The Effect of Management Styles And Employee Behaviour On Customer Satisfaction In The Electronic Manufacturing Industry In Malaysia

* Md. Aminul Islam ** M. Sayeed Alam

INTRODUCTION

Penang, Malaysia's "silicon island" is home to hundreds of electronic companies. Top electronic giants on this north-west Malaysia Island are INTEL, DELL, ACER, AGILENT, SONY, BOSCH, MOTOROLA, ADVANCED MICRO DEVICE, B BRAUN, SOLECTRON and ALTERA. Since manufacturing accounted for 51% of Penangs GDP and 40% of its labour-force is engaged in this industry, economic performance has a great impact on the state of Penang. In 2007, over 50% of foreign manufacturing investment applications in Malaysia went to electronic and electrical industries; 80% of which are located in the northern region. The Malaysian manufacturing industry's growth rate from 2004 (7.5%), 2005 (10.9%), 2006 (8.0%), 2007 (14.7%) (*Data taken from ABN-AMRO Economic Research 2001*) is basically riding on the US decade long economy boom.

This paper, however, will only try to examine how employees reacted towards the transformation process of building commitment towards the organisation's objectives, employee empowerment, cultural change and maintenance in the local electronics manufacturing scene. The first objective of this study is to examine the impact of management style on employee behaviour in dealing with customers. The second objective is to analyze the different patterns in thinking, feeling, and acting by people from diverse backgrounds. It shows that although the variety in people's mind is enormously different, there is a structure in this variety which can serve as a basic tool for mutual understanding. The scope of this research is to try to determine the effect of management style on employees and its relation to their behaviour with customers. The definition of "CUSTOMER" is *anyone who* expects to receive a specific product or service from you or your organisation. It can be a direct customer (by which we mean someone with whom one has an immediate interface) or an indirect customer (with whom the organization does not have any direct interface but how, when, where and what is done has an impact on them).

In short, this paper is trying to pinpoint certain "ingredients" of group dynamics. The researcher wanted to look at how can one company from the same industry is performing better than the others in term of:

- Level of Local Management Autonomy.
- Employee Satisfaction with their work.
- Customer Satisfaction with the Service Quality.
- ➤ How to cultivate creative production solutions for the organisation as a whole.

This research topic has been chosen with the intention to look for evidential patterns on how organisations can inspire new ways of leading from its management; thereafter allowing efficiency and creativity to emerge naturally within the organisations, much like nature creates order from chaos.

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the point of view of results, the effectiveness of an organisation is determined by the way work is organised and by the way people work with or against each other. The way in which people co-operate with each other, with the leadership and with the community; and the extent of their commitment to their organisation depends on the style of management. The gains to be made by improving the style of management are thus quite considerable, not only from the point of view of a better return to shareholders-by producing more satisfied customers and generating more profits, but also from the greater contentment and satisfaction felt by employees.

Because human behaviour is complex in nature, management theorists over the years have tried to explore and study the relationship between human behaviour and work situations. Given below are management theories spanning the last century.

- 1900s: Scientific management (Frederick W. Taylor).
 Ford Motor Company's famous "T" model embraced Taylor's work by scientifically and rationally optimising each task to improve productivity.
- 1920s: Process Approach (Henri Fayol).

^{*}Research Fellow, School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia. E-mail: amin_shanto@yahoo.com **Assistant Professor, East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. E-mail: sbl.dhk@gmail.com

Planning, Organising, Commanding, Co-ordinating & controlling.

However, studies by Mintzberg (1973) & Kotler (1982) later found that successful managers spend little time doing the above; instead they cultivate networks and personal contacts.

• 1920s: Bureaucracy (Max Weber).

The need to achieve consistency gave rise to need for rules and regulations. In short, all tasks are routine, and all transactions are recorded.

• **1930s-40s** Elton Mayo

Experiments were performed with consulting workers about the work place; highlighting levels to improve productivity for both experimental and the control groups. Other similar experiments found that productivity always improved, no matter what one changed.

Conclusion:

- People are not rational and economic beings as assumed by classical theorists.
- Social interaction is important and people work well if they feel valued.
- 1950s-60s AH Maslow

Hierarchy of Needs-people will try to improve themselves and improve the world if they do not have any worry or fear of going hunger and if they have job security.

