

Full Length Research Paper

All hands on deck: Employee engagement on cruise ships

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The present in-situ study examined employee engagement of a cruise ship workforce. 246 crew members and officers in different department's on-board a contemporary market cruise ship filled in a questionnaire during their voyages. Exploratory factor analysis has been applied to test factors of engagement and findings indicated that a four-factor solution (Communication and progress, Capacity to engage, Engaged behaviour, Trust and feeling of freedom) is the best explanation. Furthermore an IPA matrix outlined areas for improvement. The study has found that there is an opportunity for cruise organisations to increase the engagement of their employees by improving factors related to Communication and progress, Capacity to engage and Engaged behaviour. These findings have important implications for cruise tourism theory and practice.

Key words: Employee engagement on cruise ship, cruise tourism, principal components analysis, importance-performance analysis.

INTRODUCTION

CLIA (2016) reports that in 2015 the cruise industry represented 956,600 jobs, which resulted in approximately \$38 billion (US) in wages and salaries. Forecasts for 2017 through 2026 have **over 80** new cruise ships launching into the market, with a total capacity of 230,800 berths per day. With its insatiable demand for talent, the industry is growing at exponential rates. Today, it seems that the need for an agile and highly motivated workforce is a logical thing and, by itself, a common thing; **so it** is hard to imagine that our beliefs about the workforce were very different not so long ago (The Disney Institute and Kinni, 2011:57). In 1914 Henry Ford enraged the capitalists when he almost doubled the wages of his workers. However, he was among the first to notice that

“the average person will not fulfil the daily norm unless he is caught and cannot escape” (Ford, 1931). Many years later today's understanding of employees' engagement has life energy and all the colours of the rainbow, in complete contrast to Ford's grey mechanistic understanding of the workforce. Thus, by now, everyone knows that sustainable competitiveness can only be achieved through the workforce. That is, people within the organisation and, therefore, to get the most out of employees, during which they go a step further for the organisation, it is essential that they are engaged (Bhattacharya, 2014). In order to maintain long term competitiveness in the cruise industry, it will be of utmost importance for all companies to have an highly motivated

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and agile workforce.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of employee engagement on cruise ships

Engagement was, for the first time, conceptualised by Kahn (1990), who examined, through two qualitative studies, the work conditions in which employees felt connected or separated concerning the work they do. Based on the results of studies, Kahn (1990) came to the conclusion that engagement is a state in which the members of the organisation physically, cognitively and emotionally, positively express themselves in the context of their working roles. However, to come to a position where the work environment contributes positively to the emotional well-being of an individual, the context of the work should be challenging (Layard, 2005), meaningful (Ryff and Singer, 2003) and does not need to contain only the potential for socialisation (Helliwel, 2003; Layard, 2005) but should also include the potential for a deep connection and empathy among the participants in the working environment (Lyubomirsky et al., 2003; McGowan, 2006).

The accepted opinion is that engaged employees are more productive; however, Gallup (2013) points in their report to the fact that in 142 countries around the world, only 13% of employees are engaged in their work role. The cruise industry is peculiar, because private life and the job cannot be separated clearly during the stay of employees on cruise ships. Cruise ships are the physically isolated environment in which employees stay on average more than five months and employees experience what Weaver (2005:169) calls 'total institution'. The main characteristic being encapsulation of an individual. During their stay on a cruise ship, employees are exposed to various operational challenges such as long working days (on average 11 h per day), inability to take time off during their stay on board, low wages and emotional exploitation (Klein, 2002; Lee-Ross, 2005). Employees on cruise ships also have to comply with strict rules with a pronounced hierarchy based on a paramilitary system.

In regard to cruise tourism, at the present time no study has dealt with the involvement of employees on cruise ships and factors that influence engagement of employees on cruise ships. However, there are studies that have dealt with: Motivation and personal experiences of employees who work on the frontline of providing service on a cruise ship (Sehkaran and Sevcikova, 2011), organisational socialisation and making sense of their own work (Matuszewski and Blenkinsopp, 2011), the effectiveness of online recruitment in the hotel sector of cruise ships (Gibson and Swift, 2011) and challenges in the recruitment and management of trained manpower in

a multicultural and globalised environment (Gibson, 2008). The study of Sehkaran and Sevcikova (2011) brought to light of day that special attention must be directed toward understanding the motivation of employees on cruise ships, since it is of great importance for providing high-quality services. However, to achieve motivation of employees on cruise ships it must be understood, as Matuszewski and Blenkinsopp (2011) noticed, the specific nature of the social community between employees on a cruise ship that is an extremely challenging environment for all new employees, primarily because of no separation of the private and working parts of life in the isolated environment of cruise ships.

Factors of employee engagement on cruise ships

Working on cruise ships is tough and may be best described by Jacksparrow057 (2009) according to whom: "From immemorial, sailing has the status of God's punishment... those who sail are only those who have no luck or brains to find their own bread on the land... from Polynesia to Murmansk to live on the ship as a sailor or a fisherman is to be an economic gladiator who sweetens his marine captivity with the hope that he will one day buy freedom on the land and watch the sea through the outer eyelid of the window of his home on the solid ground." Considering the previously mentioned, it is seen that the engagement of employees on cruise ships is an extremely demanding but achievable task. Macey et al. (2009) noted that the involvement of employees is necessary to achieve the capacity to engage, engaged behaviour, trust and a feeling of freedom. The ability to engage is the positive energy that is created by the employees when they have individual strength, the necessary resources to fulfil their tasks and social support of colleagues and leaders (Lyman and Adler, 2012; Burchell and Robin, 2011; Macey et al., 2009; Thomas, 2009). Indeed, in describing the conditions of employment that lead to employee engagement, Burchell and Robin (2011) point out the capacity to engage needing: Social support, equality, a sense of pride among employees and the credibility of leaders. Organisational culture in which open communication between leaders and employees is encouraged (Thomas, 2009; Lipp, 2013), as well as the progress that was achieved during the work, are recognised as crucial factors in engagement (Marciano, 2010). In further sub-sections will be described the building elements that have a direct positive impact on engagement: *Communication and progress, Capacity to engage, Engaged behaviour and Trust and feeling of freedom.*

Capacities to engage

Before proceeding to a further description of engagement,

it must be noted that engagement is not a synonym for motivation (Marciano, 2010:40). Which means we can agree with Deci and Ryan (2000) according to whom, engagement arises from the desire for autonomy and expertise, while Macey et al. (2009:16) point out that in engaged individuals there is the flow of energy between a feeling of competence and self-sufficiency. Therefore, engagement refers to the essential and deep-seated commitment, pride and loyalty that do not change easily; while on the contrary, the level of motivation can be influenced by external factors. Particularly when there are expectations that some efforts that were made will produce valuable rewards, usually financial (Marciano, 2010:40).

The very nature of cruise ships is reflected in their particular environment that is physically isolated and encapsulated, where this kind of working environment is significantly different from many other industries and organisations in which employees perform their tasks (Dennett et al., 2013:3). Accordingly, to create a working environment on the cruise ships in which employees feel engaged during the execution of their tasks, cruise companies must provide them with some capacity in the form of necessary resources, social support and psychological capital. This follows that it is the duty of the organisations to contribute to creating an atmosphere in which employees have all the necessary information to perform their work. Employees are provided with opportunities for learning and mastering challenges to develop their self-esteem and are supported in their efforts to restore their energy. This is achieved by balancing between work and their private lives (Macey et al., 2009: 10).

