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Integrated Business Strategy and its Scale Development

Shahrin Saad[1], Norshahbina Saad[2], Hashim Fadzil Ariffin[3] and Mohd Fadli[4]

[1] *School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Malaysia, E-mail: shahrinsaad@uum.edu.my*
[2] *Cinta Sayang Golf & Country Resort, Kedah, Malaysia*
[3] *Hotel and Tourism Faculty, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia*
[4] *Education Services Ltd., Qatar*

Abstract: Integrated business strategy has been an area of interest for the past few decades, and the rapid growth on integrated business strategy literature has evolved the concept further. However, there are still disputable issues in strengthening the concept and the key components of integrated business strategy. In due, this article endeavors to identify the dimensions of integrated business strategy by probing in the extent literature. In addition, the aim of this article was to develop a robust and valid instrument for measuring integrated business strategy. Data were collected from quantitative study and from 222 hotels and resorts in Malaysia. Analysis revealed five significant dimensions of integrated business strategy, namely, differentiation, breadth, cost, innovation and premier. Factor analysis and reliability test was employed to ascertain the proposed dimensions. The article concludes by discussing the possible implications and future research avenues.

Keywords: integrated business strategy, hospitality, hospitality strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

The dynamic competitive business environment today requires businesses to reinvent themselves in order to gain or retain superior performance and competitive advantage (Haim Hilman and Mohamad, 2011). In order to realize this, organizations need a proper strategy in place across the board. Strategy pertains to developing plans of how an organization will achieve its targeted goals and survive prosperously. It helps organizations in developing a clearer understanding of their own organizational aspects and issues as well as of what is required for them to succeed. Also, strategy helps organizations in conducting a better assessment of their core capabilities, and in identifying and addressing weaknesses towards mitigating risks. In brief, strategy is needed to ensure and enhance an organization's growth in a rapidly changing business environment.

In the hospitality industry, acquiring the right strategy has become more crucial as the hospitality firms are facing strong competition from the rapid technological turbulence, frequent changes in customer's

needs and expectations, external environmental complexity and volatility (Bordean, Bonza, Nistor and Mitra, 2010; Kaliappen and Haim Hilman, 2013; Wang, Chen and Chen, 2012). In response to these demands, hoteliers are expected to practice continuous improvement by making appropriate strategic alignment, which if employed properly can help the hotels in accelerating their businesses.

Inappropriate usage of strategies resulted in the closing down of hotels despite the rapid growth of the Malaysian tourism industry. The inappropriateness of strategies used by hotels has triggered the Tourism Malaysia to give extra attention to the industry since it contributed significantly to the extent of RM69.3 billion (7.3% GDP) mainly through hotel businesses, travel agents, airlines and other transportation (excluding commuter) related economic activities (WTTC, 2013). This issue has been voiced out by Malaysian Hotels Operators (MaHO), mentioning that the average room rate in Malaysia is the lowest among the South East Asian countries (Utusan, 2010). This seems to result in a limitation of hotels towards making revenue contributions. Furthermore, less concern in managerial styles also added to such problem in the hotel industry (Abdul Aziz and Mohd Hairil, 2012; Rafi and Wong, 2012). This issue occurs potentially due to strategic differences and due to lack of thorough discussions and studies on the same towards formulating a commonly beneficial mechanism and guideline. In addition to that, since 2009 the Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism has voiced his concern during the World Travel and Tourism Organization (WTTO) conference that Malaysia needs to revisit its strategies for accelerating the Tourism industry growth. As such, there is a need felt to understand the nuances of strategies used by hotels in Malaysia.

Previously, the best practice of human resources (HR) which is based on universal theory was utilized in the hotel industry. This set of strategy was presumed to produce superior results for an organization (Boxall and Purcell, 2011; Budhwar and Aryee, 2008). However, there are still disputes observed about the unsuitable usage of the universalistic approach in hotels. This is because hotel establishments involve sizes and rankings which may articulate similarities as well as differences in strategies employed by them (Hong, 2009; Singh, 2012). Furthermore, researchers agree that different hotels with dissimilar star ratings should utilize varying strategies, similar to how organizations of different size employ different strategies for achieving their performances (Dev, 1998; Enrique, 2007; Ryan and Huinn, 2007; Yeamdao and Bo, 2010). Based on the above arguments, Jennings, Rajaratnam and Lawrence (2003) recommended that contingency theory is the best alternative to describe the situation.

