

TRANSFORMING INTO A LEARNING ORGANIZATION THROUGH HR INITIATIVES AND MANAGERIAL FACTORS: A CASE OF AVARI HOTEL, LAHORE

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Abstract

This study explores the HR initiatives and managerial factors that contributed towards making Avari Hotel a learning organization and ensuring its continuous success and rapid expansion in the International world. In-depth interviews and analysis of existing organizational documents and secondary resources were referred in this case study. The main findings of the study attributed its success to the consistent hard work of the owners and senior management in meeting and maintaining the international standards of five star hotel properties while sustaining and developing its own unique selling elements distinguishing Avari chain from its competitors. HR initiatives for employee retention and the functional role of HR in areas as ensuring safe, healthy and happy workplace, employee care, communication, recognition, work environment and culture, recruitment training and development has played a major role in transforming it into a learning organization. Although the strategic management at Avari Hotel, Lahore is in action to address the environment and competitive pressures, there is a strong need that management practices at Avari remain aligned with their business objectives in order to remain a force in hospitality industry and retain their market position for strong, unique and favorable brand associations.

Key Words: Hospitality Industry, Avari Hotel, Learning Organization, Success, Rapid Expansion

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1. Introduction

Hospitality Industry is present in Pakistan since its independence in 1947 and is contributing to a larger proportion of country's economy. At first there were not many hotels to start with but as the time passed, a gradual establishment of local and international hotels showed a huge potential for hospitality industry in Pakistan. Avari Hotel, Lahore is one of those early local hotels that rose as a prominent hotel chain, took their business to the International world, and set new trends and standards of growth for the hospitality industry of Pakistan. In short, the top management teams of Avari Hotel created their own future by sustaining their creative approach to business through a continuous learning process. In the present study, those HR initiatives and managerial factors are explored that contributed towards making Avari Hotel a learning organization and ensuring its continuous success and rapid expansion in the International world.

Startups are not easy in any business, the establishment of a brand new hotel is in specific requires more because they struggle with the risk, fear of failure and success altogether. The most fundamental attribute require in the hotel industry is the discipline as a hotel works like a military at the management end and has to look fascinating and sensational on the front end. The startup of Avari Hotels, International chain from Avari Hotel, Lahore is a master piece of a great struggle, resiliency and a big vision. This great start up and continuous expansion gives rise to certain questions. First what are those factors that contributed in the development process and what are the initiatives that played important role in the maintenance of such a progressive timeline. Secondly how Avari Hotel, Lahore has become a learning organization and created its own future. The present study explores those HR initiatives and managerial factors that contributed towards making it a learning organization ensuring its continuous success and rapid expansion in the International world.

From a very humble beginnings growing up in an orphanage, the Late Mr. Dinshaw B. Avari carved himself a bright career in insurance sales, fast becoming the General Manager with Sun Life Insurance Company of Canada for Sindh/Punjab/Baluchistan/NWFP and Afghanistan. His determination and commitment also saw him become the first Chartered life Underwriter in Asia. Truly a self-made man and always ready for the biggest challenges, he decided to open a hotel, even though he had no experience of Hotel operations. Always the perfectionist, he threw himself and his wife Miss Khorshed D. Avari into six months intensive training and then acquired his first hotel, the Bristol Hotel, 1944. Later they signed management agreements with Beach Luxury Hotel and Pine's Hotel in 1948 and 1961 respectively.

In 1961, the late Mr. Dinshaw B. Avari bought the Nedous Hotel and resumed that property with a new name of Park Luxury Hotel. This step taken by Mr. Dinshaw B. Avari was of great importance because it has led Avari family to build their own hotel chain as Avari Hotels. In this way, the founding stone of Avari Hotel, Lahore was laid in 1973. Later in 1978, after a management agreement with Hilton International, Avari Lahore was officially inaugurated. A franchise agreement of Avari limited was formed with Ramada Renaissance Hotels International in 1988. After the ending of this agreement in 1994, Avari Hotel, Lahore is operating under the current name since then. Very few Lahories are aware of the fact that Avari Hotel Lahore is located at the place of a previous grand hotel, the Nedous Hotel, constructed by Harry Nedous, who was an Austro-Swiss Hotelier. In 1908, at the turn of the last century the Nedous Family came to Lahore when Lahore was still an integral part of India and invested their entire money from savings on building this hotel. Later they opened other fine hotels in Sirinager and Poona.

