

The Study of Employee Retention in Thailand's Airlines Industry

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Abstract

The goal of this paper was to study the main factors encouraging employee's retention within the airline business in Bangkok, Thailand. Therefore, this study aimed to examine factors influencing employee to maintain their employment in airline business and to identify the causes of employee turnover within airline industry, including the retention strategies being considered by the airline business section. The study was both qualitative and quantitative that used survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews for primary data with Human Resource representatives while second data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to crewmembers in the selected airlines. The research's results revealed various important factors that had a certain level of influence on employee retention; such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, pay and benefits and retention strategies.

Keywords: Employee Turnover, Employee Retention, Retention Strategies, Airlines Business in Thailand

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาถึงปัจจัยสำคัญที่ส่งเสริมการคงไว้ซึ่งพนักงานในธุรกิจสายการบินในกรุงเทพฯ ดังนั้น การวิจัยนี้จึงมีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อบรรลุ ซึ่งให้เห็นถึงปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการคงไว้ซึ่งลูกจ้างในธุรกิจสายการบิน และเพื่อระบุถึงสาเหตุของการลาออกของลูกจ้างในธุรกิจสายการบิน รวมถึงกลยุทธ์ที่

เกี่ยวข้องในการคงไว้ซึ่งธุรกิจสายการบิน การวิจัยนี้ประกอบไปด้วยการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและเชิงปริมาณผ่านรูปแบบการสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ในเชิงลึก การรวบรวมข้อมูลหลักนี้กระทำโดยวิธีสัมภาษณ์โดยตัวแทนของฝ่ายทรัพยากรบุคคล การรวบรวมข้อมูลรองลงมานี้จัดทำขึ้นโดยการทำแบบสอบถามไปยังพนักงานต้อนรับของบริษัทสายการบิน ผลของการวิจัยนี้เผยให้เห็นถึงองค์ประกอบสำคัญที่หลากหลายที่เป็นปัจจัยหลักและมีอิทธิพลต่อการคงไว้ซึ่งลูกจ้าง อาทิ ความพึงพอใจในหน้าที่การงาน วัฒนธรรมองค์กร ผลตอบแทน และผลประโยชน์ และวิธีการคงไว้ซึ่งพนักงาน

คำสำคัญ : การหมุนเวียนของพนักงาน การดำรงรักษาพนักงาน กลยุทธ์ในการดำรงรักษาพนักงาน
อุตสาหกรรมการบินของประเทศไทย

Introduction

Thailand's tourism industry had significant growth over this era, in 2016. As Yuthasak (2016) said that this positive outlook is based on the strong confidence that both tourists and the world's most respected organizations; such as, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), have in Thailand as a safe and enjoyable destination. A report from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2014) indicated that Thailand has welcomed a total of 26,735,583 visitor arrivals in 2013, exceeding the year's original target of 26.1 million and representing a 19.6 per cent increase over 22,353,903 international tourists in 2012. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2016) reported that East Asian and ASEAN visitor arrivals totaled 7.63 million or 65.32%, the biggest market share of all visitors, together that the number of tourist arrivals in Thailand took place the revenue of 1.44 trillion Baht from foreign visitors which success the highest record up 23% over 2014. This was based on total visitor arrivals of 29.8 million, up 20 percent.

The key significant in supporting the industry's growth, the airline business has played a vital role in increasing the number of international tourism, including that the reopening of Don Mueang airport, which produce the high capacity of the airports and airlines. In related statistics from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2014) provided that the number of visitor arrivals to Thailand at Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang International Airports reached a total of 16,989, 458 in 2013, representing a 16.65 per cent increase over 2012. Moreover, the demand of air transport in Thailand still remain strong and moving on as the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2016) provided that the number of passengers' movement between Jan-Nov 2016 reached a total of 110,419,687 as 11.02 percent in all major airports in Thailand such as Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang, Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Phuket and Chiang Rai.