Applying the contingency theory, this study explore the types of strategies used by hotel with different star ratings. Specifically, the integrated business strategy and human resource approach. It is argued that star rating will dictate the strategies being used by hotels. Furthermore, the hotel industry is a labour intensive in nature, which requires the integration of strategies (Berry, 1982; Hong, 2009; Rafi and Wong, 2013). Accordingly, this study sought to use integrated business strategies and two dimensions of human resource approach (HRA), namely human resource hard (HRH), and human resource soft (HRS) approaches.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of this study has considered contingency theory, and universalistic approach in developing the study framework. Contingency theory was employed due to an argument that organizational performance or effectiveness results from fitting certain organizational characteristics to contingencies that reflect the situation of the organization (Burn & Stalker, 1961; Jennings, Rajaratnam & Lawrence, 2003). On the other hand, universal approach was employed due to the strategies used in hotel industry

usually considered it's labor-skilled characteristics regardless of the star rating. However, Jagdeep (2012) argued that Malaysian hotels did not appreciate integration of strategies in their operation. This has opened opportunity to this study in exploring the similarities and differences of strategies used by different star rated hotels in Malaysia.

III. INTEGRATED BUSINESS STRATEGY

Integrated business strategy means that various businesses strategies being integrated in seeking to improve business performance. Without doubt, in any type of business or even in life, one needs to have strategy. Hence, researchers found that by integrating strategies, it helps organizations to measure overall organizational performance by accumulating not only through one perspective (Purcel, 1989; Hasliza, 2009). On the other hand, strategy has been portrayed as a plan which is defined as a direction, a guide, or course of action into the future or even facing, or it is also considered as a pattern, that is, consistency in behavior over time (Boxall and Purcell, 2011; Johnson and Scholes, 2002; Miller, 1987; Mintzberg, 1994).

Most organizations begin their strategic planning cycle by updating and revising their business objectives in relation to performance (Miles and Snow, 1974; Porter, 1985; Schaffer, 1996). The reviews are mostly in key areas such as people, standards, and business development (Mintzberg, 1994). Due to a critical factor of an organization is the manpower or human resource, a number of authors had attempted to integrate appropriate human resource (HR) practices and policies into different business strategies (Boxall and Purcell, 2011; Budhawar, 2000a, 2000b ; Lengnick-Hall, 1988; Miles and Snow, 1974; Miller, 1987; Mintzberg, 1973; Porter, 1985; Pucell, 1989; Schuler and Jackson, 1987;Storey, 1992).

This study attempted at integrating business strategies from four different gurus (Miles and Snow, 1974; Miller, 1987; Porter, 1985; Schuler and Jackson, 1987). The integration of business strategies needs to be conducted due to the nature of this study. Whereas the four gurus strategies were adapted due to they were among the earliest strategies gurus in business environment studies. Due to this study is attempting to examine the relationship between strategies and hotel star rating while in depth comparing the similarities and differences strategies employed at each hotel star rating, integration of strategies deemed vital due to it originality which every gurus strategies was focusing at different area. However, few were found to be similar which will be consolidated and renamed appropriately as suggested by Hasliza (2009). For example, Miles and Snow's (1974) and Miller's (1987) strategies focus more on the marketing perspective. Although Porter's strategy discusses about management, and finally Schuler and Jackson's strategy views it from the human resource perspective. However, there were also dimension that being focused by all of the gurus as such the success posture or the innovation and this dimension would be consolidated. Notwithstanding, if only three gurus agreed at one dimension but the dimension would be renamed appropriately based on its popularity among gurus.

On the other hand, it has been claimed that different organizational level or size would practice different strategies. This practices somehow has deemed to be explored because it should help in making knowledge available to the academician as well practitioners about the similarities or differences strategies utilized by different hotel star rating management.

Integration of scholars' strategies is made through the finding of the most popular strategies discussed by scholars in the business area (Hasliza, 2009). This will help to gather attention and focus more on overall

business as a whole rather than focus on one specific area per se. The measurement will be produced through a typology, which compares all four sets of gurus' measurements in one typology and extract the most popular strategies as tabulated in Table 1. The reason of integrating the gurus' strategies is because it is believed that through integration it would help to develop the most popular strategies discussed by different gurus and these strategies are compressed become one. This will ensure that the strategies will become more dominant. Furthermore, there are research activities that integrate strategies from different authors in order to fine tune the strategy to meet the organizational needs (Bamberger and Meshoulam, 2000; Beer, 1985; MacDuffie,1995; Wright, McMahan, McCormick and Sherman, 1998). Most of the authors agreed that businesses need to have a proper guideline in achieving their goals in organizational performance.