In 1985, Avari towers, Karachi was inaugurated which was one of the biggest and highest constructions in Karachi and took Avari hotels to another business hotel category. Avari Towers introduced 120 renovated rooms and suites

adopting the recent trends in a uniquely designed 17 storey building that was proved to be an admirable destination to accommodate all possible needs a business traveler may have. In 1988, following the death of Mr. Dinshaw B. Avari, his son Mr. Byram D. Avari became the Chairman of the Avari Hotels. Mr. Dinshaw B. Avari and Xerxes B. Avari, the sons of Mr. Byram D. Avari are working as the Executive Directors of Avari Hotels.

Mr. Byram D. Avari introduced the Avari, Hotels chain to the international world. The Avari Hotels is the first Pakistani company that has acquired management contracts to operate at local as well as international properties. In 1995, Avari Dubai was built that raised the business hotel category of Avari Hotels and proved to be a unique and comfortable destination for the travelers beyond comparison. In 2008, second property Avari Suites as Avari Al-Barsha in Mall of the Emirates was built that proved to be a lifestyle destination to accommodate the needs of business as well as leisure traveler. In 2010, Avari hotel chain introduced Avari Xpress Hotels & Residences in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital city that was a prestigious brand of limited service, and guest residences. Avari Xpress Residences, Islamabad provides comfort of access, because of the built in security features, and they are not offered in other residences and guest houses. The future projects of Avari group include Avari Xpress Ferozepur Road, Lahore; Avari Xpress, Gujranwala; Avari Xpress Shimla Pahari, Lahore; Avari Xpress, Sialkot; Avari Xpress, Multan.

The history of development of Avari hotels suggests that the top management has put certain efforts required in the foundations of the property that has confirmed a continuous boom in the development timeline of the chain and introduced it into the international world. Senge (1990) labeled such organizations as learning organizations that seek and create their own future and believe that learning is a continuous and creative process for its management teams. The theory of learning organizations (Senge, 1990) suggested five

disciplines that are necessary for an organization to master while introducing learning into the organization as

1.1 Systems Thinking

An organizations thinking should be focused on recognizing the patterns instead of conceptualizing change as separate events in an effort to figure out the big picture. In this way an organization's paradigm change from being isolated to interconnected to the whole and focus on an organization's own actions and operations increases to solve problems.

1.2 Personal Mastery

It focuses on a dedication to the lifelong learning emphasizing on being more realistic, thriving for becoming a best person and achieving a sense of excitement in a person's career to support understanding of personal potential.

1.3 Mental Models

Mental models should be well managed because they ensure effective implementation of new and powerful insights as well as organizational practices. Real change requires focus on employee's openness in reflecting their beliefs and generalizations and understanding about their impact on operations.

1.4 Building Shared Visions

A shared vision that obtains commitment from employees in good and bad times has the potential to connect an organization together. Building shared vision by considering employee's personal visions can earn long term commitment of employees.

1.5 Team Learning

It is important for a learning organization to maintain a team who is willing to learn and work together because organizations flourish on the basis of

teamwork nowadays. Keeping in mind the goals of organization, teams have to be aligned together to work for gaining the desired outcomes.

In short, learning organizations emphasize on the role of senior management in designing as well as ensuring implementation of projects or practices in the entire corporation. These organizations foster their employees to develop their potential and resources so that they can work as a team believing on the principles of humanity, liberty and collective effort to lean and endorse organizational changes positively (Garvin, 1993). Avari Hotel, Lahore has also developed the capabilities of their employees in a continuous manner to achieve organizational goals with such consistency. Especially when learning organizations continuously go through rapid change to expand and create their future, they strive to maintain commitment and same mind shift in their teams of employees to provide support and efficiency in achieving organizational goals. Senge (1990) argued that in learning organization, the role of a leader is different from traditional leadership styles. He suggested that in a learning organization employees are not powerless entities with no personal visions and the leaders role should not be of a person giving instructions with non systemic worldview. Instead he suggested that leaders will play role of designers, stewards and teachers in a learning organization.