Engaged behaviour

Engagement is a united feeling filled with positive energy that occurs in employees during their work as a product of a sense of urgency, focus, intensity and enthusiasm (Macey et al., 2009:27). Lyman and Adler (2012:41) noted that the engagement of employees occurs more often in organisations with a huge variety of networks in continuous development; where employees are looking for ways to connect with each other, tearing down in front of them all barriers, whether real or imaginary. Accordingly, the engagement can be seen in the form of a specific behaviour that is painted with four imperative characteristics: (1) sense of emergency; (2) sense of focus; (3) sense of intensity; (4) sense of enthusiasm (Macey et al., 2009: 20). Combining these four elements, engagement appears significantly different compared to some similar concepts while maintaining its specific feature of the extremely powerful source of personal fulfilment of employees (Macey et al., 2009:20). The essence of engagement is very vividly brought by Lord Currie as: "You can smell it, can't you, that engagement of people as people. What goes on in

meetings, how people talk to each other. You can capture the feeling of energy, engagement, commitment, faith in what the organisation stands for" (MacLeod and Brady, 2008). Thus, the engaged workers do not feel only compaction with energy, but also a sense of competence. It is this sense of competency that emerges to the surface from the personal experience of workers and the general conditions of work that companies construct (Macey et al., 2009:27). The engaged behaviour of employees is vital for the simple reason that, as Haudan (2008:169) sees it, "business success is not decided by visionary insights and the speed of learning by the brightest few, but through the understanding and the speed of execution of the most of the slowest majority."

Trust and feeling of freedom

Some of the main benefits of engagement are self-initiative and proactivity of employees. However, to create a specific environment in which employees are engaged in their work roles, demonstrating at the same time self-initiative and proactivity, it is essential that employees have absolute freedom in their operation without any fear that they will be punished if they use that freedom. Therefore, we come to the conclusion, as Macey et al. (2009:12) noted, that in the absence of freedom in the process of engagement, it is impossible to achieve a connection between the strategy of the organisation and the individuals action. The reason being that, psychologically speaking, in such circumstances there is no moment when a person feels safe enough while working. In some case, where employees do not feel safe, their fear directs their operations during the interaction. So, it follows that in organisations where there is no freedom of choice in action, employees are restrained, cautious and limited; with a focus on retaining a sense of security (Haudan, 2008:47) and not on self-initiative proactivity.

Covey (2006) claims that, based on his research, 51% of employees believe in their senior managers, 36% of employees believe their leaders are honest, 27% of people believe in governments and 12% of people believe in large companies. On this basis, we can conclude that trust is an extremely rare, but valuable resource and that it is, as Covey (2006) considers, the strongest form of engagement and inspiration in organisations. When people trust each other, there is open sharing of information and resources. While in a culture of distrust, people accumulate resources for fear that someone else could use them to their advantage (Marciano, 2010:184).

Communication and progress

People around the world mostly come to work on cruise ships because of the higher wages they receive in

comparison to the wage they would get for the similarly performed job on land in the countries of their origin. However, for employees on cruise ships to get engaged during the performance of their duties, it is necessary that, as Macey et al. (2009:69) noticed, their work makes sense that employees work for managers who are experts, managers who have a positive influence on the development of employees and managers who are impartial in interaction with employees. Therefore, the task of a leader on a cruise ship is to use, as claimed by Lyman and Adler (2012:92), a set of instruments to create a far-reaching two-way communication. Where leaders also provide information to employees and provide a variety of ways in which an employee can effectively use the same information. Effective communication on cruise ships is a very challenging task since the official language is mostly English. Which, for the majority of employees on a cruise ship is their second language. Therefore, during the communication with employees on a cruise ship, in addition to spoken words, leaders must pay special attention to non-verbal communication; where non-verbal communication can be understood, as described by Matsumoto et al. (2013a:4), as communicating and messaging in any and every modality, where words are not used.

The importance of verbal and non-verbal communication was noticed by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 - 1821) who claimed that "you have to (...) appeal to the soul of man to electrify it." (Clayton, 2015). Indeed, leaders of cruise ships who want to create an environment where employees behave in an engaged way, must daily provide employees with positive and constructive feedback that educates, motivates and inspires the employees. Starting from the assumption that success produces success, in circumstances where employees recognise that their efforts contribute to positive organisational outcomes; their confidence grows and flows with increasingly important energy (Macey et al., 2009:124). That is why it is crucial to recognise and celebrate business milestones since this does not only celebrate progress but also, in a highly visible way, shows the movement toward a higher sense that makes tangible progress for the employees (Thomas, 2009: 123).