• **1960s** EH Schein

He tries to look at people from economic, social and self-actualising stand-points.

- No single management style can succeed in improving the performance of all workers.
- No motives of an individual may be extremely complex and liable to change over time.
- A high level of satisfaction does not necessarily lead to increased productivity.
- 1960s-70s Peter Drucker

Management by Objectives is about strategic management and setting objectives for staff and assessing the achievements.

- Decentralisation and managing in turbulent times.
- Preparing one to deal with sudden change and take advantage of new situations.
- Advocated the concept of competitive advantage.

To draw from Morgan (1986), he sees organisations as complex entities, at times machine-like and at other times organic. He identified eight different ways in which an organisation behaves at one time or the other:

- as machines
- as organisms
- as brains
- as cultures
- as political systems
- as psychic prisons
- as flux and transformation
- as instruments of domination.

These metaphors of organisational life are not fixed categorical systems, as a machine like organisation can be designed to achieve specific goals and turn to an organic system to help it adapt to changes of in the business environment. During turbulent times, it also has the potential to turn into psychic prisons as many organisations are constrained by their own shadows or "psychic prisons", meaning that these organisations only see their own representation of themselves in the outside world, whether by the past they have created, inherited or by the distortions of their own culture.

Menfred Davidmann (1981) concluded that management in the form of government shows that democratic countries have a much higher standard of living, which is three times that of the dictatorial countries. His studies also show that in 1978, 215 million people in America produced about 2,100 billion US dollars' worth of goods and products, while in USSR, about 260 million people produced about 800 billion US dollars' worth. This assessment helps to relate the effectiveness of management style with the standard of living, freedom of individual and the quality of life. Looking at the individual organisations and enterprises, Davidmann's analysis shows that the size of the organisation often determines the level of management style- whether it leans more towards participative or authoritarian management.

Smaller companies are also more effective. Their problems are related to moving with the times, to getting and using specialist advice and applying it in a way suited to their operations. As compared to their smaller

counterparts, large organisations have different sets of problems-their main problem is how to fulfil their expectations and how to get the people to work together. Smaller organisations are more effective by 24 to 33% as compared to large companies with regards to employee utilisation (turnover per employee) and capital utilisation (turnover per unit of issued share capital). This means that the effectiveness of larger organisations can be increased by at least 25% which means that the productivity and profitability can be increased by such a large factor by organising things in a way which promotes teamwork and by adopting and propagating a more participative style of management. While Malaysia is driving to bring its society into the new Knowledge Economy to align with the new Internet Age, a certain level of caution is necessary, as the word "knowledge" may not be as benign as it seems to be. While the nation is charging full steam ahead on to the digital era, socioeconomic disparity between those "have" and "have not" can create negative progress for the community and the country as well (www.infosoc.nitc.org.my).

HYPOTHESES STATEMENTS

In line with the research objectives and based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between authoritarian management styles and employee behaviour.

H2: There is a significant relationship between participative management styles and employee behaviour.

H3: There is a significant relationship between laissez-faire management styles and employee behaviour.

The study of management has alternatively concentrated on the study of leaders and styles of leadership. Walsh, J. P., & Ungson, G. R. (1991) have shown that while certain traits differentiated leaders from non-leaders, the relative importance of these traits changed from one situation to another. The critics were so persuasive that the trait theory failed when research turned to the significant situational and style variables to explain managerial success.

H4: There is a significant relationship between authoritarian management styles and customer satisfaction.

H5: There is a significant relationship between participative management styles and customer satisfaction.

H6: There is a significant relationship between laissez-faire management styles and customer satisfaction.

McGregor (1960), Argyris (1990), Schein (1988) have collectively identified three broad 'common-sense' approaches:

Theory X: People cannot be trusted. They are irrational, unreliable and inherently lazy. They therefore need to be controlled and motivated using financial incentives and threats of punishment. In the absence of such controls, people will pursue their own goals which are invariably in conflict with those of their work organisation.

Theory Y: People seek independence, self-development and creativity in their work. They can see further than immediate circumstances and are able to adapt to new ones. They are fundamentally moral and responsible beings who strive for the good of their work organisation if they are treated as such.

Social: A person's behaviour is influenced most fundamentally by social interactions, which can determine their sense of identity and belonging at work. People seek meaningful social relationships at work. They feel responsible towards the expectations of people around them, which often is a greater motivating factor than financial incentives.