The hospitality industry utilizes elements from traditional management theory as well as the best practices but current trends emphasize more on practices because they are beneficial in multiple aspects of business such as improving employee productivity, quality and branding as well. Most of the best practices in hospitality reflect extensive social and economical trends. Poster (2008) described some of the theories and practices for the hospitality and tourism organization including the theory of unique selling elements that emphasize on making a hotel stand out from the crowd. If a hotel points put three unique selling elements and utilize them as a foundation of all marketing exertions, those elements should serve as the distinguishing features such as the famous personalities as guests or

the special food items. Management theorists are focusing on the usage of new media to address the quality control issues of hospitality industry. As an organizational culture develops certain preconditions favorable for the success of hospitality management, to create a productive corporate culture five C's including, collegiality, cooperation, compromise, communication and coaching help encouraging the employees to be creative, focused and committed.

2. Objectives Of The Study

The main objectives of the research are

- To explore the historical background, distinguishing features and culture of Avari Hotel, Lahore.
- To explore the HR initiatives, managerial practices and critical success factors that contributed towards making Avari Hotel a learning organization and ensuring its continuous success and rapid expansion in the International world.

3. Literature Review

The following literature is highlighting the importance of HR practices and role of HR management in hospitality industry. Thelin and Boluk (2012) investigated the role of human resource practices in sustaining the competitive advantage in hotel industry. While examining the human resource practices of hotels, they considered three main sections of human resource management as hiring including recruitment and selection, performance evaluations and training programs. The findings suggested that although the hotels found their human resources practices important for maintaining sustainable competitive advantage but less attention was given to the development of human resources systems and processes.

The characteristics which the hospitality industry considers crucial in a hotel employee include commitment, interpersonal skills, problem solving, team

work, well organized and flexibility (Gittins, 2014). To develop and maintain these characteristics human resource practices including recruitment and selection, personnel planning, benefits and compensations, training and development, health and safety, and performance appraisal are crucial to practice in hospitality industry. Enz and Siguaw (2000) categorized the best human resources practices of hospitality industry in five areas including employee recognition, leader development, knowledge building, employee empowerment and cost management. Additionally they emphasized on designing integrated human resource systems and mentioned them as the most powerful tactics to make sure the value creation for customers as well as the profitability for owners. They also suggested that innovative hotel chains are focusing on their human resource practices to foster a prolonged organizational effectiveness.

Montasser and Manhawwy (2013) examined certain critical success factors that are crucial for the success of a hotel industry. First, the critical success factor which a hotel industry traditionally focuses on is the location of the property. Although things changed overtime but the importance of location stayed the same. It is understood that a hotel located on an old and used highway will not work well, whether it provides the best services. Second, it is important for a hotel to have a global outlook because even a small or locally owned hotel need to be able to compete on an international level to be successful. There is a need to stay aware about the trends of hotel industry all over the world because tourists research for the quality of local hotels from all over the world while making their selection.

Third, quality management is the crucial factor and goes beyond the concept of customer services as it involves employee satisfaction as well as involvement. Because one random interaction with the hotel employee can make difference between an impressed customer and satisfied customer or the one who goes online and writes a bad review about his hotel experience. Focusing on employee satisfaction can enhance the chances that all employees will provide

excellent customer services. Fourth, the flexibility or the autonomy given to the managers to make decisions to accommodate customers because customers with different expectations visit hotels and a manager bound by an inflexible set of policies would be unable to fix a customer problem and gain customer's loyalty and good word of mouth in the future (Montasser & Manhawy, 2013).

Dhar (2015) studied the service innovative behavior of hotel employees which can be regarded as the core demand of hotel employees because it is their major work responsibility and they strive for serving their customers in the best possible way. The researcher examined the effect of high performance human resource practices on the commitment level of the hotel employees. The findings revealed that organizational commitment mediated the relationship between the high performance human resource practices and service innovative behavior of the employees.

Radojevic, Stanistic and Stanic (2015) provided an insight regarding what hotel characteristics have a significant relationship with the satisfaction of customers. The findings of the study suggested that customer experience of a hospitality industry can be enhanced only by one of the most important factors which are the hotel star rating. In addition the services provided including air-conditioning devices in rooms, membership card in a branded hotel chain and price, a bar located within the hotel area and Wi-Fi Internet free of charge have a significant positive influence on the customer satisfaction. There are also certain factors those appeared in a negative relationship with the customer satisfaction as the distance from the city centre which suggests the importance of location, the size of the hotel suggesting star ranking of the property and general hotel price level in the city where the hotel is located as the travelers compare prices while deciding their destinations to stay.

4. Research Methodology

Case study research method was applied that involves in depth investigation of a problem in one or more real life situation over time. As the study is exploratory in nature, interviews as well as secondary sources were referred in this case study. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

4.1 Sample

Mr. Q. J, General Manager Avari, Hotel Lahore, Mr. A.K, Corporate Human Resource Manager, Avari Hotels and Mr. I. A, HR manager Avari Hotel, Lahore were approached with their consent. Representatives from senior management of Avari Hotel, Lahore with more than 5 year experience working with Avari were interviewed because they have better understanding about the factors helping them cope with the ups and downs faced by the organization over time.

4.2 Case History Form

To assess the historical background, distinguishing features, culture, current business portfolio, business achievements and developments overtime, a self developed case history form was administered. Secondary resources including progress reports, Avari magazine, property development timelines and official websites of Avari Hotels were consulted.

4.3 Interview Guide

A self developed, semi structured interview guide was developed to assess the core strengths of HR department, HR initiatives for employee retention, functional role of HR in areas as ensuring safe, healthy and happy workplace,

employee care, communication, recognition, work environment and culture, recruitment training and development. In addition, improvement areas as well as managerial factors contributing towards the success and expansion being a learning organization were also discussed.

4.4 Procedure

Consent was taken from the participants and the nature of the study was explained before administration of the interview guide and analyzing the secondary data. Concerned authorities were insured that the information required from them will be held confidential and will only be published with their permission after getting the content reviewed by them. The participants were given the right to withdraw from participation and terminate at any time they wish. After taking the consent from the concerned authorities and participant, the study was conducted in an office setting.

5. Results

The purpose of the study was to assess the distinguishing features, HR initiatives and other managerial factors that have contributed towards the success of Avari hotel chain and played an important role in making it a learning organization to shape its successful future are discussed. Property development sheets as well as the websites of Avari Hotels were consulted to identify the distinguishing features of business, unique Avari culture, current business portfolio, property development timeline and achievements in form of awards and certifications.

6. Distinguishing Features of Avari Hotels

It was explored that all branches of Avari Hotels provide certain facilities to their guests that distinguish them from their competitors as business center, Avari gold card, lady Avari and family rooms, health club providing gymnasium and massage spa, swimming pool, banquet facilities and special diet menus,

business conferences and meeting rooms, 24-hour front desk and express check-in/-out, luggage storage and 24 hour room service, currency exchange and tour desk, wireless internet, designated smoking area, laundry/dry cleaning and babysitting service, car rental, airport shuttle and parking, fax/photocopying, facilities for the disabled and concierge service.

7. Avari Hotels Culture

Avari Hotels hold an excellent culture by setting certain values and behaviors in their employees who then help in maintaining the same culture in services to clients. The practices those are not allowed for any of the employees to maintain a healthy work environment are discussed as in the lobby or any public areas smoking, eating, drinking, chewing gum, whistling, humming, singing or spitting in any area is not allowed. Casual conversation or standing in groups with co-workers, allowing personal friends to visit employees at the hotel, saying anything negative about the hotel, entering in other departments or guest floors, shouting or talking in the public areas are all strictly not allowed in any employees conduct at workplace. Avari Hotels insure certain characteristics in their employees those differentiate them from other service providers in the market. These include excellent communication skills, interpersonal skills, competency, loyalty, integrity and commitment of employees, knowledgeable of safety hygiene issues, team work, enthusiasm and leadership.

