note that employee engagement serve as a proxy to team performance – that subsequently has an impact on team- and overall organisational performance). To this end, the purpose of the study is to determine which managerial competencies are essential to ensure employee engagement South African hotels.

Your institution is invited to part take in this study due to your affiliation with FEDHASA Cape. With your informed institutional permission, customer-contact employees from the rooms division and food and beverage departments, will be invited as participants to the study. Customer-contact employees in the hotel industry are invited as study participants due to the fact that they are in the position to reflect on how engaged they are in their jobs, and what causes them to be this engaged. Thus, customer-contact employees are invited to complete a survey where they will rate: (1) his/her own individual level of work engagement, and (2) the degree to which their manager/supervisor display various managerial behaviours. If the customer-contact employee wishes to participate, then he/she will complete a survey that will take approximately 30 – 35 minutes to complete. The customer-contact employee do not have to complete the survey in one go, but will be able to save their progress and continue at a later stage. In addition, the managers/supervisors of these customer-contact employees are invited as third-party participants; the rooms division and food and beverage manager – or – the first-line front office and service supervisor (the exact job title depends on the size and culture of the hotel organisation)

2. PROCEDURE

If this institution gives permission for its members to participate in this study, then the following procedure will apply:

All hotels associated with FEDHASA Cape are invited to take part in the study. At this stage, you as a hotel organisation received an invitation email from FEDHASA to participate with this organisational permission letter attached. Please take note that if this institution would like to support this research study and participate, then you need to respond to the researcher directly – Elizabeth Reeves (Cell: 073 511 7449; Email: 13506315@sun.ac.za). The researcher will then reach out to the relevant contact person at the hotel to discuss and guide next steps. Thus, FEDHASA has NO visibility in terms of which hotel organisations chose to participate or not.

The contact person at the particular hotel will obtain consent from managers as third-party participants, and will distribute the invitation email to participate to all customer-contact employees. Importantly, no manager or customer-contact employee will be coerced to partake to the study – it is completely voluntary. If the customer-contact employee wishes to stand a chance to win the lucky draw, then he/she will provide the researcher with a contact number for the purpose of obtaining the prize (take note that the researcher will personally notify the winner and ensure that the prize is delivered).

This is the full extent of the participation of the hotel organisation in this research project.

3. LUCKY DRAW

As briefly mentioned above, customer-contact employees will be able to stand a chance to win a prize. The winner of the lucky draw will be awarded with a weekend away to a tourist destination close by to express the researcher's gratitude for his/her participation. Please take note that the winner will be randomly selected, and that there is only one prize to be won for one lucky winner. Thus, if the participant wishes to be eligible for the lucky draw, then it will be necessary to provide the researcher with his/her contact number, so that the researcher can contact him/her to deliver the prize won.

4. ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

To begin with, the hotel organisations that wish to participate in the study will remain anonymous. The managers/supervisors and customer-contact employees will remain anonymous. Even though, the customer-contact employees that wish to part take in the lucky draw will provide their phone numbers (so that the researcher can deliver the prize), the researcher (or no one else for that matter) won't be able to link the identities of the customer-contact employees to their raw scores. Thus, individual data sets (scores) will remain anonymous and confidential.

Finally, the hotel organization that wishes to participate, the respective managers, and the customer-contact employees will not have access to the raw data sets. Also, the scores and ratings will be kept confidential and will not be shared with the hotel organisation nor the managers – the managers will not receive any form of performance feedback based on subordinate ratings. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participants and/or their company, will remain confidential. In addition, the information (data) obtained will be safely stored by the researcher. Thus, no parties to the research project will have

access to the raw scores, except the researcher. The findings of the study will only be published as aggregate scores that will serve as an explanation for the phenomena in question, and no individual names or raw scores will be made available.

5. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Voluntary participation applies to the hotel organisation, the managers/supervisors as third-party participants, and the customer-contact employees as units of observation. During the data collection procedure, the contact person at the hotel organisation will fulfil an important role, since this person will need to obtain consent from the managers (as third-party participants), and he/she will distribute the invitation email with the link to the survey to all customer-contact employees. Some may argue that the nature of the relationship between the contact person and the manager, or the relationship between the manager and the customer-contact employees may be problematic, as there exists a possibility that some may be coerced in participating in order to depict the manager or the hotel in a favourable light. The researcher will ensure that the contact person is aware of these ethical underpinnings, and that he/she would ensure that all parties (specifically the contact persons and the relevant managers at these organisation) will not coerce anybody to partake in the study. To this end, it is clearly stipulated that a prerequisite of this study is voluntary participation (or that they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind), and that no person in a power position or otherwise, can coerce a customer-contact employee to partake.

As stated above, participation is completely voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. However, if the managers as third party participants initially consent, but at a later stage elects to withdraw, then this will have certain implications. If they withdraw at a later stage, then it implies that the researcher will have to disregard all customer-contact data from that particular Hotel, since there will be no way to distinguish which customer-contact datasets are related to a specific manager as third party participant. Thus, all data from the hotel organisation that the particular manager belongs to, will be disregarded and excluded from any data analyses, regardless of the choice to consent by other participants. Managers as third party participants need to be aware of these implications if they elect to withdraw at a later stage.

6. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There exist no foreseeable risks, discomforts or inconveniences with regard to FEDHASA's role in this study, nor the participation of hotel organisations. However, managers/supervisors as third-

party participants may experience psychological discomfort when being rated by their own subordinates – managers as third-party participants will be assured of complete anonymity and confidentiality.

There exists a possibility that respondents (i.e., customer-contact employees) may feel exposed or vulnerable when reporting on their manager's/supervisor's performance. Specifically, participants may experience emotional discomfort when reporting on their manager's/supervisor's level of emotional intelligence (emotional intelligence constitutes as a psychological construct and can elicit a psychological response). The researcher, Elizabeth Reeves, is a registered Psychometrist and will oversee the administration of the TEIQue emotional intelligence questionnaire (in collaboration with her supervisor, Prof Johan Malan, who is a registered Psychologist). Participants will be, and can be assured that no personal information or individual scores will be disclosed to any other party (thus, participants will be assured once again of anonymity and confidentiality) to reduce potential discomfort.

7. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO THE COMPANY AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits involved in participating in the study, however, the results of the study may be utilised by industry and training facilities to inform managerial development, that can have a positive impact on employee engagement and overall team performance.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

And as mentioned previously, please contact me if you are interested in participating in the study, or if you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, Elizabeth Reeves, directly (Cell: 073 511 7449; Email: 13506315@sun.ac.za). You can also contact my supervisor, Prof. Johan Malan (Cell: 083 540 0531; Email: djmalan@sun.ac.za).

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Mrs Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

I, have read and understood the foregoing information and give institutional permission to the researcher to commence with the data collection procedure.

Signature:

Date: