

Human Resource Information Systems: An Integrating Feature for Advancing Organizational Health in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Health is imperative to the well-being and effectiveness of organizations. Given the increasing functional pressure and strain emerging from changing demographics and competition in the tourism industry, their organizational health is considered imperative for sustained efficiency and service robustness. This paper addressed concerns of organizational health from the lens of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) which as discussed, advances improved control and connectedness within the industry; thus, furthering the organizations health objectives in terms of effective communication, cohesion, collaboration, and goal focus. It is the position of this paper that the HRIS offers much more to the functionality of tourism organizations through the role it plays in the linkage of systems and units. The paper therefore affirms to the role of HRIS in advancing a more deliberate and conscious approach towards the management, monitoring and structuring of its human resource; thus, maintaining coherence and stability in the organization.

Keywords: Organizational Health, Human Resource Information Systems, Organizational Stability, Organizational Adaptive Learning.

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1. Introduction

In advancing the health and well-being of organizations, effort is channelled toward ensuring resource control, improve communication and ensure collaboration (Chauvin, 2010). Health as an organizational construct, details the connectedness of organizational units, levels and systems. Fairman (2015) described organizational health as a being unique from the likes of performance, competitiveness or effectiveness. Unlike the latter, which project the organization towards established goals, organizational health describes the state or condition of relationship and interaction between the various components of the organization. Price (2010) posited that healthy organizations are in a better position to pursue their goals more effectively as internal relations offer the required support. Health is also concerned with the level of stability expressed in the organization and how well resources are distributed and applied.

Reports suggest a growing level of strain within the Nigerian Tourism industry (Amadi, 2008). This is linked to pressure emerging from changing demographics such as population growth and increased competition within the industry. Such environmental factors, although external, have a strong impact on the level of stability and harmony within the internal system of the organization (Amadi, 2008, Obiora, 2021). Barros (2015) posited that one way such external pressures often seep into the organization is through the demand it places on the various units and system of the organization. Akpabio(2007) and Obiora & Ifegbo (2019) identified the industry as one which is constantly bludgeoned by the cultural, political and economic changes that characterize the environment. Reiterating this observation Amadi(2008) noted that this was because Tourism organizations are primarily in the business of creating new experiences and realities for their clients, and as such are deeply immersed in their social settings – engaging and relating with their environment.

In their study Keller and Price (2010) argued that developing organizational health should be a deliberate and conscious action on the part of the organization’s management. Health from the perspective of Nair, Kumar and Ramalu(2014) should be not be expected to simply occur as a result of system linkage. This view was also corroborated by Price (2010) who posited that stability and synchrony between organizational units or parts should be pursued intentionally and not assumed to occur by chance. Research into the manifestations of organizational health appear to place significant interest on factors such as organizational culture and leadership as possible antecedents (Jenaabadi&Zare-Javan, 2014; Hong, Law & Toner, 2014); thus, emphasizing on health as a consequence of factors such as organizational policies, regulations, values, norms and leadership styles. Nonetheless, advances in information communication technology alongside the evolving nature of human resource

management practices point to the effectiveness of utilities such as human resource information systems in coordinating and channelling the organization's human resources in more efficient ways harmonious with the organizations goals (Batool, Sajid, & Raza, 2012).

Human resource information systems (HRIS) describe the various interconnectedness of systems that allow for data transfer and the management of the organizations human resources (Khera, 2012; Sadiq, 2012). The HRIS is considered efficient and effective in the management of data on human resource features, describing, prescribing and predicting human resource capabilities necessary for the well-being and advancement of the organization. However, scant interest has been shown in addressing the link between HRIS and outcomes of organizational health. This is because the concept of organizational health is rarely discussed from a technological perspective. This paper thus contributes towards addressing these noted literature gaps as it discussed the relationship between HRIS and organizational health; drawing primarily from content bordering on the experiences of organizations in the tourism industry.

2. Organizational Adaptive Learning Theory

The theory of organizational adaptive learning follows Senge's (1990) position on the need for organizations to consistently review and improve on their existing knowledge in order to be more effective and competitive. According to Senge (1990), the development of the organizations human resource and capabilities are such that anchor on its understanding of its environment and market. He noted further that adaptive learning is a cognitive process entailing the observation of others and understanding of the evolving nature of one's market, context or environment – developing and reconfiguring one's features and behaviour in the same way. Similarly, Yang, Liu and Wan (2004) argued that learning does not focus on the external environment alone, but through the facilitation of avenues for participation and involvement, learning also draws from the creativity and innovativeness which is internal and embedded in the workers or employees of the organization.

As a system, knowledge is vital to the organizations development as it determines its capacity to advance the necessary features for engaging its environment. King and Lekse (2006) stated that in adapting, organizations begin by working towards modifying and restructuring existing frameworks which in the past served in addressing the nature of existing market demands, but which has become nonsynchronous with the changes that have come to define the organizations context. It is these conditions, reflecting the health of the organization, that pave the way for the organizations capacity in continuing to offer value and address the needs of its market or environment (Zeng, He & Chen, 2010; King & Lekse, 2006). Through the organization's ability to manage its knowledge and human resources, it is able to understand its own shortcomings and thereby redesign and reconfigure its form and methods ensuring that ensure its internal systems and processes align with the functional requirements of its environment - thus enabling it to compete and perform more effectively.

3. Human Resource Information Systems

The fusion of information systems with human resource management practices according to Teotia (2012) allows for a more consistent and coherent approach towards the coordination and control of the organizations human resource. Zafar (2013) posited that apart from the competitiveness enabled by the organizations adoption of information systems in spurring its human resource management practices, the HRIS is also considered as enabling a more systematic and well aligned approach towards the planning and structuring of its human resource. Khera and Karishma (2012) stated that individuals, differ on a substantial basis. Such differences are reflected in their physical characteristics (e.g., gender, age, height, complexion etc.) and also in non-physical characteristics (e.g., temperament, cognitive abilities, social skills etc.) and to a considerable extent influence their functional capacities in the organization. Sadri and Chatterjee (2003) observed that the HRIS supports management policies and decisions on human resource through its emphatics on things like role compatibility, the specification of functional gaps or deficiencies, prescription of training focus and plans as well as the prediction of necessary skills for adapting and sustaining effectiveness.

Obiedat (2012) identified clarity in the structuring of roles as being imperative for performance. According to Akpabio (2007), most hotels in Nigeria and other parts of Africa and increasingly engaging more advanced forms of information systems that not only aid in their operations but also serve to protect and reinforce their security and the security of their clients as well. The reliance on information system is one which has for decades defined the operations and service quality of the Tourism sector; not only boosting customers confidence in their capacities but also in the recruitment of suitable, qualified and trustworthy staff in their operations (Chang, Gong & Shum, 2011). Hence, customers details and information are secured from the external as well as internal threats. Similarly, Rangriz, Mehrabi and Azadegan (2011) stated that while the primary focus of the HRIS is premised on enabling a more efficient and effect level of control and monitoring of the human resource of the organization, however, its application and use in service industries such as tourism and hospitality has metamorphosed into such that

integrates much more – such as the bridging of skills with functional gas and serving as a platform through which creativity is harnessed within the system.

4. Organizational Health

Health, with respect to the organization, describes a condition or state of well-being manifested through cohesion, effective communication, goal focus and collaboration. The concept of organizational health relates to the flow of processes, actions and the extent to which units correspond and are harmonic in their functions. Smet, Loch and Schaninger(2007) argued that health deals more with the connectedness of the organization's internal features, units and levels – noting that such connectedness is important for sustaining the progress of the organization. According to Price (2010) Organizations that are able to maintain mutual relations and understanding between management and subordinates, effectively engage their workers, and align members or group values with those of the organization, have a stronger focus and are more consistent in the pursuit of their goals. This requires not only a bridging of expectations of the various groups within the organization but also the enabling of processes that encourage inclusivity, as such, a shared sense of responsibility to the organization (Bauer & Jenny, 2012; Fisher, Psych & Psych, 2007).