METHOD

The problem of this research is related to the understanding of employee engagement on cruise ships; more precisely, finding methodological procedures to examine and measure the factors that influence engagement. To achieve continuous evolution of tourism research it is necessary to implement all five Echnert and Jamal's (1997) dimensions: Gathering a theoretical body of knowledge, using diverse methodological approaches, clarifying theory and methodology, achieving interdisciplinary focus and enabling a holistic, integrated, research. To assess the validity of the used scale that was used in evaluating engagement of employees on the cruise ships. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed based on the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and Cronbach's Alpha by SPSS 21. PCA is the

most commonly used method of factor analysis since, although it is descriptive, it provides valuable insights into the latent structures of data that can be used for further analysis (Turner and Vu, 2012:184). The purpose of PCA in this part of the research is, as Turner and Vu (2012:185) explain, to reduce the number of original variables to a smaller group of components that describe the hidden structures within the set of data so that only the components with several variables and high simple structures of load are separated. Looking at the reliability of measurement scales, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most commonly used and therefore, as Churchill (1979) recommended, it is an excellent analysis formula for assessing the quality of the measuring instrument. Analysis of the alpha coefficient assumes that the variables were randomly sampled from a large group of variables to test the reliability of created factors (Turner and Vu, 2012:186).

Questionnaire development

Tourism significantly relies on all types of data, as well as on quantitative processing of data and information collected in various ways during the decisive efforts of scientists and practitioners (Baggio and Klobas, 2011:xxii). Quantitative research is associated with the etic approach, whereby the etic approach is objectively placed and framed as research conducted from a neutral point of view, or from the perspective of an outsider (Jennings, 2012:309). The questionnaire is a popular technique that is often used in tourism research, since, as noted by Babbie (2007:270), the questionnaire is suitable for descriptive research conducted on a large target population, where collected data is suitable for providing adequate explanations.

In this research the questionnaire is formulated to examine the engagement of employees on a cruise ship. The questionnaire consisted of three parts, whereby the first and second part of the questionnaire aimed at assessing the attributes of engagement while the third part of the questionnaire was of general nature and referred to the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The individual attributes of engagement were separated and grouped into appropriate factors (*Communication and progress, Capacity to engage, Engaged behaviour and Trust and feeling of freedom*) as taken from scientific literature. For the evaluation of the perception of employee engagement on a cruise ship, answers to the questions in the questionnaire were measured by Likert's scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). While for the evaluation of significance of attributes of engagement also used Likert's scale from 1 (It is not important to me) to 5 (It is extremely important to me).

Sample design and data collection

The collection of quantitative data to examine the factors of engagement of employees on cruise ships took place on the Disney Magic cruise ship in the period between 30.05.2016 and 18.7.2016. The very process of data collection was based on the self-completion of a questionnaire. After each employee completed their questionnaire, the author checked whether the respondents answered all the questions in order to reduce the number of missing values. Interviewing of the employees was conducted in the evening hours, usually between 19:00 and 22:00. Respondents were interested in participating in the research and author encountered a general acceptance every time he approached the employees and asked them if they would like to take part in the research. Out of the 1,007 employees, who stayed on the Disney Magic cruise ship during the research, the author managed to collect 249 completed questionnaires. So the total number of respondents was 249.

Table 1. Sociodemographic profile of sample.