Through this integration, four dimensions of strategies have been found (refer to Table I). The integration process starts from comparing dimension that has at least three gurus focusing on one dimension. Once the dimension identified, it indicated the popularity of the dimensions among the four gurus and these dimension than will be renamed similar to the original dimension named except for dimension which all four gurus focus on it, the original name shall be maintained or altered as per dimension focus activities. These strategies measurements were focused on the Superiority-based, Differentiation, Breadth, and Cost. The details of the integration of business typology is shown in Table I.

IV. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND ITEMS DEVELOPMENT

The prime motive of the study was to develop an instrument for measuring IBS construct based on the dimensions ascertained from literature. Scales from the extant literature were adapted and further used as a source for measuring dimensions of IBS. The component of IBS derived from integrating strategies by various business scholars. Hence, the IBS were measured by four dimensions, namely uniqueness strategy, product expansion strategy, superiority-based strategy and cost efficiency strategy. These four dimensions are derived from the business strategy typology proposed by Miles and Snow (1978, 2005), Porter (1985, 2007), Miller (1987) and Schuler and Jackson (1987, 2005). A total of 29 questions were developed with two questions were constructed in negative stance. The negative questions were re-coded accordingly. This was to increase the consistency level in answering the questions.

Since the questions were designed in a bipolar manner, respondents were given six choices of answers. Three choices of answers represent the respondent agreement with the statement on the right, while the other three choices of answers represent the respondent agreement with the statement on the left.

Table I
Integrated Business Strategy Model

Schuler and Jackson (1987a)	*Miller (1988)*	*Miles and Snow (1978)*	*Porter (1980)*	*Integrated Strategy (Employed in this study)*
Innovation	Quality enhancement			**Superiority-based**
Differentiation	Innovation	Differentiation	Prospector	**Differentiation**
Focus/Breath		Focus	Analyzer	**Breadth expansion**
Cost control	Costreduction	Cost leadership	Defender	**Cost efficiency**

V. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

To fulfill the set of objectives of the study, factor analysis and reliability test were employed to establish reliability and validity. All analyses have been conducted using the SPSS 20.

VI. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

(A) Pilot test

A pilot study is a study that is conducted with a smaller number of respondents as a logistic experiment and is used to check the validity of the measurements before conducting the study on a larger scale or the real study. During the pilot study, the questionnaire should be piloted with reasonable sample of respondents who come from the target population or who closely resemble the target population (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran, 2000).

Before the questionnaires were sent for the pilot study, a pre-test was conducted with two colleagues in the College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia. The purpose of the pre-test was to extract feedback concerning the understanding, phrasing and designing of the questionnaire. Based on the feedback given, the questionnaire was then revised accordingly.

A pilot study was conducted for this study. The questionnaire was distributed to thirty hotels' human resource manager. The comments and feedback obtained were subsequently taken into consideration in amending the survey questions. Table II presents the feedback and action taken to improve the questionnaire.

Table II
Pilot test feedback-improvement

Pilot Test Feedback	*Improvement*
Bipolar semantic scale was a bit confusing	Instructions on the bipolar semantic scale were clarified further for better understanding
Some questions were lengthy	Long-winded questions were shortened
Choice of questions was vague for some of the questions	Changes were made by incorporating many of the suggested words

(B) Demographic Profiles of the Participants

Table III presents the detailed descriptive statistics of the participants' demographic profiles. Majority of the hotels

(C) Scale Reduction (Factor Analysis)

The main principal of factor analysis is data parsimony and data interpretation (Zikmund, 2003). In a simpler explanation, factor analysis is conducted to summarize and disclose the information contained in a larger number of variables into a smaller number of factors. Therefore, in this case, items are reduced to common interrelated and meaningful dimensions (Hair *et al.,* 2006). Hence, through the common interrelated items, the pattern of association would assist researcher to establish interrelationship of variables that