In today's business world, employee turnover and employee retention has been such a significant issue for many industries, not only in hospitality industry but also in airline industry. Attractively, while today's organizations are indeed different in terms of challenging of retention is growing. It is that businesses today are not adopting some of the strategies used in the past to ensure that more employees are retained, together with Bidisha and Mukulesh (2013) indicated that employee retention is concerned with keeping or encouraging employees to remain in an organization for a maximum period of time. Additionally, most airline companies in Thailand does not get involve creating a devise strategies to keep their employees. Airline companies today are not creating an environment, which encourages their employees to remain loyal to the organization. As Armstrong (2006) indicated that management performance can be expressed as the approximation of individual objectives of employees with organizational objectives provided that employees support the culture of the organization. If a human resource manager cannot identify actual reasons for employee turnover, an effective retention policy can never be made.

As Holbeche (2004) said that strategic management has a clear focus on implementing strategic change and growing the skill base of the organization to ensure that the organization can compete effectively in the future. Given that employee retention has proven to be important for the functioning of a company. (Echols2007; Gershwin1996; Rodriguez2008). According to Rodriguez (2008) claimed that if employees feel they aren't learning and growing, they feel they are not remaining competitive with their industry peers for promotion opportunities and career advancement because organizations, jobs and people change over time, it is likely that a previously good fit can deteriorate over time, leading to increasingly higher levels of dissatisfaction, and that career related thoughts of future quitting develop accordingly (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Employee's turnover is the most significant matter that need to be considered as an urgent situation to maintain the productive of the company. So that, the problem of employee turnover is likely to occur said Herman (2005). In the real business, Armstrong, (2009) and Reiß, (2008) indicated that Employee turnover is considered to be one of the persisting problems in organizations. Additionally, the old belief has been changed from entrepreneurs is important stakeholder in the organization but nowadays employees are very meaningful stakeholder instead- people who is more important assets, have the influence over sustainable growth in the organization. The aim of this paper is to focus on a full-service airline in Bangkok, Thailand.

The researchers examined an airline of Bangkok Airways, and Thai Airways international to investigate the main factors encouraging employee's retention.

Objective

1. To imply factors influencing employee to maintain their employment in airline business.
2. To recognize the causes of employee turnover within airline industry.

Scope of the study

The research studies the major factors and reasons that might inspire employees to stay with the airline company in Bangkok, Thailand, particularly the medium size airline which are namely Thai Airway International Public Co.,Ltd and Bangkok Airway Public Co.,Ltd. The factors that influence the strategies in employee retention are job satisfaction, organizational culture, retention strategies, turnover intention, coworker relationships, and pay and benefits. Furthermore, the target population of this research includes the crewmembers that are the permanent staff of the company. The crewmembers consist of captains, co-pilots, In-flight pursers, pursers, senior crew and junior crew. The 420 questionnaires were distributed to the crewmembers at Thai Airways crew center (OPC) and Bangkok Airways crew center (BAOC) at Suvarnabhumi airport.

Conceptual Framework

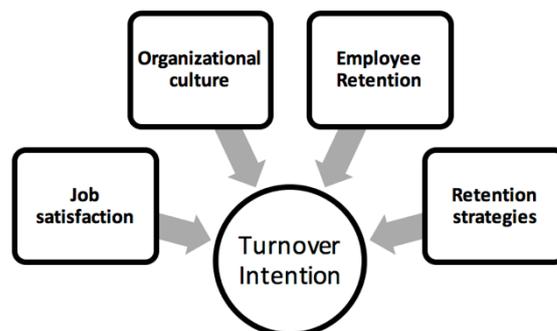


Figure 1.1 The Conceptual Model to Demonstrate the Study's Framework.

Operation Definitions

Airline Business: is a commercial organization which offers air transport services for traveling passengers as a common carrier.

Employee: in this study means the person who works in the airline business as a crewmember.

Employee turnover: in this study means that the number or percentage of employees that leave a current company and are interchanged by new one.

Employee Retention: is about the capability of an organization to maintain their valued people within the business in a given period.

Retention Strategies: as an attrition of the organization to guarantee employees are employed within an organization for a long-lasting period.

Job Satisfaction: as a positive perspective of one's hopes, aspirations and expectation towards the organization that provided a job opportunity.

Organizational Culture: as a structure of organization's value, assumption and behavior that boost the philosophy for a whole organization together to represent the organization outlook.

Pay and benefits: as a compensation offered to the person who works for an organization including salaries, incentive, vacation and health care.

Turnover Intention: a perception and perspective of one's to discovery a better solution and opportunity to suite their life style.