Demographic variable	(n)	Valid (%)
Years of service at the current cruise company		
1-2 years	94	37.8
3-5 years	99	39.7
6+ years	56	22.5
Department on a cruise ship		
Hotel	139	55.8
Marine and technical	47	18.9
Entertainment	63	25.3
Gender		
Male	146	58.6
Female	103	41.4
Age group		
20-29	99	39.8
30-40	114	45.8
41-50	33	13.3
51-60	2	0.8
60+	1	0.4
Highest education level		
High school (secondary school)	51	20.5
Associate degree	71	28.5
Bachelor's degree	108	43.4
Master's degree and Doctoral degrees	19	7.6
Place of residence		
North and Central America	72	28.9
Europe	78	31.3
Asia	67	26.9
South America	19	7.6
Africa	9	3.6
Australia	4	1.6

N=249.

FINDINGS

Sociodemographic profile of sample

Descriptive statistics of employees on cruise ships included the demographic profile of the respondents to years of service at the current cruise company, department on a cruise ship, gender, age, level of education and place of residence (Table 1).

Factor analysis

To separate hidden factors that influence engagement of employees on the cruise ship, 17 questions in the questionnaire were analysed by using analysis of

Principal Components with Varimax rotation. There were retained all factors whose characteristic value were greater than 1, and the percentage of explained variance of indicator greater than 0.5. Observing all four components (factors) of employee engagement on cruise ships, the author decided to retain the fourth component as well since, even though its characteristic value is 0.98, it still significantly contributes to increasing the total explained variation in responses. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the identified factors varies between 0.564 and 0.847. Taking into account that the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the fourth factor (*Trust and feeling of freedom*) is below 0.6, this factor cannot be considered reliable, although it is acceptable (greater than 0.5). The values of coefficients for other factors are above the limit of 0.6 and can be regarded as reliable.

Table 2. The factor analysis.

Factor	Item	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Communication and progress	Manner in which business milestones are recognized	0.855	6.960	19.525	0.847
	Manner in which successfully accomplished milestones are recognized	0.849			
	Recognition from Your leader for task successfully completed	0.764			
	Communication and feedback from Your leader	0.548			
	Leaders support when expressing guest dissatisfaction	0.538			
Capacity to engage	Suitability of Your on job training in achieving work responsibilities	0.777	1.684	18.813	0.809
	Clarity and quality of information that helps you to perform Your role in a good quality	0.776			
	Necessary resources, challenges and leader support that you and your working group are receiving during achieving of goals	0.599			
	Cooperation during achieving of goals of your working group	0.590			
Engage behaviour	Freedom of expressing Your thoughts	0.729	1.113	15.199	0.772
	Your working group while solving small issues before they become big problems	0.689			
	Time passing by while working	0.576			
	The way Your colleagues enhance the productivity of work	0.564			
	Meaning and contribution of Your individual work within Your working group and company	0.528			
Trust and feeling of freedom	My own knowledge and confidence in achieving working goals	0.807	0.979	9.614	0.564
	Easiness of staying focused during my work	0.652			

Results of factor analysis suggest a solution with four factors explaining 63% of the variance. Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of the adequacy of the sample is 0.897, while Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant ($p = 0.000$). The results of the factor analysis after rotation produced a clear structure factors with a relatively high percentage of explanations of variance of indicators and minimal overlap between items, indicating the independence of factors. Table 2 summarises the results of the factor analysis.

The factor of *Communication and progress* explains 19.52% of the variance and has a reliability coefficient of 0.85. It is followed by *Capacity to engage* factor that explains 18.81% of

the variance and has a reliability coefficient of 0.81, the next in the series is a factor of *Engaged behaviour* that explains 15.20% of variance and has a reliability coefficient of 0.77 to finally come to factor of *Trust and feeling of freedom* that explains 9.61% of the variance with a coefficient of reliability of 0.56.

IPA method

The original model of importance-performance (The Importance-Performance Analysis, abbreviated IPA) was first proposed by Martilla and James (1977) who believed that satisfaction

is a function of the consumer perception of the performance and significance of attributes. Given that the IPA method, as noted by Oh (2001:617), proved to be very successful in many researches in the field of tourism, quality of service, education and marketing and, based on the similarities with previous research, the author decided to use the IPA model during research of employee engagement on cruise ships. Therefore, job satisfaction, which is ultimately reflected in employee engagement on cruise ships, can be seen as a function of the perception of the performance of employees and the level of significance of a certain attribute in the context of the work that employees do. Just as Martilla and

Table 3. IPA results for the factors of engagement and their importance.