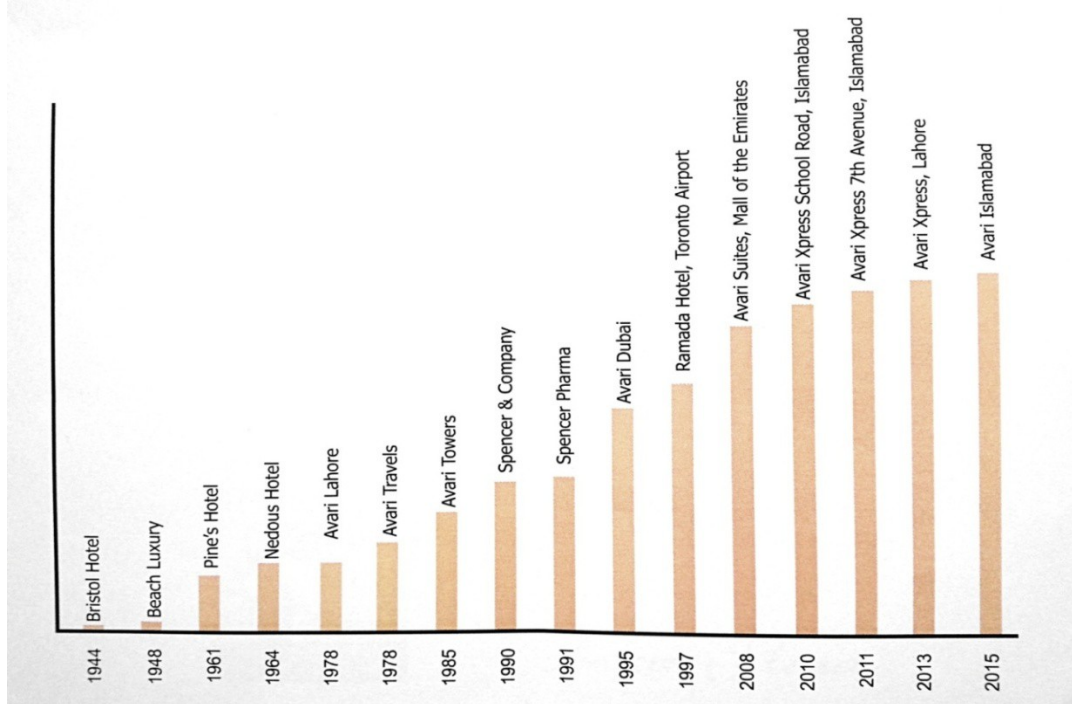
8. Current Business Portfolio

The current business portfolio of Avari Hotels include two five star properties as Avari Hotel, Lahore (188 bedrooms) and Avari Towers, Karachi (236 bedrooms); four star hotels as Avari Dubai (190 bedrooms), Avari Al-Barsha, Dubai (74 one bedroom, 4 two bedrooms apartments), Avari Xpress, Islamabad (42 bedrooms) and Avari Xpress, 7th Avenue Islamabad (44 bedrooms) and one three star hotel as Beach Luxury, Karachi (100 bedrooms).

9. Property Development Timeline

In the light of historical background discussed in detail in the introduction portion, the following timeline is showing a pattern of the property development which is continuously progressing high.

Figure 1



Source: www.avari.com/property

10. Awards And Certificates

The World Travel Award that was established in 1993 to recognize, reward and celebrate the excellence among all the sectors of tourism industry and is distinguished worldwide as the ultimate symbol of quality, where the winners set the benchmark to which all other competitor aspire. Avari Hotels is the only hotel chain in Pakistan who has achieved eight consecutive World Travel Awards as Pakistan's Leading Hotel for the years (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012 & 2013).