If one agreed that these are the basic common approaches to employee behaviour, then how do managers influence and motivate their staff to perform well?

H7: There is a significant relationship between patience level of employees and acceptance of customer satisfaction.

H8: There is a significant relationship between employees working as team members and customer satisfaction.

H9: There is a significant relationship between an employee's self perception and customer satisfaction.

H10: There is a significant relationship between an employee's interpersonal skills and customer satisfaction. If an employee is motivated enough, would his/her behaviour be good enough to satisfy the customer?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample of ninety one (91) employees from local and foreign multinational manufacturing companies located in the northern region of Malaysia were chosen for the purpose of this study. This geographical area has been chosen as they represent a large number of multinational companies in Malaysia. Different levels of employees were studied based on their capacity as subordinates and internal customers. Manufacturing companies are comprised of PC related electronics industries. The population frame was drawn from 50 companies listed in the Federation of Malaysia Manufacturers (FMM). The companies were chosen by looking at their nationality, number of employees, and location of the organization. Data collection was accomplished by mail and personal delivery.

The sampled companies were contacted in advance by telephone. The managers who were contacted were either Program Managers, Customer Service Managers, Operations Managers and other managers who were the persons to be contacted as authorized by the list provided by the companies. These managers identified that the number of respondents and questionnaires were examined by them in person. The managers then distributed the questionnaires to the identified respondents. The population of the study consisted of front-line employees and middle management level employees in electronics manufacturing companies in the northern region of Malaysia particularly Penang and Kulim industrial parks. Respondents were from both local and multinationals companies such as Intel, Solectron, Xircom, Silterra, Smart Modular, Dell, Acer and Unico. Out of the 160 questionnaires distributed, 101 were returned. From a total of 101 questionnaires, 10 questionnaires were incomplete. Hence, the analysis was based on 91 responses.

RESULTS

A total number of 150 questionnaires had been distributed. The response rate was 63.1% - which means that 100 questionnaires were returned to the researchers, out of which 9 were incompletely filled. The final number of questionnaires used for the analysis of this study is 91.

DATA PRESENTATION

Frequency distributions were obtained for all biographical data or classification variables. All respondents' biographical data was divided into seven (7) variables. The variables were gender, age, marital status, cultural background, educational background, work history with the organization and finally, the country of origin of the present organization. Sample Profile of Respondents indicated that male and female respondents were equally distributed;92% of the respondents were aged below 40 years with 64% out of these below 30 years of age. 40% of the respondents were married, 55% single and 5% divorced. Regarding cultural background, Chinese make up 55% of the sample size, followed by Malay -27% and Indians -18%. In the area of educational background, 48% held a bachelor degree or a master degree, followed by 41% diploma or higher diploma holders, secondary education formed 11% of the total sample. The time period of service of most respondents was below 3 years (44%) and for 41%, it was 3-5 years.12% of the respondents have work experience of 6-10 years and only 3% have worked for more than 10 years in their present organization. American organizations formed 65% of the sample size, 34% of the organizations were from Malaysia and 1% were from the Asian region.

RELIABILITYANALYSIS

The reliability of a measure can be established by testing for both consistency and stability. The Cronbach Alpha for all variables was shown in Table 1 (Results of Reliability Analysis). The reliability test showed that the measures of all items are acceptable. Alpha's range of 0.86 for participative management styles, 0.65 for authoritarian management styles, 0.8307 for laissez-faire management styles, 0.84 for employee behavior and 0.90 for customer satisfaction are acceptable.

Table: 1: Results of Reliability Analysis

Variables	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
(IV) Participative	08	.8617
(IV) Authoritarian	07	.6565
(IV) Laissez-Faire	05	.8307
(IV) Employee Behavior	20	.8459
(DV) Customer Satisfaction	20	.9046

IV = Independent Variable, DV = Dependent Variable

According to Nunally (1982) and Sakaran (2000), the conservative minimum coefficient range shall be more than 0.6 to be considered reliable. Question 11 & question 16 were therefore dropped from the dimension of laissezfaire in order to increase the reliability status of 0.83.

EFFECT OF MANAGEMENT STYLES ON EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR

Regression analysis was used to find out whether authoritarian, participative and laissez-faire management styles have any significant effect on employee behaviour. Table 2 presents the result of the regression analysis.