Factors and items	Importance		Performance	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Communication and progress	3.68	0.960	4.26	0.847
Manner in which business milestones are recognized?	3.66	0.911	4.09	0.841
Manner in which successfully accomplished milestones are recognized?	3.56	0.919	4.12	0.813
Recognition from Your leader for task successfully completed?	3.59	1.088	4.27	0.900
Communication and feedback from Your leader?	3.75	0.938	4.43	0.841
Leaders support when expressing guest dissatisfaction?	3.87	0.906	4.40	0.783
Capacity to engage	3.95	0.798	4.33	0.736
Suitability of Your on job training in achieving work responsibilities?	4.05	0.796	4.29	0.714
Clarity and quality of information that helps you to perform Your role in a good quality?	4.04	0.742	4.38	0.654
Necessary resources, challenges and leader support that You and Your working group are receiving during achieving of goals?	3.80	0.865	4.29	0.831
Cooperation during achieving of goals of Your working group?	3.91	0.761	4.34	0.736
Engaged behaviour	3.77	0.912	4.21	0.829
Freedom of expressing Your thoughts?	3.48	1.021	4.23	0.894
Your working group while solving small issues before they become big problems?	3.89	0.885	4.42	0.733
Time passing by while working?	3.84	0.900	3.85	0.975
The way Your colleagues enhance the productivity of work?	3.74	0.862	4.26	0.725
Meaning and contribution of Your individual work within Your working group and company?	3.91	0.819	4.27	0.678
Trust and feeling of freedom	4.18	0.772	4.33	0.740
My own knowledge and confidence in achieving working goals?	4.37	0.656	4.51	0.640
Easiness of staying focused during my work?	3.98	0.828	4.15	0.789

James (1977) pointed out, easiness of implementation and attractiveness of methods when displaying data and strategic proposals are two of the reasons that contributed to the prevalence of technique. Table 3 shows the arithmetic mean of the factors of engagement and the importance that employees on cruise ships give to them.

In Figure 1, we see how on the X-axis shows

the level of satisfaction of employees by factors of engagement, while the on Y-axis is shown their perception of the importance of factors of engagement. The average perception of the importance of the engagement factor was 4.27, while the average satisfaction with engagement factors amounted to 3.83. The four quadrants are constructed by average values by factors of engagement, and their importance and

satisfaction level (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that the three factors (*Communication and progress*, *Capacity to engage* and *Engaged behaviour*) are positioned in the quadrant I, marked with "Concentrate here (high importance and low performance)," while one factor (*Trust and feeling of freedom*) is positioned in quadrant II marked with "Keep up the good work (high importance and high impact)".

