



ANALYZING CHALLENGES FACED BY HOTEL INDUSTRY IN ENGAGING EMPLOYEES DURING COVID 19.

“A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN ITC MARATHA AND OBEROI GROUP OF HOTELS”

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ABSTRACT

The employees of the Hotel industry are often at the first defense in the profitability game. But as the approach of the research paper study relies on the current pandemic situation which has come across globally impacting the entire tourism sector which directly or indirectly effected the Hotel industry. It is a major challenge for the hotel industry for front and backend staff engagement in their respective roles, which also leads to the declining numbers in counting customer satisfaction after the completion of lockdown, and in turn, also decreasing profitability power for the respective industry as well. In such a high-alert situation the turnover of industries such as hospitality, successfully engaging with and retaining team members with accepting and proving the challenge. Employee engagement is defined as the emotional commitment of an employee with the organization and its goals. Engagement allows hotels to reach their full potential by helping to create open communication channels, improve productivity and retaining the talented staff after the pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

India is the country of over a billion people and is also the birthplace of major religions of the world. It is the home of the most fascinating temples, forts, and monuments of the world. India has got an exotic place to travel from the point of view of tourists and is a described as a dream destination for the leisure travelers.

Hospitality industry in India has received a major boost in the past few decades since the Indian Government realized the great potential of tourism in India. India has the right tourism potential and attractions to captivate all types of tourists whether it is adventurous tour, cultural exploration, pilgrimages, visit to the beautiful beaches or to the scenic mountain resorts, or business travelers, it has all. Hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key sectors driving the country's economy. It is boom time for India's Hospitality sector. (Global Journal of Finance and Management, 2014. Vol. 6, Number. 4, pp. 375-378.)

According to UK Essay. November 2013 sectors of Hospitality Industry Tourism [online] The hospitality industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, restaurants, event planning, theme parks,

transportation, cruise line, and additional fields within the tourism industry. The hospitality industry is a several billion dollar industry that mostly depends on the availability of leisure time and disposable income. A hospitality unit such as a restaurant, hotel, or even an amusement park consists of multiple groups such as facility maintenance, direct operations (servers, housekeepers, porters, kitchen workers, bartenders, etc.), management, marketing, and human resources. The hospitality industry covers a wide range of organizations offering food service and accommodation. The industry is divided into sectors according to the skill sets required for the work involved. Sectors include accommodation, food and beverage, meeting and events, gaming, entertainment and recreation, tourism services, and visitor information.

The Indian tourism and hospitality industry have emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in India. Tourism in India has significant potential considering the rich cultural and historical heritage, variety in ecology, terrains and places of natural beauty spread across the country. Tourism is also a potentially large employment generator besides being a significant source of foreign exchange for the country. During January-October 2018 FEEs from tourism increased 8.30 per cent year-on-year to US\$ 23.54 billion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement: Hospitality Industry.

Employee Engagement is the measurement for level of commitment and work involvement of an employee towards the organization they are working for and its passion towards commitment and values. It's a very well defined and measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their respective job role, behavior with the co-workers and the industry or company which profoundly influences their willingness to learn & perform at work. It has direct impact on the productivity of employees as well as the organization. Hospitality Industry being one of the largest industries as well as the second largest employer, Employee engagement plays a significant role. Employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks to retain valued and high potential employees. It is very important for effective utilization of human resource and smooth successful running of the organization. Without employee engagement organization cannot survive for long period of time. Mohd. Sadiq. 2014, (Employee Engagement in Hospitality Industry in India: An Overview. Global Journal of Finance and Management, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 375-378) says that to enhance the level of hospitality services for the tourist the Ministry of Tourism Government of India has introduced the concept of "Atithi Devo Bhava" for providing better hospitality services. If the employee working in hospitality sector is engaged towards the job, definitely they will provide better hospitality to the guest.

Employee Engagement Surveys in Hospitality.

Employee engagement surveys have become a measuring tool amongst the modern hotel industry, especially with large corporate brands such as Intercontinental, TAJ residency, The Park, ITC Maratha and others. The another engagement initiative introduced by Rezidor hotel group (including such brands as Radisson, Park Inn and others) was named as "Climate Analysis". (Rezidor) 21,443 employees across Europe, Middle East and Africa participated the Climate Analysis 2010 (vs. 18,472 in 2009). The evaluation of each hotel's and corporate department's climate saw particularly good results for the main areas "Creativity and Innovation" with a score of 85,2% (83,9% in 2009), "Ethical Standards" (88,3% vs. 87,3%), "Personal Development" (87,4% vs. 86,5%) and "Executive Leadership" (85,7% vs. 84,7%). The findings tie in with further researches and studies – for example with the recognition as "Most Ethical Company 2010", an award the think tank Ethisphere gave to Rezidor.