Table III
Demographic Profiles of the Participants

Demographic Profiles	*Categories*	*Frequency*	*Percentage (%)*
Star Rating	1 Star	12	5.41
	2 Star	16	7.21
	3 Star	97	43.6
	4 Star	61	27.5
	5 Star	36	16.2
Type of Hotel	Resort	91	41
	City	131	59
Number of Employees	Below 50	69	31.1
	50 – 150	62	28.0
	151 – 300	91	41.0
Education Level	STPM and Lower	18	8.1
	Diploma	76	34.2
	Bachelors' Degree	99	44.6
	Postgraduate Degree	23	10.4
	Others	6	2.7
Tenure	Less than 1 Year	54	24.3
	1 – 3 years	45	20.3
	4 – 6 years	63	28.4
	7 – 9 years	26	11.7
	Above 10 years	36	15.3
Job Positions	Officers	15	6.8
	Executive Level	207	93.2

belong together. However, before conducting factor analysis, data has been checked for it normality and it passed the assumption of normality with skewness and kurtosis test.

In this study, exploratory principal axis factoring (PAF) with varimax rotation was carried out to simplify a large number of items to a few representative factors or dimensions. This activity is conducted in order to test the patterns of correlation among items of variables, and to establish the goodness of measures for testing hypothesis (Field, 2005; Hair *et. al.,* 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). However, there are initial considerations that need to be considered before conducting factor analysis, for example the sample size and data screens (Fields, 2005). Further, researcher needs to consider on the statistical assumptions; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. According to Kaiser (1974), KMO values must be greater than 0.5 while Bartlett's test should be significant at $p< 0.05$ to present the adequacy of the correlations among variables and thus provide a meaningful basis for factor analysis (Field, 2005; Ho, 2006). While determining the number of factors to be extracted, eigenvalue and scree plot test techniques were taken into consideration as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2006) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). In this technique, eigenvalue of factors must be greater than 1 while at scree plot test, the

cut-off point at which the pattern of curve has changed to nearly horizontal line will be determined and used as a guideline to find out the optimum number of factors to be extracted (Hair *et al.,* 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In interpreting the factor, factor loading is checked. Factor loading is a measure of the importance of variable in measuring a factor (Zikmund, 2003). In this study, only items with loading of 0.50 and above and not cross-loaded in other factors were considered. The reason of taking 0.50 as a cut-off point loading as suggested by Kinner and Gray (2004) and Tajeddini (2010) that items which have factor loading excess of 0.50 were typically interpreted very high significance and considered usable for the further analysis. Hence, Sohn and Lee (2012) supported the suggestion which is factor that is higher than 0.50 should be posited for further analysis. On the other hand, the cut-off point for cross loading was set at 0.50 due to recommendation by Costello and Osborne (2005) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). The ultimate objective of checking the factor loading is also to minimize the number of significant loadings and to make sure that each variable is associated with only one factor (Blaikie, 2003). Furthermore, factor loading is representing the degree of correlation among the factors of each variable (Sohn and Lee, 2012). Factors that have been cleaned were interpreted and named according to the largest values of the factors in the rotated factor matrix.

There were originally twenty-nine (29) items used to measure integrated business strategy. However, due to the high cross-loading among factors, 5 items were eliminated from further analysis. Then, the data were rerun for factor analysis. From the results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the 24 items after discarded five items, nine factors were resulted. However only five factors were used for further analysis due to the factor loading has been set at 0.50. Each factor should carry at least three items and were not cross loaded (0.50) were accepted, all items were kept for further analysis. The result of the principal component analysis with varimax rotation is presented in Table IV. Meanwhile, the KMO value measuring adequacy of items resulted at 0.598 and this indicated that the items were correlated and they formed common factors. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also found to be significant at $p < 0.001$ with the approx. Chi-Square value at 2618.295, indicating the significance of the correlation matrix, and therefore provided a reasonable basis for factor analysis.

Moreover, the eigenvalue of the resulted factors were greater than 1 which explained 77.18 of variance in the data. The first factor accounted for 10.07 of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 4.31. Factor loading for items in this factor ranged from 0.66 to 0.87. Factor one consists of three items related to two items from product differentiation and one from breath. Due to majority of items were from differentiation, the factor was named as "Differentiation".