Avari Hotels won the Certificate of Excellence –Trip Advisor Winner (2014). The Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence is awarded to properties that

consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews on Trip Advisor. Certificate of Excellence celebrates the accommodations, attractions and eateries that make these perfect trips possible.

Gender Equality for Decent Employment Award by International Labor Organization whose main aim is to encourage equality of rights at workplace, support decent employment opportunities, foster social protection and built a strong dialogue on the work-related issues. Avari Lahore Garden awarded as the first prize in Spring Festival 2010 and won the Annual Chrysanthemum Award 2008. The restaurants of Avari Hotels won brands of the year awards for Fujiyama (Avari, Lahore-2008), Dynasty (Avari, Lahore- 2008, Dynasty (Avari Lahore-2007), Fujiyama (Avari Towers, Karachi-2008) and Dynasty (Avari Towers,Karachi-2008).

11. Hr Initiatives At Avari Hotels

Interviews were conducted to assess the HR initiatives for employee retention, functional role of HR in areas as ensuring safe, healthy and happy workplace, employee care, communication, recognition, work environment and culture, recruitment training and development. In addition, improvement areas as well as managerial factors contributing towards the success and expansion being a learning organization were also identified.

12. Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses

Themes derived from interview suggested that Avari Hotels have been adopting the following human resource management functions to maintain a highly effective workforce: recruitment and selection, personnel planning, benefits and compensations training and development, health and safety, and performance appraisal.

Avari hotels have developed a standardized list of job positions and those positions are filled in agreement with international standards. However, keeping

in view the changing needs of the workforce, new jobs are added to the list. In Avari hotel, a new vacancy may arise because of the dismissed staff, the need to replace the employees who are retiring, and the promotion of employees or the replacement of employees on job rotation. To fill in a vacancy, a requisite form is sent by the head of that particular department when the vacancy is created to the human resource manager. The form explains all the specifics required for the potential candidate. Then the requisition form is approved by General Manager for the final decision. Inside candidates as well outside candidates including interns serve as the sources of recruitment.

Selection criteria changes in accordance to the job position. For example the selection criteria in food and beverages department include work sample testing technique whereas the basic criteria for testing and selection of other department employees include communication skills in English, grooming and appearance, academic and professional qualifications with experience and knowledge of the job position they are required to fit in, balance poise and maturity, reasoning and judgment with good computer skills and individual's potential for growth.

Performance appraisal is an import aspect for increasing the productivity of employees and to induce quality improvements in the overall performance of the organization. Department heads are the main decision makers involved in appraisal of employees. The Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale is used for appraisal as annual appraisals are conducted. The factors considered important for appraising an employee include the appearance of the employee, professional work experience and overall conduct, communication and training skills, business attitude and operational performance, planning and organization, leadership and teamwork, achievements of objectives and creativity.

In order to facilitate the employees, Avari hotel provides certain benefits and services to their employees. For example, facility of flexible work schedule is

available for shift employees. During working hours, Avari provides free meals and tea to employees, free uniforms and free laundry services for employees' uniforms, free transportation for female workers, free medical facility to all employees and their children, yearly pay rise regardless of employees' performance and life insurance facility. Employees' get their provident fund at the time of retirement as well as resignation. Employees are provided with the counseling services as the family counseling and the retirement counseling. Health and safety measures include fire preventions, energy conservations, health and safety laws, facility of in-house doctor and dispensary, security measures, social security fund and hygiene of employees.

It can be concluded as Avari hotel's functional strategies play an integral role in its competitive strategies, Avari must require highly committed employees to play a proactive role in executing strategies as well as to maintain Avari culture. Therefore, Avari exercise its HR processes in order to create a work force that is committed, competent and customer-oriented. Being a part of the service industry, the role human resource is fundamental and cannot be ignored.