The Climate Analysis analyzed to view a continuous increase of the Employee Satisfaction Score. By increasing the usage of a highly developed and detailed questionnaire, measures the company's working climate on a set of standards, including communication, development opportunities, feedback and appraisal, leadership and company image and culture. The results do not only mirror the current climate, but also are the basis for activity plans in order to further

develop and improve internal processes.

Challenges faced by Hospitality Industry with respect to Employee Engagement.

Most organizational theories and empirical research have focused on the value and significance of negative phenomena such as problem solving, managing uncertainty, and overcoming resistance to change. A negative approach focuses on minimizing what is wrong with human and organizational development and does not address an understanding of human strengths and optimal functioning (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). However, people excel by maximizing their strengths, rather than repairing their weaknesses (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

The long-term success of any business hinges on the satisfaction of its customers. And this is especially true in the hospitality industry. For example, by making sure a guest has a great experience, a hotel manager can increase the chances of the customer returning and/or recommending the brand to someone they know.

It is crucial for employers in the hospitality industry to ensure their employees are productive and engaged because, as many research studies have shown, the happier and more involved a worker is, the better that individual's performance.

Implementing a successful employee engagement program can be difficult for any business and company leaders are often presented with a unique set of challenges. These are some of the most common problems the hospitality industry experiences, along with solutions managers can use to resolve them:

Not enough collaboration between workers: When employers want to see more interaction throughout the different departments of a hotel, they can motivate and inspire employees by offering rewards and recognition to those who take the initiative and interact.

Offline system limiting performance: Traditionally, the hospitality industry used IT systems that operated offline. However, moving to the cloud will provide companies with a unified platform that integrates all essential data and software. By increasing employee access and visibility into important processes and information, managers are able to enhance their capabilities and efficiency.

Lack of manager insight: Being able to accurately assess company programs and analytics is important. Certain tools, processes and organizations can help give hospitality leaders the insight they need and, therefore, make sure they are maximizing their potential for success.

Slow adoption of reward programs: Recognizing and rewarding employees for their hard work is crucial in maintaining high levels of job satisfaction. To avoid a lag in the implementation of these programs, employers should start in by rewarding members for specific goals and behavior in manageable increments.

Role of Managers in Motivating Employees.

In the hospitality and tourism industry today, managers face challenges on how to motivate their employees in order to provide excellent and efficient service to the customers and to improve productivity. The major problem is that many employees are not motivated to achieve goals and interests of the organization and instead they are interested to satisfy their own needs. A balance is when these employees satisfy their private needs through satisfaction of organization interests. Thus, managers should have knowledge and skills to effectively use and coordinate their employees. Managers have to know what their employees expect from work. This may assist managers to manipulate work.

Managers cannot force their employees to be motivated, but if they know what their employees want from work, they can bridge the gap and can create a coordinated work environment which may include enhancing self-skills and to motivate by rewards that help employees. Generally, motivated employees are enthusiastic about task accomplishments and the focus is highly well executed towards the accomplishment of the achieving the satisfaction of customers of Hotel industry. They often do their jobs best.

3. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- To analyze and define the term employee engagement in context of pandemic situation in India and how effective it is, in the present competitive environment.
- To study the challenges faced by the hotels in term of employee turnover or attrition rate during the current lockdown crisis.
- To study the customer lookout in terms of the increase and decrease of the visits after pandemic situation gets over.

4. DATA COLLECTION

The study is comparative in nature. It is based on the collected primary data. The study also includes the detailed analysis of the collected secondary data. The researcher has collected primary data by using a well-structured questionnaire and by collecting the information from the employees of the respective hotel mentioned in the research paper for study. The secondary data used was from the library, past research papers, some articles and the internet. The researcher has also used various reference books, textbooks, conference proceedings, newspaper, magazine, journals, and government reports. These data used in combination as per need of the study. These data having different merits and demerits and have serves our purpose of the research study.

Primary Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to have collection of samples, which is a mix of both open and close ended questions. The **analysis** was the use of non-quantifiable methods to evaluate investment or business opportunities and make decisions. This is different from quantitative analysis, which relies on a company's income statement, balance sheet and other quantifiable metrics. **Data Collection Method-** Open-ended and less structured protocols, Interviews, Produce results that gives meaning, experience and views.