Factor two (eigenvalue = 2.87) was represented by four items. The items were originally from "Breadth" dimension. Factor loading for this factor ranged from 0.51 to 0.79 and accounted for 10.04% of the total variance in the data. Since all of the items in this factor discuss about product breadth, the original name of product breadth was retain. While for factor three, with eigenvalue of 2.76 and was represented by three items. Two items was originally from the quality dimension and one from differentiation dimension. The factor loading that has been carried by this factor ranged from 0.51 to 0.83 and accounted for 9.07% of the total variance in data. Since the items discuss about premium and differentiation of a product, it was named "Cost".

Subsequently, factor four was represented by four items with eigenvalue of 1.89. In this factor, two items are originally from differentiation dimension while one is from breath dimension. The factor loading

for this factor ranged from 0.583 to 0.855 and accounted for 9.01% of total variance. Since the items in this factor discuss about innovation of new product, the factor was named "Innovation". Then, factor five represented by three items with eigenvalue of 1.73. The factor loading ranged from 0.583 to 0.869 and accounted for 8.76% of total variance. The factor was named "Premier" as all the three items discuss about being the first mover in the industry's competition.

Factor six was represented by two items with eigenvalue at 1.45. The factor loading for this factor ranged from 0.812 to 0.847 and accounted for 8.06% of total variance in data. Since there were only two items representing this factor, this factor will not be used for further analysis. Consequently, factor seven has also been represented by two items with eigenvalue at 1.36. The factor loading for this factor ranged from 0.753 to 0.819 and accounted for 8.02% of total variance in data. Since there were only two items representing this factor and it was not strong enough to explain about the factor. As a result, the factor was also discarded from further analysis as recommended by Hair (2006).

Further, factor eight and nine were also represented by two items and they were not used for further analysis as recommended by Hair (2006) to discard factors that has low items represented since it did not carries high relevancy to the factor. In addition, Costello and Osborne (2005) suggested that the lowest of items to be considered stable in a factor should be three items. With these results, only five factors were considered in the subsequent analysis.

(D) Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted in evaluating on how dependable the measurement scales that have been obtained from factor analysis. Hence, the reliability of measurement tools by internal consistency was verified through Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability coefficient in order to examine the stability, the consistency and the predictability of each factor. If the value is at 0.60 and above, it is generally recognized as a reliable value in social science (Nunnally and Burnstein, 1994; Hair *et al.,* 2006; Sekaran, 2003). In addition, study focusing on service providers in tourism industry also has utilized 0.60 value as recommended reliable value for a factor (Sohn and Lee, 2012). Table V illustrates the reliability coefficients of the measures.

As illustrated in Table 5, the Cronbach's alpha (α) of integrated business strategy, ranged from 0.63 to 0.76. These numbers have met the minimum accepted reliability as suggested by scholars (Hair *et al.,* 2006; Nunnally, 1994; Sekaran, 2003; Sohn and Lee, 2012). Generally, the reliability analysis conducted on the items proven that all of the measurements were reliable, stable and internally consistent.

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Differentiation					
Avoid competition	.817				
Wait-and-see	.743				
Target niche market	.663				
Breadth					
Added new lines of products in 5 years		.791			
Produce differentiated product		.764			
Offers a wide range of product range		.743			

Satisfied customer need		.512			
Cost					
Premium prices for quality products			.828		
Attain success by being first mover			.764		
Upgrading of existing products			.508		
Innovation				.855	
Marketed new lines of products in 5 years				.692	
Innovation of product				.583	
Willing to take risks					
Premier					
Competition by reducing labor cost					.869
Meet specific customers' need					.671
Ahead of competitors					.583
Eigenvalues	4.31	2.87	2.76	1.88	1.73
Percentage Variance Explained	10.07	10.04	9.07	9.01	8.76
Total Variance Explained	77.18%				
KMO	.598				
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	2618.3				

Variables and dimensions	*Mean (M)*	*Standard Deviation (SD)*	*No of Items*	*Cronbach's Alpha*
Integrated Business Strategy	1.93	0.69	16	0.69
Differentiation	2.06	0.75	3	0.73
Breadth	1.81	0.61	4	0.76
Uniqueness	1.90	0.62	3	0.67
Innovation	1.82	0.56	3	0.63
Premier	2.06	0.85	3	0.67

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the overall results, this study has provided empirical evidence in the scale and validation of integrated business strategy. This study also has succeeded in giving the scale validation for hotel industry strategies. Although there are voluminous studies in hotel industry star ratings, this study addressed the gap by recommending integrated business strategy as a prime hotel strategy.

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