Hill (2012) stated that the issue of health differs in line with the nature or type of organizations or industry. Within the Nigerian Tourism industry, manifestations of health are such that border on the positive relationship between co-workers, units in the organization and supervisor-subordinate relationships. This differs from the experiences of other industries, such as the oil and gas which is noted for its heightened trade union activities (Amadi, 2008). Health suggests a condition where the commitment to the organization is shared across the various workers and units of the organization; hence differences are put aside or constructively channelled in a resourceful way towards enriching and reinforcing the organizations operations. (Brown & Ragsdale, 2012; Jones, Howcroft & Drake, 2010) According to Hong & Toner (2014), the organization's ability to maintain balance and internal cohesion, is suggestive of how well its members buy into its vision and are willing to collaborate in ensuring it attains such. Health therefore implies not only a condition of balance and stability in the organization's operations but also evidence of agreement and unity within the organization (Hakkak, Pirzad, Nasab & Arefneiad, 2014; Yuceler, Doganalp, Kaya and Yuceler, 2013).

5. Human Resource Information Systems and Organizational Health

Rangriz, Mehrabi and Azadegan(2011) noted that the information system of the organization enhances communication flow and strengthens collaboration within the organization. The HRIS advances a network of communication systems that facilitates information access and sharing, enriching the organizations systemic features and the depth of its internal cohesion. Nawaz and Gomez (2012) argued that organizations with supportive technological features, such as the HRIS, tend to be more consistent in their behaviour and approach. Such consistency is necessary for internal predictability and planning. This is because it allows for understanding between organizational units and levels, clarifying on time lines for actions and the roles or functions of various units or levels in the actualization of particular objectives of the organization (Matimbwa & Masue 2019; Sadri & Chatterjee, 2003). Thus, one could argue that the HRIS bridges the differences in the expectations of units in the organization, particularly with respect to related human resource management actions or practices. It enhances communication and facilitates collaboration through the link and connectedness it offers or establishes in the organization.

Related research indicates that the HRIS is a critical component of the tourism industry across the world (Zafar, 2013; Bourini, 2011; Al-Qatawneh, Abutayeh & Al-Hammad, (2012). This is because apart from the general roles information systems play or contribute towards the coherence and efficiency of services such as airlines, hotels, lodges etc., the HRIS specifically enhances the way in which workers are managed and monitored in organizations. Al-Tarawneh and Tarawneh(2012) posited that it offers database support for addressing issues concerned with staff capacity, promotion, remuneration, behaviour control, shifts, etc. enabling a more harmonic stance on human resource issues and practices across the organization. Furthermore demonstrated in their study demonstrated that the HRIS reduces bias or error tendencies in decision-making, ensuring that processes such as recruitment, training and development of workers actually match and effectively address the gaps and challenges identified in the organization. Thus, HRIS can be viewed as vital and useful in the development of understanding and collaboration in organizations – ensuring units are synchronized in their functions and well aligned in the overall framework of the organization.

Organizational health measures such as effective communication, cohesion, goal focus and collaboration, all reflect the extent to which the organization is unified in its various functions and actions. The unification of organizational components suggests that despite the distinctive functions or operations of each unit, these contribute uniquely but in agreed forms to the overall framework of the organization; enhancing the control of its

resources and drive for excellence. While research on technology trends and their implications for the health of organizations such as hotels have scarcely been addressed, there are nonetheless strong evidence and reports that suggest a growing level of reliance of management on the use of information systems and other technology-based practices in the management of functions and processes (Brown & Ragsdale, 2012; Barros, 2015; Jones et al, 2010). Scholars have over the years, continuously advocated and strongly recommended the merging of organizational actions with technology as a basis for enhancing the quality of services, consistency in terms of inter-unit coordination and robustness through data security, safety and accessibility across various platforms (Batool, Sajid, & Raza, 2012; Krishna & Bhaskar, 2011; Sadiq, Khan, Ikhlaq and Mujtaba, 2012).

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Developing and advancing organizational health is fundamental to the success of the organization. Health reflects a variety of conditions which are necessary for consistency, coherence and stability in the organization, enhancing its competitiveness and effectiveness. Health reflects the extent to which the organization's internal systems are cohesive and are synchronized; thereby providing the required support and conditions that enrich the organizations actions and operations. Information systems, particularly the HRIS, reinforces the connectedness of the organizations systems; strengthening the collaboration and cohesion between the organizations units and functions. From the discussion, it was established that HRIS improves the organizations coordination and monitoring of its human resource features, smoothens planning actions and enables features that are specific to its own learning and context. In this vein, it is recommended that practitioners advance HRIS as a more deliberate and conscious approach towards the management, monitoring and structuring of its human resource; such that is favourable towards maintaining coherence and stability on the organization and supportive of its health concerns.

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