5. ANALYSIS OF DATA (Blue-ITC Maratha, Orange-Oberoi group of hotels)

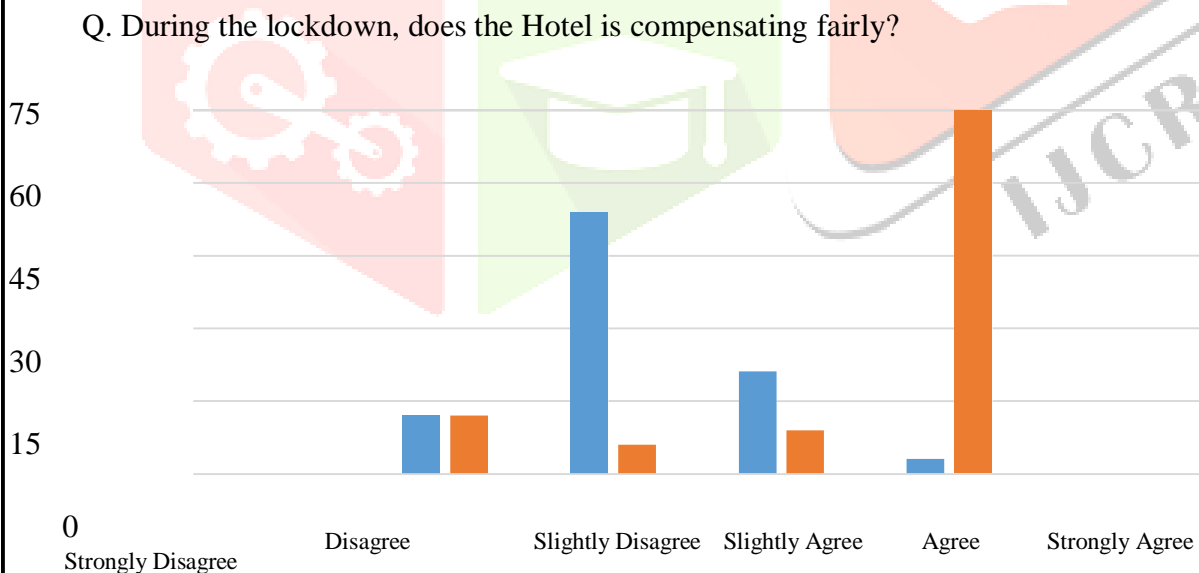
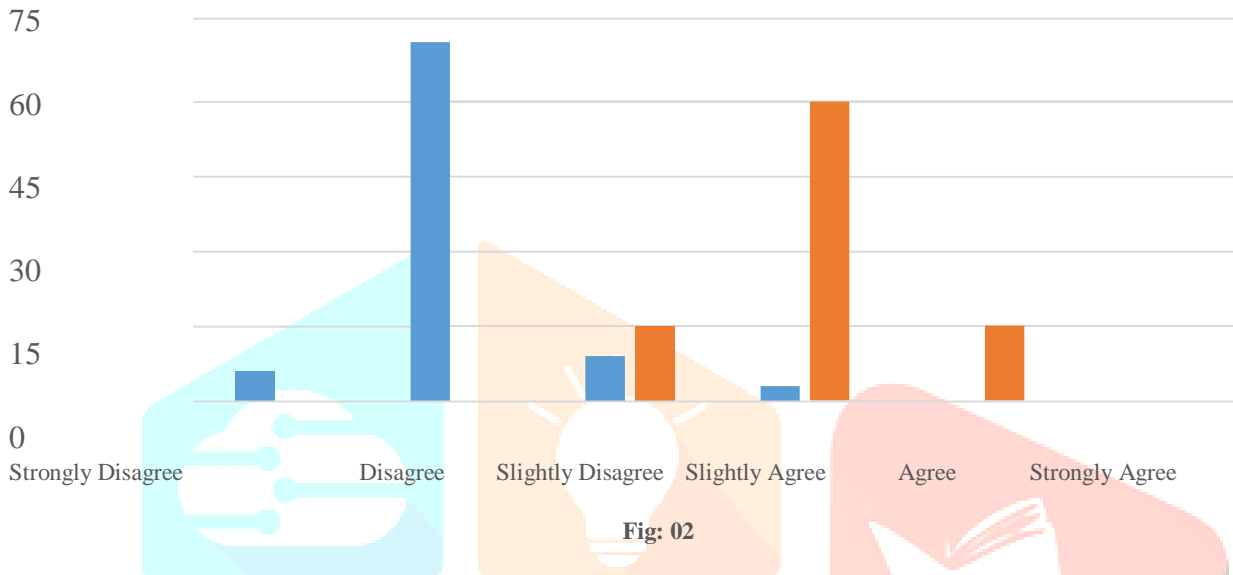