Literature Review

Employee Retention

Employee retention refers is on the section of HR practices which is concerned about company's policies to meet and maintain a great people that are not to leave their job. "Built to last and good to great" reflects that success is always backed by the human power and strength which is dependent on the selection of the competent person in the particular area, afterwards the stratagem and visualization of the organization can be pursue (Collins 1958). According to Ahlrichs, (2000) indicated that hiring knowledgeable people for the job is essential for an employer. But retention is even more important than hiring. This is true as many employers have underestimated costs associated with turnover of key staffs. Together with Meaghan et al. (2002) indicated that as valued people are meaningful and create a certainty of process of a good atmosphere which are hard to replace if they decided to say good bye to get some new opportunities, most of things are subjected to reduce the possible of shortage of well-skilled people at all level from top to bottom. In reality, the employees tends to remain in the organization even when facing pressure from others that intend to leave the organization because they feel that they are a part of the organization (Choong, Wong and Lau, 2011).

Employee Turnover

According to Society for Human Resource Management. (2011), Employee turnover is defined as “the rate at which employees enter and leave a company in a given fiscal year.” HR professionals and organization executives focus on turnover for three main reasons: it has significant cost implications; it affects overall business performance; and it has the potential to become difficult to control, resulting in a talent crunch, where it is hard to find quality candidates with the skill sets required to fill open positions said Allen, D.G. (2008). Employee turnover is the rotation of workers around the labor market, between firms, jobs and occupations, and between the states of employment and unemployment (Abassi & Hollman, 2000). Once financial times are fitted, employee’s turnover can subject some chances to lower expenses through salary savings till financial situations recover (Marcus, 2010). Employee’s turnover is costly both organization and economy as a whole package, including profits and productivity. Turnover is an accepted part of organizational operations; less than five percent turnover is actually considered unhealthy (Hurley, 2010). Catherine (2002) argued that turnover include other costs, such as lost productivity, lost sales, and management’s time, estimate the turnover costs of an hourly employee to be \$3,000 to \$10,000 each.

Employee Retention Concepts

An obligation to continue to do business or exchange with a particular company on an ongoing basis stated Zineldin (2000). A more detailed and recent definition for the concept of retention is Customer liking, identification, commitment, trust, readiness to recommend, and repurchase intentions, with the first four being emotional-cognitive retention constructs, and the last two being behavioral intentions (Stauss et al,2001). Retention factors incorporating the needs and desires of employees at any age enhance levels of individual job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment (Boomer Authority, 2009). Further, career development (Boomer Authority 2009), organizational commitment (Patrick Owens, 2006), communication (Gopinath and Becker, 2000) and superior-subordinate relationship (Zenger, Ulrich, Smallwood, 2000) are also the factors known for prolonged stay of the employees in the organization. Brosseau (2000) has cited instances in which pay-for-performance systems have successfully met with union approval. Rewards as provided by organizations have relationship with job satisfaction and hence employee retention (Taplin et al., 2003). Cho et al. (2006) investigated the relationship between the use of human management practices and organizational performance. It found that

companies providing incentive plans to employees are more likely to experience lower turnover rates among non-managerial employees.

Job Satisfaction

Collins (2007) and Meyer et al, (2003) also defined job satisfaction as the degree to which an employee has positive emotions towards the work role. Job satisfaction is vital for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, together with Lee-Kelley, Blackman, Hurst (2009) and Martinez, Paraguay, (2003) contend that lack of satisfaction in the job is a major predictor of turnover intentions.

Organization Culture

Patterson (1988) stated that the culture influenced the staffs' behavior in: the objective of organization, empowerment, decision making, sense of belonging, trust, quality of work, recognition, generosity and support, honesty, and diversity of staffs. It was designed to measure interrelationships among societal culture, organizational culture, and leadership, and to develop dimensions that could be used to predict the impact of cultural variables on organizational phenomena. Kotter and Heskett (1992) expanded organizational culture had to be created by the management and organizational staffs. If the organizational staffs had a great two-ways communication based on thought, trust, importance, team working which had reflected a great development of organizational culture that would be happened.

Retention Strategies

To improve retention of the employees, companies adopt career development policies in alignment with the needs of the employees (Wetprasisit, 2006). Keeping critical employees motivated and dedicated is one of the most important demands on management today. Eyster, et al. (2008) stated that job flexibility along with embracing career and life options, is a critical incentive for all employees. Research shows growing trends of employers providing greater job flexibility that includes flexible career options (i.e. training, mentoring, workstation accommodations, job mobility, and reduced work hours) and life options (i.e. counseling services, health and wellness programs) (Boomer Authority, 2009; Eyster, et al., 2008).