Table2: Results of Regression Analysis (Effect of Management Styles on Employee Behaviour)

Variable	Beta	T-ratio	Sig.T
Authoritarian	.416	3.919	.000
Participative	.219	1.386	.169
Laissez-Faire	123	850	.397
R2 = .252			
F = 9.750			

Sig.F	= .000
Durbir	n-Watson = 1.789
Condit	tion Index = 26.996

The SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) output shows that participative management styles do not have any impact on employee behaviour (Sig.T=.169). Therefore, H2 was not accepted. The authoritarian management styles were found to be significant (Sig.T = .000) at 1% significance level. The beta was positive (.416). This means that authoritarian management styles do have significant positive effect on employee behaviour. Therefore H1 was accepted. The laissez-faire management styles were found to have no significant effect on employee behaviour (Sig.T = .397). Therefore, H3 was not substantiated.

The R² was 25.2% meaning authoritarian, participative and laissez-faire management styles can explain 25.2% variations in employee behaviour. The Durbin-Watson (1.789) falls within an acceptable range. Therefore, there was no auto-correlation problem in the data. The condition index, VIF and tolerance-all fall within the acceptable range. This constructs that there was no multi collinearity problem in the model. The histogram shows that the data were normally distributed. The F-value was large and was found significant at 1% significance level (Sig.F =.000). This constructs that the regression model used for analysis was fit.

EFFECT OF MANAGEMENT STYLES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Regression Analysis was used to find out whether authoritarian, participative and laissez-faire management styles have any effect on customer satisfaction. Table 3 presents the results of the regression analysis.

Table 3: Regression Analysis (Effect of Management Styles on Customer Satisfaction)

Variable	Beta	T-ratio	Sig.T
Authoritarian	145	-1.287	.202
Participative	344	-2.056	.043
Laissez-Faire	.052	.340	.735
$R^2 = .157$			
F = 5.414			
Sig.F = .002			
Durbin-Watson = 1.939		•	
Condition Index = 26.996		•	

The SPSS output shows that the participative management styles were significant at 5% significant level (Sig.T = .043). This means participative management styles have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. Therefore, H5 was accepted. However, authoritarian and laissez-faire management styles were found to have no significant effect on customer satisfaction. (Sig.T = .202 and .735 respectively). Therefore, H4 and H6 were not accepted. The R^2 was .157 which indicates that authoritarian, participative and laissez-faire management styles can explain 15.7% variations on customer satisfaction. The Durbin-Watson (1.939) falls within an acceptable range. Therefore, there was no auto correlation problem in the data. The condition index, VIF and tolerance all fall within the acceptable range. This constructs that there was no multi collinearity problem in the model. The F-value was large and was found significant at 5% significance level (Sig. F = .002). This constructs that the regression model used for analysis was fit.

EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Regression analysis was used to find out whether an employee's own attributes such as patience and level of acceptance work as a team player, perception of self and interpersonal skills have any significant effect on customer satisfaction. Table 4 presents the result of this regression analysis.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis (Effects of Employee Behaviour on Customer Satisfaction)

Variables	Beta	T-ratio	Sig.T
Patience and Acceptance	.032	.214	.831
Team Player	.097	.715	.476
Self Perception	257	-1.966	.053
Interpersonal Skills	.182	1.461	.148
$R^2 = .057$			
Durbin-Watson = .913			
Condition Index = 26.803			

The SPSS output shows that an employee's own self-perception does have a significant impact on customer satisfaction (Sig.T = .053) at 10% significance level. Therefore, H9 was accepted. On the effects of employees' interpersonal skills towards customer satisfaction, it was found to have no significant impact at 5% significance level (Sig.T=.148). However, it was found to be significant at 15% significance level. The beta was position