13. Critical Success Factors of Avari Hotel, Lahore

Themes derived from interviews suggested that first, Avari Hotel, Lahore's location provides an edge over the competitors as it is located in the heart of a historical city Lahore and is surrounded by many historical places. Secondly, its traditional Mughal architecture makes it unique and attractive to the tourists. Like Avari Hotel, Lahore, all other properties of Avari group are also located at the most supreme locations setting the best tourist destination for the travelers worldwide. Avari Hotel's global outlook is also contributing towards making progress in meeting up the international standards and following the trends emerging in hospitality industry worldwide. It is also making it the most favorable for the international customers or tourists because of the international quality standards.

Avari Hotel's unique selling elements including business center, Avari gold card and lady Avari that offers separate rooms on separate floor for the women travelling alone where housekeeping services are provided by female staff. to make them feel comfortable. Avari Hotel' Lahore and other properties are mostly five star hotel properties and in hospitality industry property stars define the ranking based on the quality of services provided. Therefore this ranking of five stars is also contributing towards the success.

Avari exercise its HR processes in order to create a workforce that is committed, competent and customer-oriented. The HR practices including recruitment and selection, personnel planning, benefits and compensations training and development, health and safety, and performance appraisal help keeping the employee enthusiastic and motivated to provide all guests with an excellent eminence and luxury with a sincere and professional wellbeing as promised in the mission statement of the organization.

Avari Hotels classify its client's segmentation into six segments as walk in, corporate and business clients, Government officials, diplomats, tourist groups and airlines. GM Avari Hotel Lahore mentioned that the segmented pricing policy helped Avari hotel to enhance the profits and room occupancy, to meet the goal of sustaining highest occupancy rates whereas keeping the average room rate superior as compare to the other competitor chains.

The standards Avari Hotels are maintaining to stay aligned with their mission statement are the factors continuously contributing to the success of Avari group. These include being fair with the guests and with colleagues, personal responsibility for oneself and property, unconditional team work and communication, protecting assets and identifying defects for knowing the product, salesmanship being everyone's responsibility, making guest complaints their own and recording them properly to prevent their repeat occurrence, always talk positive about hotel, sell services of hotel and being profitable.

14. Discussion And Conclusion

We have conducted an exploratory case study on Avari Hotel, Lahore in order to understand its distinguishing features, HR initiatives and other managerial factors that have contributed towards the success of Avari hotel chain and played an important role in making it a learning organization to shape its successful future. Based on in-depth interviews, observations and documentation; distinguishing features of Avari Hotel, Lahore is perceived as its certain facilities to their guests that distinguish them from their competitors as business center, Avari gold card, lady Avari and family rooms, health club providing gymnasium and massage spa, banquet facilities and special diet menus, business conferences and meeting rooms, currency exchange and tour desk, wireless internet, designated smoking area, laundry/dry cleaning and babysitting service, car rental, airport shuttle and parking, fax/photocopying, facilities for the disabled and concierge service. Findings are analyzed according to Senge's fifth discipline model (1990). The findings further showed that Avari Hotel, Lahore tackle many characteristics of the learning organization. However, there are some contradictions as well.

HR initiatives for employee retention, functional role of HR in areas as ensuring safe, healthy and happy workplace, employee care, communication, recognition, work environment and culture, recruitment training and development were analyzed. Themes derived from interviews further suggested that Avari Hotels have been adopting the following human resource management functions to maintain a highly effective workforce: recruitment and selection, personnel planning, benefits and compensations training and development, health and safety, and performance appraisal. Huang and Shih (2011) narrated that many organizations show interest for employing traditional knowledge management procedures to become a learning organization and human resource initiatives play a vital role in alternating practices and eventually strategic planning teams become crucial in this regard. Avari hotel's functional strategies play an integral

role in its competitive strategies; Avari must require highly committed employees to play a proactive role in executing strategies as well as to maintain Avari culture. Therefore, Avari exercise its HR processes in order to create a work force that is committed, competent and customer-oriented.