Pay and Benefit

Griffeth et al. (2000) highlighted the importance of pays and benefits as critical factor towards employee retention. Furthermore, Griffeth et a. (2000) noted that pay and benefits

alternatives have an influence on turnover. These have the advantage of being flexible, and capable of targeting particular behaviors that a company might want to change or promote without increasing fixed costs (Rappaport, Bancroft, & Okum, 2003)

Related Empirical Research

Job satisfaction is truthfully connected with employees' desire and motivation to stay or leave with their organizations based on Lee-Kelley, Blackman and Hurst, (2009), Martinez and Paraguay, (2003) and Collins, (2007). Organizational instability has been indicated to have a high degree of high turnover. Organizational Culture affects the way in which employee consciously or unconsciously think, make decisions and ultimately the way they perceive, feel and act based on Patrick Owens, (2006), Denison and Mishra, (1995) and Cho et al., (2006). When high performers receive incompetent compensation/rewards, they lookout for another employment based on Griffeth et al., (2000) and Lockwood, (2006) The development of saving the employees for the long term is a kind of approach made by the organizations so that they could maintain employees for long time and gain benefits based on Boomer Authority, (2009) and Meyer et al., (2003).

Methodology

To target population was focused on two of the most well-known airlines in Thailand, especially the medium size airline which are namely Thai Airways International Public Co.,ltd and Bangkok Airways Public Co.,ltd that is targeted to crewmembers within the two major airlines as mentioned above. The sampling size of population is 420 employees out of 8,053 employees in the total numbers of the population in two major airlines based on Thai Airways International Public Co.,ltd annual report (2016) and Bangkok Airways Public Co.,ltd annual report (2016). The questionnaire is measured by a 5-point scale ranging from 5 to 1, Where 1 = the least influence, and 5 = the most influence. For reliability of the questionnaires, cronbach's alpha of each factors was tested and all factors had the values above 0.6, indicating the acceptable quality of the factors as follows; job satisfaction (0.83), organizational culture (0.93), retention strategies (0.90), pay and benefits (0.87) and turnover intention (0.64)

Result

From 420 samples, the majority of the respondents were 60.5% of female, while 39.5% were males. The 272 respondents were the large number of age between 26 - 35 year old (64.8%) Most of them were single (71.4%) as well as respondents holding Bachelor's degree

possessed the highest percentage in educational background level (79.0%). The employees who work within the organization more than seven years were the largest group of the respondents (41.0%)

The purpose of the multiple regression analysis is to conduct effect of job satisfaction factor, organizational culture factor, retention strategies factor, pay and benefits factor on turnover intention factor and also perception toward airlines' retention strategy effectiveness on turnover intention. The results from the analysis provided the answers for the first objective of the current study.

Table 1.1A Multiple regression analysis among four influencing factors on turnover intention factor.

Model 1	R	R Square	F-value	P-value	Durbin-Watson
	.235 ^a	.055	6.090	.000 ^a	1.814

a. Predictors: mean of pay and benefits, mean of job satisfaction, mean of retention strategies, mean of organizational culture.

b. Dependent Variable: mean of turnover intention.

Table 1.1B Multiple regression analysis among four influencing factors on turnover intention factor.

Model 1	Beta	t-value	P-value	VIF
(Constant)		13.196	.000	
Mean of job satisfaction	.237	3.994	.000	1.543
Mean of organizational culture	-.080	-.973	.331	2.934
Mean of retention strategies	-.157	-1.944	.053	2.884
Mean of pay and benefits	-.066	-1.153	.250	1.448

a. Dependent Variable: mean of turnover intention.