(Beta=.182). This means that interpersonal skills have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Therefore, H10 was accepted. Patience & acceptance (Sig.T = .831), team player (Sig.T = .476) were found to have no significant effect on customer satisfaction at 5% significance level respectively. Therefore H7 and H8 was not accepted. The Durbin-Watson (.913) falls within an acceptable range. Therefore, there was no auto correlation problem in the data. The condition index (26.803), VIF and tolerance all fall within the acceptable range. The histogram shows that the data were normally distributed. This constructs that the regression model used for the analysis was fit.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The research finding (H1, H5, H9 & H10 were accepted) have shown that all employees surveyed have a drive to improve and excel. However, they need to perform under a structural boundary as against the unstructured, selfactualisation kind of environment. It is a challenge for the managers to take a serious approach and some in-depth study on their organisational strengths and weakness in the area of human resources and processes is required. Because more often than not, managers prefer to operate in their "comfort zone" and glide along rather than spend time looking for improvement. A participative leadership style needs total commitment from managers as risk is involved when managers are being asked to trust their subordinates to have enough common-sense to do the right things and to keep the managers informed if things go wrong. Writing one of the early human histories circa 400 B.C., Herodotus observed that "Men trust their ears less than their eyes". Today, we say actions speak louder than words. Hence, it is the behaviour of the managers and leaders and not their words which contribute to a functional change in the organization. The definition of empowerment means that every employee should stop the projection of being a victim. Trust needs to build and only then people take ownership and responsibility for their work. It must come from bottom up and the employee's inner desire should be to make a change in their workplace.

The feedback from the Hypotheses raised in this study implied that organisations need to have an identity for their employees to work towards the common objective. Authoritarian management styles have an impact on employee behaviour which showed that a leader or a vision is necessary to lead the pact. "Authoritarian" in this case can also be applied to organisations that have a "strong" sense of culture, it means that there are certain ways to do things and approach problems. However, such an organisation may arouse positive feeling in some people and negative in others. Again this will need to be measured against a historical background. A clear example is IBM Corporation. According to Peter and Waterman (1982), it is one of most renowned companies, but it was depicted with horror by Max Pages, a leading French social psychologist, and he called IBM a "new church" in one of his studies in 1979. This example clearly shows that people are children of their society; and this fact is applicable even to an academic scholar. With many management and psychological concepts floating around, there is no single universally accepted definition of human behaviour and management style. One should realize the fact that people are, to a considerable extent, what they make of themselves. Hence, while breaking down a specific department's tasks and goals, employees generally appreciate being able to participate in small decision making processes if they have an understanding of the overall organisation's objective. This concept is well backed by H5, where participative management style impacted customer satisfaction.

Patience and Acceptance, Team Player and Interpersonal skills were found to have no significant effect on the customer satisfaction. This does not mean that they are not important in satisfying the customer. The data was collected from all levels of the management and this may have had an affect on the result. Different factors are significant for different levels of the management. The self perception of employee behaviour has a significant effect on customer satisfaction. This implies that it is important to understand how employees' perceive certain tasks and responsibilities entrusted to them.

Instead of being essentially self-seeking, social, self-fulfilling or 'labouring' creatures, people are mixture of all of these with the emphasis in any given situation being an outcome of the specific social and cultural context in which they are living. Frieze (1978) suggested that people wield power from one status-in this case the position in organisation; concrete resources-the technology and tools; expertise-the knowledge; self-confidence. This study confirmed that employees with high self-perception and interpersonal skills have an impact on customer satisfaction as such employees are more likely to interpret their customer's needs and make prompt vital decisions instead of seeking the advice of their colleagues or superiors. However, Schein (1988) pointed out that over time, people may be socialised into their organisation's way of thinking about acceptable behaviour and motivation.

(Contd. on page 43)

Concerning the purchasing of two wheelers, most of the rural consumers who are owners have listed quality of the product as the prime factor while considering the various brands of two wheelers. Features of the product, advice of friends and relatives, and brand image/company reputation follow the quality factor regarding the two wheelers. Being a liberalized economy with a growing middle class, India has emerged to be an important place for many multinational companies. The domestic players have to devise every strategy to counter the challenges of MNC's to withstand the competition and survive. Ultimately, it is the consumer who will benefit from these exercises. It is evident from the study that even rural consumers have expressed their deep desires to own quality products. This indicates that customers are quality conscious and are interested in making purchases that give them better satisfaction in the end.

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Ultimately, managers do have some influence on their staff in term of behaviour and motivation. Therefore, constant communication and continuous training is the key to an employee's development. On the other hand, managers may also attract and select people who are already inclined to see things their way. Nevertheless, none of the approaches can be forced on all the people all the time. The most effective approach is goalsetting, as it is based on the premise that intentions shape actions. If work goals are specific (though difficult) and if they are accompanied by feedback on how well one is doing, work performance is usually enhanced.

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