Smith et al. (2014) argued that the employees of a learning organization should be able to question the existing rules norms to create novel thought processes and enhance their efficiency and service quality by taking decision through learning by doing approach. Although major decisions are made by the top management but department executives practice democratic leadership to ensure opinions of all team members and come up with creative ideas and decisions to implement strategies effectively as supported by Weldy and Gillis (2010) that variations exists while depicting characteristics of learning organization at different organizational level as the perceptions of managers, supervisors and employees are varying in nature from one another regarding the features of learning organization. Further, in order to facilitate the employees, Avari hotel provides certain benefits and services to their employees. For example, facility of flexible work schedule for shift employees, free meals, free uniforms, laundry services, transportation for female workers, medical facility, yearly pay rise, life insurance facility, counseling services, health and safety measures of employees.

In conjunction with few inconsistencies, Avari Hotel, Lahore is a flourishing and unique case of a learning organization. It has a comparatively traditional structural frame but with accommodating and innovative implementation plans. Prior implementation, all the decisions go through a detailed review to ensure the best decision. Avari Hotel is like a big business with lower rates of turnover because of their effective efforts on the employee end to maximum retention. They consider employees as a unique asset and they give more importance to the knowledge and experiential involvement of employees rather than their job positions. Main departments put an extra effort in fixing the problems and ensuring proper solution that are beneficial over time as supported

by Bui and Baruch (2011) who further explored the Senge's work considering the positive impact of systems thinking and shared vision in knowledge management

Avani Hotels, international is now one of the biggest hotel chains in Pakistan as well as in the International world. It is the story of one small local hotel that first survived and learned through management and franchise agreements and then introduced their own brand Avani Hotel that entered in the International world and succeeded. Its success is attributed to the consistent hard work of the owners in meeting and maintaining the international standards of five star hotel properties. It rose as a prominent hotel chain and set a benchmark for upcoming hotel chains. The greatest growth was seen in 80s and then 90s, the Avani Hotels, International survived the economic recession of 2008 when hotel occupancy rates fell and an alarming sign was given to the hotel industry of Pakistan.

Avani Hotels, International is the only hotel chain that has won eight consecutive World Travel Awards as Pakistan's Leading Hotel. High degree of customization and personalization are the basic requirements for success and growth in a learning organization and Avani Hotels is able to maintain its freshness as a brand by meeting and exceeding the customers' customization and personalization requirements. It is also true that competitive forces and environmental changes are rapid and there is a need to quickly adapt to the changes of the environment. The strategic management at Avani Hotels is in action to address the environment and competitive pressures. There is a strong need that management practices at Avani remain aligned with their business objectives in order to remain a force in hospitality industry and retain their market position for strong, unique and favorable brand associations.

15. Recommendation

Gephart et al. (1996) suggested a timeline to adopt certain types of changes required to achieve the principles of a learning organization. Avari Hotels existing as well as upcoming properties can apply these changes to fill the gap between vision and reality with the creative tension that will enable the senior management see the truth in changing circumstances. This timelines is consisted of ten phases.

- **Phase One** is to introduce a communications system that can facilitate the regulation and transfer of information that on what basis that learning organization is built. Such system will provide a universal access to business and strategic information.
- **Phase Two** is to develop an instrument or tool to examine the difference between organizational current and future timeline of progress and to create an assessment profile to design the learning organization initiative in future.
- **Phase Three** is to commit to developing, maintaining, and facilitating an atmosphere that garners learning.
- **Phase Four** is to create a vision of the organization and write a mission statement with the help of all employees.
- **Phase Five** is to use training and awareness programs to develop skills and understanding attitudes that are needed to reach the goals of the mission statement, including the ability to work well with others, become more verbal, and network with people across all departments within the organization.
- **Phase Six** is to communicate a change in the company's culture by integrating human and technical systems.

- **Phase Seven** is to initiate the new practices by emphasizing team learning and contributions. Employees will become more interested in self-regulation and management, and be more prepared to meet the challenges of an ever-changing workplace.
- **Phase Eight** is to allow employees to question key business practices and assumptions.
- **Phase Nine** is to develop workable expectations for future actions.
- **Phase Ten** is to remember that becoming a learning organization is a long process and that small setbacks should be expected. It is the journey that is the most important thing because it brings everyone together to work as one large team. In addition, it has inherent financial benefits by turning the workplace into a well-run and interesting place to work; a place which truly values its employees.

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