Fig:01

While analyzing the responses provided by the employees (Front end/ Back end) of both the sample hotels, it has been cleared featured that the employees are seemed to be very much satisfied in terms of compensation. But the majority of the respondents think that they are not fairly compensated in ITC whereas they are compensated fairly in Oberoi.

Q. Are you satisfied the kind of assigned work (e.g. calling the customers for knowing their well-being, the idea of converting hotels as quarantine centers, the Post Covid 19 hygiene factors to be considered etc.) by your manager My work gives me a sense of satisfaction in terms of work life balance during lockdown?



This was a very relevant question asked with the respondents based on the current situation, the interpretation of the collection of responses states that the majority of the respondents do not have a sense of satisfaction in terms of work-life balance during lockdown specially in ITC MARATHA. They believe that the job profile that they are carrying does not allow them for this particular parameter. It is a very tough situation for them as the existing and consistent customers are giving a serious thought to it and even they disclosed that they are not sure as to how long the hotel is going to pay them without generating business. Whereas when we asked the same question to the employees of Oberoi, the answers were completely opposite regarding the same with a very few of the employees have actually mentioned the reason related to only excess number of working hours during lockdown. The major focus of Oberoi is to not only retain the customers whether they are the perspective customer or not but to take care of the required need of the regular customers along with giving the satisfaction to their employees as well.

Q. How gel is your relationship and communication with your reporting manager during and before pandemic as well?

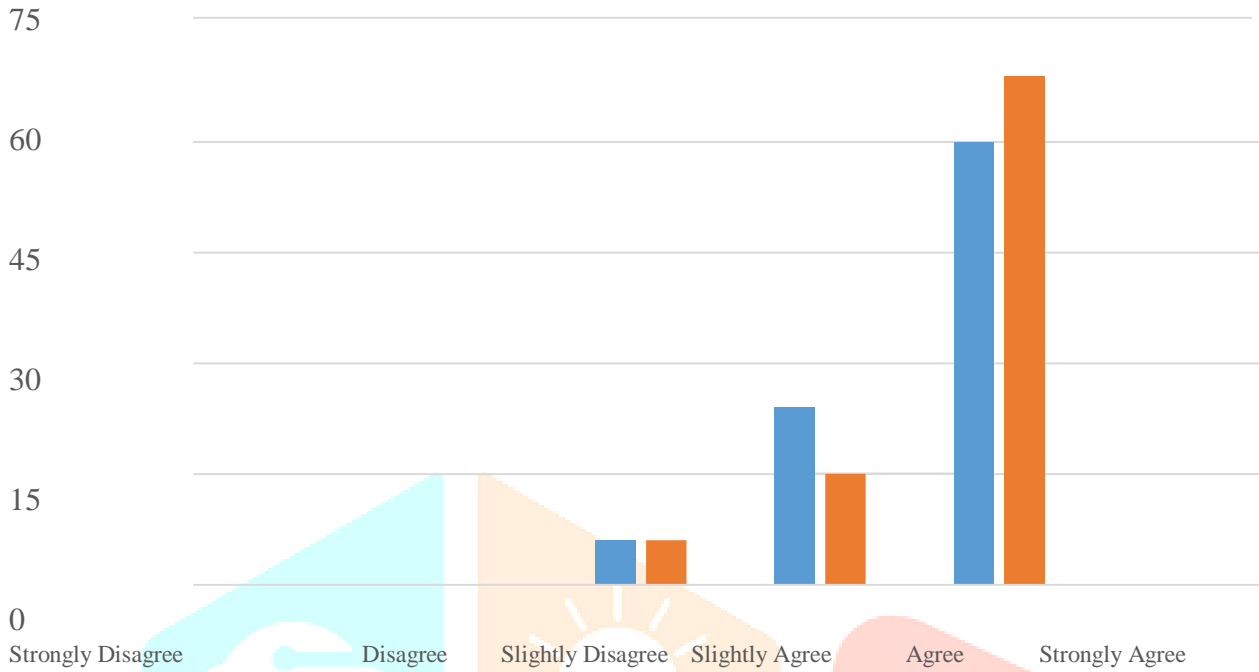


Fig:03

While analyzing the received responses it clearly interprets that only two respondents are slightly disagree to the above statement and majority of both the hotels strongly agrees to the statement wherein they can speak up their minds to their supervisors in both the cases and the bond is very firm between the employees and their reporting managers.