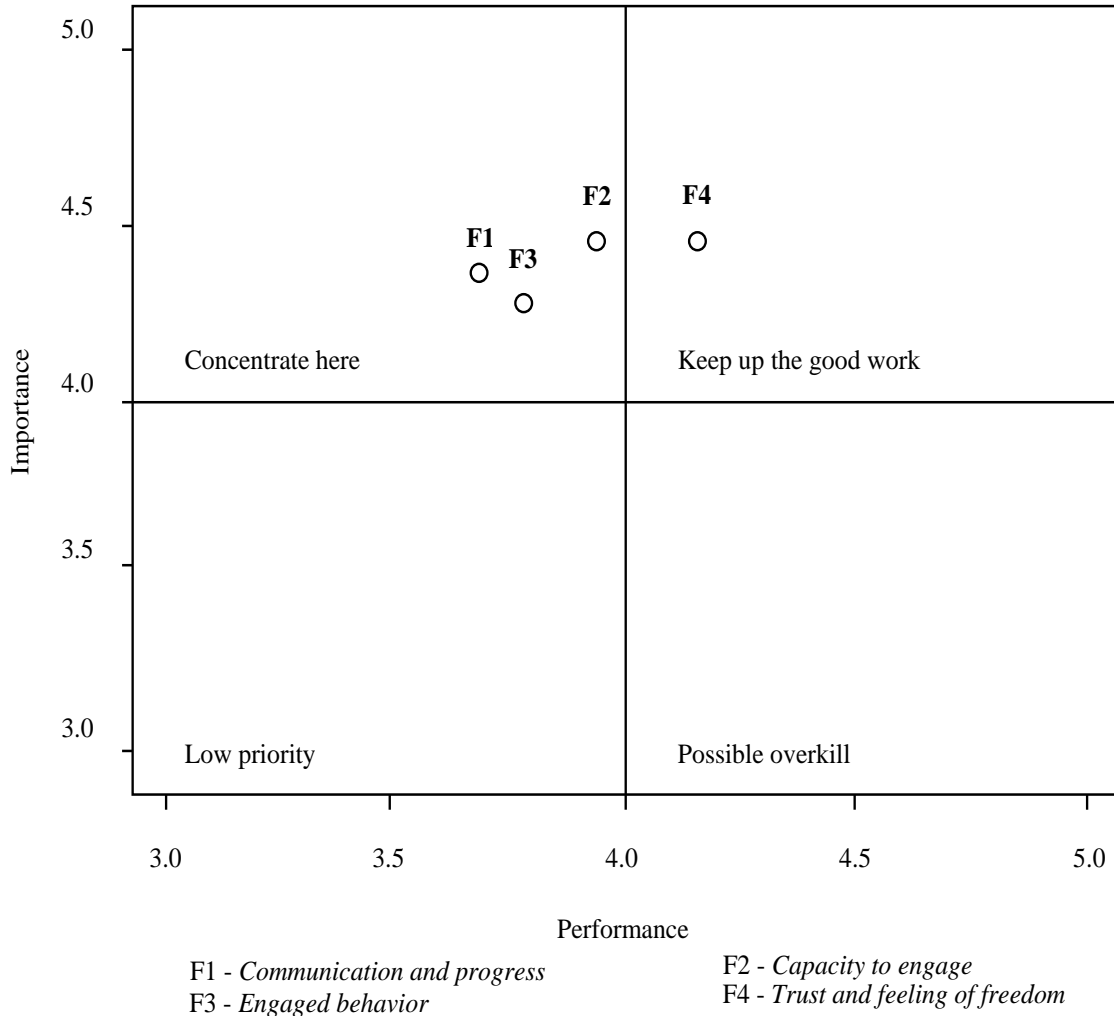


Figure 1. The importance-performance grid.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of the research was to understand the engagement of employees on cruise ships with a special emphasis on finding methodological procedures to examine and measure the factors that influence employee engagement on cruise ships. Observing the employee engagement on a cruise ship, IPA analysis (Figure 1) showed that there is room for improvement of certain factors of engagement. Factors of engagement that required attention were: Communication and progress, Capacity to engage and Trust and feeling of freedom. To improve engagement of employees

On cruise ships it is necessary to pay attention to the factor of *Communication and progress*. Therefore, managers should deal with the instruments of communication, as well as the way of communication. Thus, managers are expected to demonstrate openness during communication with employees in which takes place two-way verbal communication. The setting for this two-way

communication, rather than a group meeting, is where the employees are performing their tasks. In this way, the manager can update on the overall company aims and the successes of their department within those visions. Partly because of the setting, it becomes evident to the employee their part in this achievement; making them feel needed, enthusiastic and fulfilled (Macey et al., 2009:67). This is precisely the right moment when a leader should pay tribute to the employee, because, as Marciano (2010:86) considers, today’s recognitions create tomorrow’s initiatives. In spite of the fact that the warm words and sincere gratitude are of great importance for all employees, managers are recommended to pay tribute to the employees for completed tasks and through tangible forms; such as dinner in exclusive restaurants or excursions in the ports of call. It is of great importance to employees on a cruise ship to be informed about business milestones of the cruise company. So it is expected that managers are sincere during the recognition and close and direct about the successfully