The result of multiple regression demonstrated in table 1.1A and 1.1B were conducted to see the influencing factors including job satisfaction, organizational culture, retention strategies and pay and benefits predictors. Referring to the collinearity to see whether the data were met the assumption of collinearity indicated the multicollinearity was not concern as all VIF were less than 10.00 (the highest VIF of the finding was 2.934) Furthermore, the predictors explained 5.5% significant of variables (R-Square=.055, F=6.090, P< .05) while Durbin-Watson is not less than 1

and over 3, therefore there was no autocorrelation in model no. 1, between the predictors and dependent variable. The analysis demonstrated that employee turnover which consisted of job satisfaction (Beta=.237, $t=3.994$, $p<.05$), organizational culture (Beta= -.080, $t=-.973$, $p>.05$), retention strategies (Beta= -.157, $t=-1.944$, $p>.05$) and pay and benefits (Beta= -.066, $t=-1.153$, $p>.05$) that only job satisfaction factors had a significant positive on employee turnover intention.

Only job satisfaction factor had positive influence on employee turnover which the result was not accurately completed, the majority of employees in both selected airlines satisfied with their job satisfaction within their current organization thus the employees still had the intention to leave the organization that they work for, in others perspective and point of view.

Discussion

As Ibrahim A.M. *et al.*, (2013) stated that most employees leave one job for another due to the availability of higher paying jobs. Obviously, in a better economy the availability of alternative jobs plays a role in turnover. Most employees may tend to leave their present job to better paid job. To be support with Griffeth (2000), Allen (2008), Hom (1984), Lockwood, (2006), Choong, Wong and Lau, (2011) identified that, the key issue in retention is the amount of total compensation relative to levels offered by other organizations. Nevertheless, the most critical factors learned from the study of Airlines' employees were dissimilar to previous researches, as job satisfaction and retention strategies were conveyed rather than pay and benefits and organizational culture and turnover intention. Likewise, job satisfaction is a widely studied phenomenon and this interest stems from the influence it can have on workers, affecting their physical and mental health, attitudes, professional and social behavior, both with implications for individual's personal life and for organizations (Martinez & Paraguay, 2003). Numerous research studies have been conducted on the relationship between employee retention and job satisfaction, most of the studies believe that job satisfaction is directly linked with employees' desire and willingness to stay with their organizations (Johnson, 2000, Perez, 2008, Sutherland, 2004). Job satisfaction is vital for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, together with Lee-Kelley, Blackman and Hurst (2009), contend that lack of satisfaction in the job is a major predictor of turnover intentions.

Multiple regression analysis can explain the contribution of variance of the predictor, or independent variables to the total variance of the dependent variable (Cohen et al., 2013). To be noted that predictors were mean of pay and benefits, mean of job satisfaction, mean of

retention strategies, mean of organizational culture as well as dependent variable was mean of turnover intention.

Job Satisfaction factor (β ata) = .237 or 2.37% which implies that one percent increase in Job Satisfaction factor increase 4.1% of retention level if other variables are kept controlled. The T-test value 3.994 and significant at .000 which is less than the 0.05. The relationship was negative and statistically significant but the regression model is valid, and also organizational culture, retention strategies, pay and benefits factors had no significant effects on employee retention.

Conclusion

This study achieved its goals in indicating employee turnover intention. It also highlighted the significant aspect between influencing factors and intention to leave the airline business.

The number of past studies recognized that employee turnover is costly the organization. Human resource is considered as the fundamental factors in managing people as the airlines business pay critical role as a part of the business growth of the world and therefore it needs to get better retention strategies to decrease the turnover rate of employees which lead to provide a good organization performance and profitability.

Recommendation

Research implication

Airlines business should take an outcome into account, and also management team or human resource department, especially HR director should also emphasize proper understanding of the employees' retention strategies in-depth details as well as employees' perspective such as their needs and wants to enhance with strategies or interventions. In order to gain more effectiveness and efficiency in the employees' management also human resource practices need to improve as it has the potential to retain their employees' overtime. Moreover, turnover rate in the organization need to be constantly monitored and prepared in all strategies as turnover of the vital employees establishes several highest organization's loss and costs such as potential employees, training and recruitment.

Consequently, HR directors and HR managers need to pay more attention on job satisfaction of employees that needs to be improved in order to take the first significant step in retention improvement. The result of this study has been provided that almost all

of the airlines' employee are satisfied with their job characteristic and job satisfaction which was shown to be positively related to employee turnover intention

Future research

Further research should continue to focus on the job satisfaction towards employee retention as well as this need to imitate the study in other industry in Thailand. In-depth interview and focus group are another alternative that need to be done further to complete and understand the specific information that is concerned factor influencing employee retention.

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