Q. Given the opportunity, do you promote about the best working conditions in your respective hotel as career development?

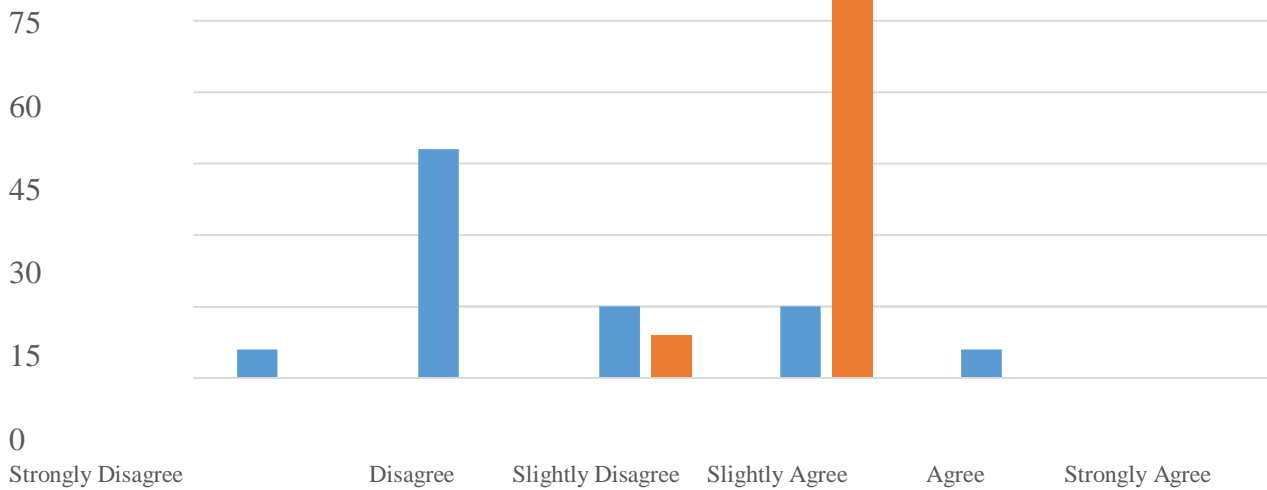


Fig:04

As per the prepared research notes, no one was agreeing to provide the response of this question. But as per the collected observations of the verbal and non-verbal discussion with the employees, majority of them were very much aware regarding the tough working conditions of this industry. As being opting the industry and the profile which they are carrying as their passion, provides them the strength. The glamorous feeling of the industry by meeting the VIP and VVIP of a regular basis along with the backend celebrations that are provided by the hotel gives them immense pleasure. But here most of the employees respond in the direction of disagreement towards the statement for ITC but majority of the respondents are in favor of the statement for Oberoi.

Q. Do you think that during this pandemic or may be after it, you will think about leaving this industry and will work somewhere else?