achieved milestones. Employees' loyalty to the company is a valuable and rare resource these days and therefore it is the duty of managers to pay tribute to loyal employees in the form of monetary prizes and celebrations at which good food and drinks are served. However, the most challenging part for managers is certainly the one when there is a conflict between employees on the front line of service and guests. In such moments, managers should not blindly hold to Field's (1905) maxims according to which the guest is always right. Having said that, if managers want to maintain their integrity, they must investigate the whole case and, if necessary, protect their subordinate.

During this study, it was discovered that additional efforts are needed concerning the factor of *Capacity to engage* in improving employee engagement on cruise ships. In addition to the interestingness of work tasks, the availability of the necessary resources to perform the work tasks suggests to employees the existence of support and autonomy in their work. These are all necessary conditions for the cultivation of engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Consequently, managers are expected to, in addition to the necessary resources, provide their employees with working practices that are in line with the trends of the cruise industry. However, managers must pay attention to their attitude and behaviour towards employees during the training, so as not to experience them as trivial. Managers must understand that the information is also a resource; so it is very important to allocate their time and effort when sharing the pieces of information. Of course, English is the official language of most of the cruise ships; however, it is still a second language for most managers and employees. Therefore, the provision of clear and quality information is quite a challenging task. Indeed, just as Lyman and Adler (2012:9) suggest, the flow of information is essential in order to assist employees in their direct impact on the life of the organisation. Nurturing mutual respect and understanding within the working group, and the other working groups on a cruise ship, is the duty of managers which, if successfully executed, brings an opportunity to improve the success of the performance of everyday tasks. Ultimately, the support that each manager provides to his employees is essential. However, such support must be full of devotion; so that the managers experience themselves as leaders who invest their maximum to facilitate the development of their employees.

The final factor in which improvement would lead to the improvement of employee engagement on cruise ships is the factor of *Engaged behaviour*. Freedom to express an opinion is a precious instrument in nurturing the engagement of employees. However, creating an atmosphere where employees feel comfortable when presenting their opinion is a very difficult task for managers. If the manager wants to enjoy the benefits of engagement of employees, it is necessary to possess empathy toward employees, to try to understand the

employees, not to judge them, and to strive for the values that he preaches to others. In circumstances where the manager successfully creates an environment in which freedom of thought is respected, an *Engaged behaviour* as the prerequisite for proactiveness is created. That kind of behaviour is of great value in solving small problems before they develop into major problems. It is thereby desirable for the manager to pay attention to: The size of the working group, ethnicity of employees in the working group and the freedom of choice in solving problems. Regarding of ethnicity of employees on a cruise ship, managers must pay attention to the harmony between the very different cultural heritages of employees. Special efforts must be invested to create a harmonious relationship between individual and collective ethnic groups. In friendly environments, a sense of the flow of time is extremely positive; unfortunately, some factors adversely affect this desirable feeling. Therefore, managers must have an understanding that for employees on cruise ships the passing of time largely depends on the shift in which they work during the day, itineraries of the cruise ship, as well as whether it is a day at sea or in a port of call. Finally, engaged behaviour and productivity of the working group are under the direct influence of managers, where managers are certainly not allowed to favour certain ethnic groups (usually the same ones to which they belong) among employees.

In the end, it is necessary to point out that the author of this scientific research attempted to integrate different theories and models which would assist in clarifying, and then improving, the understanding of the nature of employee engagement on cruise ships. This research, in the author's best knowledge, is a pioneering work. So, further testing and improvement are necessary. To improve employee engagement it would be very useful to conduct an identical study on the employees of other cruise companies. If the repeated study with employees on other cruise-companies provides similar or even better results, it would be interesting to carry out the model of employee engagement on cruise ships and complete the study that would include structural equation modelling.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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