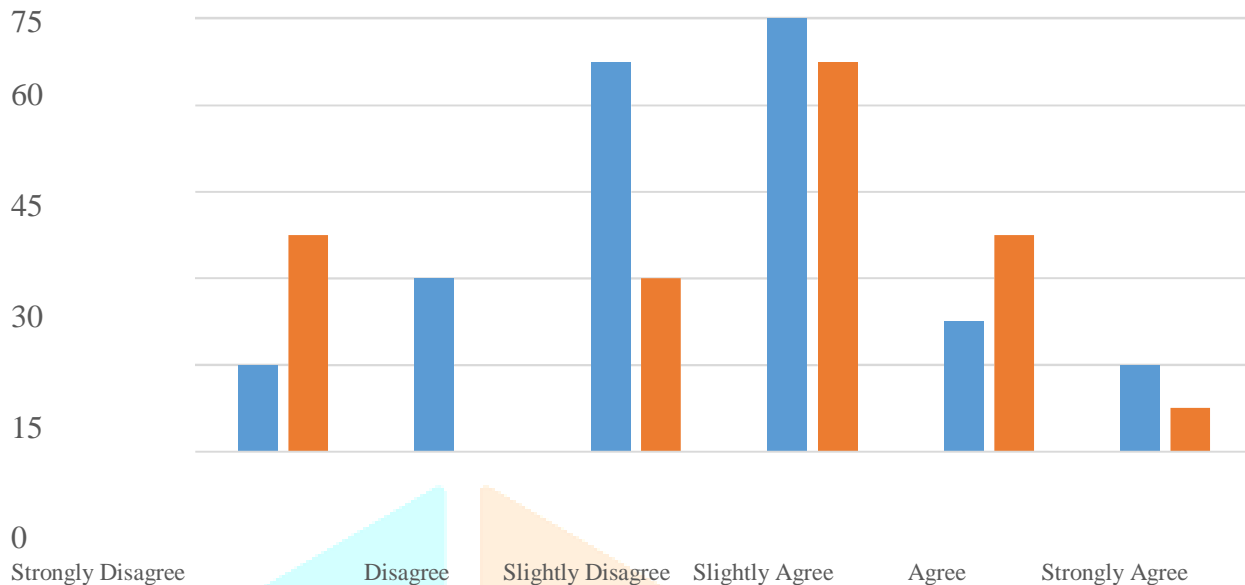


Fig: 05

The respondents have highlighted that due to the maximum number of years' experience in this industry, they cannot move to some other. Similarly, the brands are too big to be loosen. So, the employees are very much looking forward towards the long term bonding with the respective hotels even after pandemic will get over.

Q. During the lockdown period, are you being provided the required training and sufficient resources (e.g. Internet connectivity for connecting with global clients, call reimbursements for domestic connections etc.) to perform your job well?

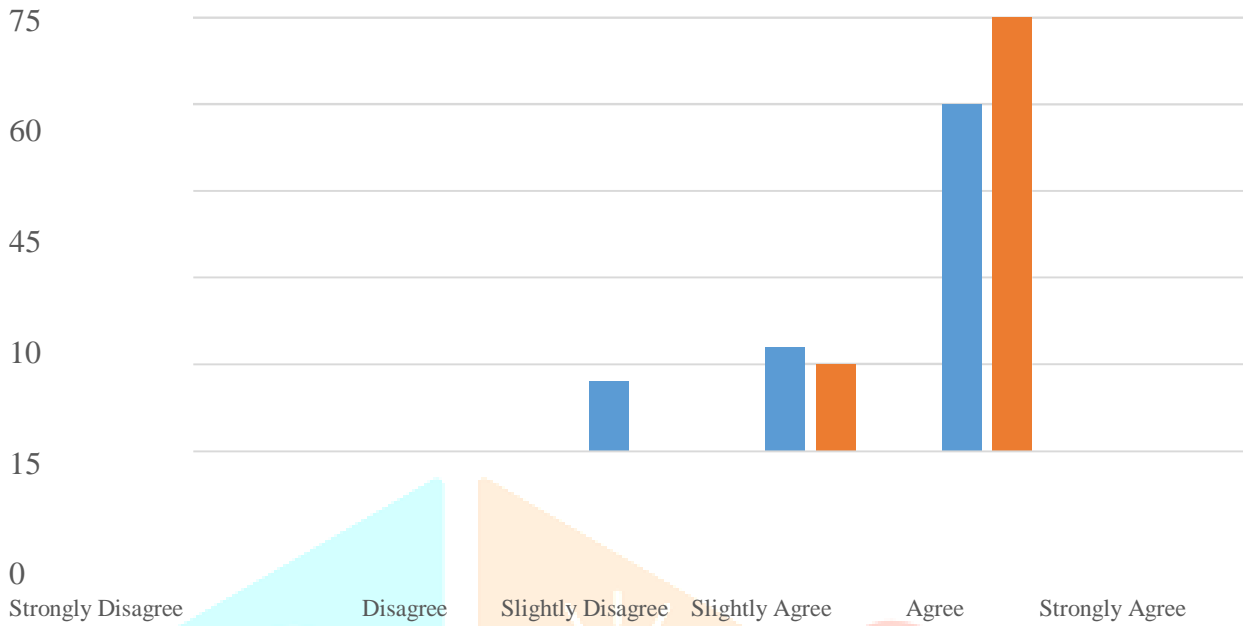


Fig: 06

The responses very clearly state that the employees are very much satisfied in receiving all possible facilities by their hotels during lockdown. One more point is being mentioned during telephonically collected research notes is that not only the hotels are providing them the work related help but also assuring their safety and need for essentials.

Do you have to willingly contribute more hours and time than is normally required to complete the work during pandemic?

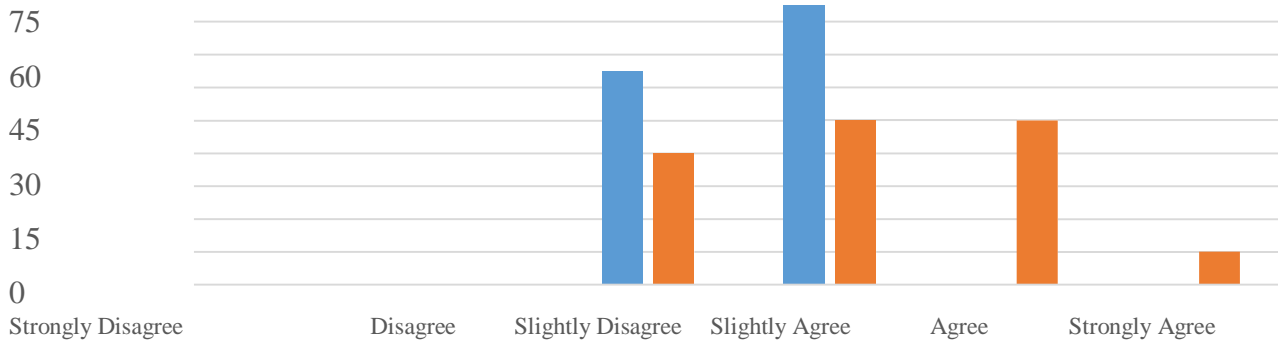


Fig: 07

The detailed analysis towards the level of contribution made by the employees is measured. The respondents completely believe in giving extra inputs as and when required by their respective job roles, teams, reporting managers and hotels. But due to covid 19 the number of hours is increasing on regular basis by assigning some tally work, or rechecking the warehouse stuff, planning for the futuristic approach after pandemic etc. The employees were becoming slightly disagree to the point. The comparison of the study shows that the level of strongly disagree is comparatively low in Oberoi hotel.

Q. How much number of extra hours are scheduled on national/public holiday?

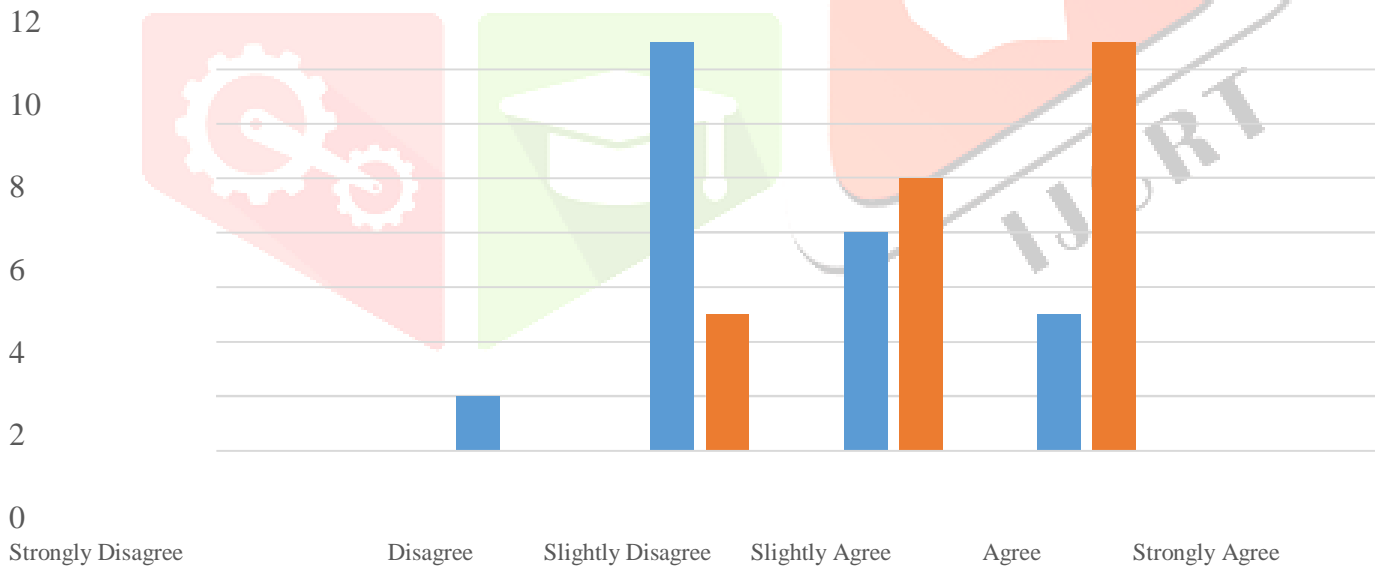


Fig:08

Considering the above received responses, majority respondents do not willingly work on public holidays for ITC but with respect to Oberoi the respondents agreed to the statement. Hospitality industry has no public holidays, hence employees from the core departments need to work and it may hamper the work life balance of the employees.

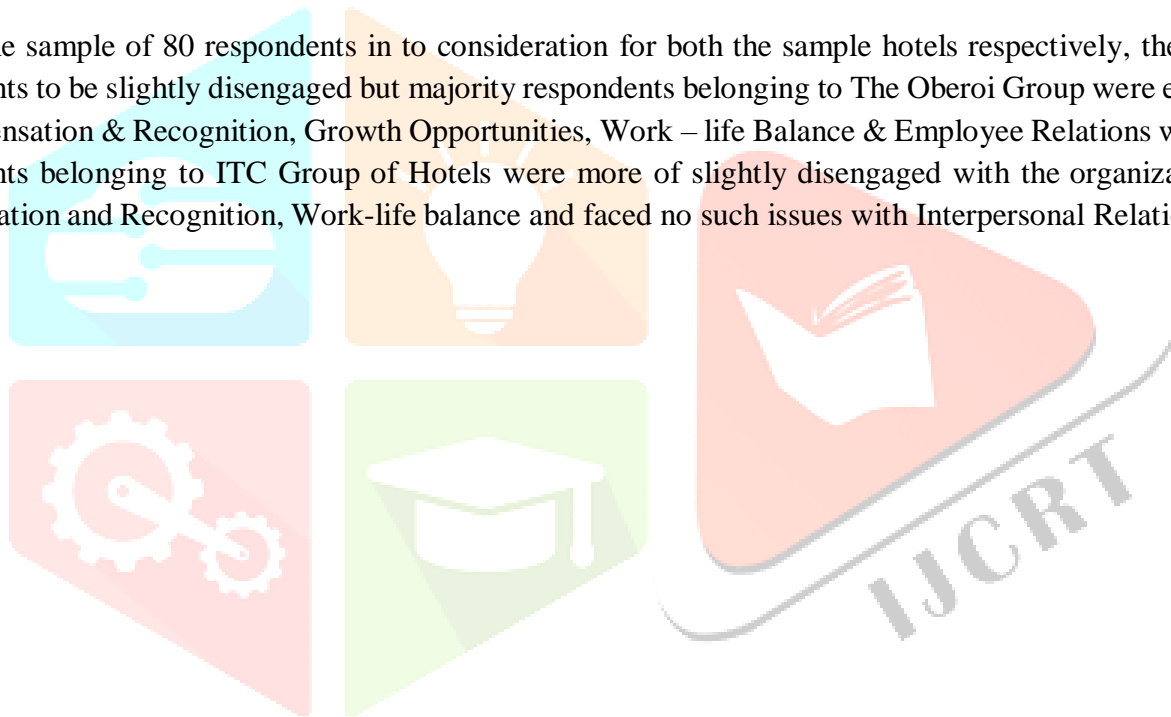
6. RESULTS

According to the complete analysis of the research, the results indicates that the hotel industry is well equipped and well planned for COVID 19 pandemic. The Employees have full faith and working day and night to overcome with this crisis. But simultaneously a very big concern for the hotel employees are related to the comeback duration of customers. Th employees of Oberoi hotel are much more satisfied in almost all the among parameters, in comparison to ITC Maratha.

7. CONCLUSION

A comparative an exploratory research was conducted for the ITC & Oberoi Group of Hotels with regards to Employee Engagement taking AON Model of Employee Engagement as a tool. The research data conclusion states that the respondents belonging to The Oberoi Group of Hotels are more engaged with the organization than the respondents belonging to ITC Group of Hotels.

Taking the sample of 80 respondents in to consideration for both the sample hotels respectively, the study find few respondents to be slightly disengaged but majority respondents belonging to The Oberoi Group were engaged in terms of Compensation & Recognition, Growth Opportunities, Work – life Balance & Employee Relations whereas majority respondents belonging to ITC Group of Hotels were more of slightly disengaged with the organization in terms of Compensation and Recognition, Work-life balance and faced no such issues with Interpersonal Relationships.



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