

**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF HOTEL'S EMPLOYEE  
TURNOVER IN THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA***

**KAMELIA CHAICHI**

**FEP 2018 14**



**DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF HOTEL'S EMPLOYEE  
TURNOVER IN THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA**

By

**KAMELIA CHAICHI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**June 2018**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**June 2018**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Dahlia Zawawi, PhD**  
**Faculty : Economics and Management**

Hospitality and tourism is a growing industry in Malaysia. The growth in the hospitality and tourism industry is the reason for the development of the hotel sector. A good understanding of the factors influencing employee turnover intention in the hotel sector is fundamental since turnover is costly and diminishes the organizational effectiveness. Turnover intention is the principal focus of this study as it is regarded as an important predictor of actual turnover behaviour. The present study adopts the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as an appropriate and efficient model in examining turnover intention and behaviour.

Personality role has received increasing attention in recent studies. Hence, by adding personality traits (e.g. positive personality traits (PPT) and core self-evaluation (CSE)) into the TPB model, the current study tries to add value to the literature. The purpose of this study is to propose and investigate an integrative model of turnover intention, which aims to achieve the following objectives: (1) to test the relationship between TPB constructs (Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control) and employee turnover intention, (2) to test and evaluate the effect of positive personalities (PPT and CSE) on employee attitude, and (3) to examine the moderating effect of commitment on the relationship between TPB construct and turnover intention. The measurement characteristics of antecedent variables, along with the outcome variables, are explored and justified in the methodology chapter. The data was obtained from employees of hotels in the area of Klang Valley in Malaysia.

The quantitative method adopted by this research uses the SMART-PLS to measure the validity of the research model and to analyse the data of this study. Findings reveal that all TPB constructs are significantly correlated with turnover intention, all the positive personality factors except self-efficacy predicts employee attitude towards the hotels, and three components of commitment partially moderate the relationship between TPB construct and turnover intention in the hotels in Malaysia. This study has important implications for hotel managers and human resource managers in the hotel industry. A good understanding of the factors affecting the turnover intention of the employees and their positive attitude towards the hotels is expected to help in the development of strategies for managers to retain employees in the hotel organization.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MEMBINA MODEL KONSEPTUAL TENTANG PUSING GANTI PEKERJA  
DI HOTEL-HOTEL KAWASAN LEMBAH KLANG, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**KAMELIA CHAICHI**

**Jun 2018**

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**Fakulti : Ekonomi dan Pengurusan**

Industri pelancongan dan hospitaliti kini semakin berkembang di Malaysia. Perkembangan industri pelancongan dan hospitaliti telah menyumbang kepada perkembangan sektor perhotelan. Pemahaman mendalam terhadap faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kecenderungan pusing ganti pekerja di sektor perhotelan adalah penting kerana pusing ganti melibatkan kos yang tinggi dan mengurangkan keberkesanan organisasi. Niat pusing ganti adalah tumpuan utama kajian ini kerana ia dianggap sebagai peramal penting untuk tingkah laku pusing ganti yang sebenarnya. Kajian kali ini menggunakan Teori Perlakuan Terancang [Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)] sebagai model yang sesuai dan cekap dalam mengkaji niat dan tingkah laku pusing ganti.

Penyelidikan berkenaan peranan personaliti semakin mendapat perhatian para sarjana baru-baru ini. Oleh itu, kami juga cuba menambahkan nilai kepada kajian ini dengan menambah sifat keperibadian yang lain (contohnya, Ciri-ciri Keperibadian Positif [Positive Personality Traits (PPT)]) dan Penilaian Diri Teras [Core Self Evaluation (CSE)] di dalam model TPB.

Tumpuan kajian ini adalah untuk mencadang dan menguji satu model yang mengintegrasikan pelbagai niat pusing ganti, dengan tujuan untuk mencapai matlamat pengajian sebagai berikut: 1) untuk menguji hubungan di antara konstruk TPB (Sikap, norma subjektif, dan kawalan tingkah laku yang boleh dilihat) dan kecenderungan pusing ganti pekerja, (2) untuk menguji dan menilai kesan personaliti positif (PPT dan CSE) terhadap sikap pekerja, dan (3) mengkaji kesan interaksi komitmen terhadap hubungan di antara konstruk TPB dan niat pusing ganti. Ciri-ciri pengukuran pembolehubah sedia ada, bersama dengan pembolehubah hasil, telah diterokai dan dibuktikan di dalam bab metodologi. Data telah diperolehi daripada sampel pekerja hotel di kawasan Lembah Klang, Malaysia.

Kajian kaedah kuantitatif yang dijalankan menggunakan SMART-PLS untuk mengukur kesahihan model penyelidikan dan menganalisa data kajian ini. Hasil kajian juga mendedahkan bahawa semua konstruk TPB adalah berhubungkait dengan niat pusing ganti, semua faktor personaliti positif kecuali efikasi diri boleh meramal sikap pekerja terhadap industri hotel, dan akhirnya, tiga komponen komitmen mempengaruhi sebahagian hubungan di antara konstruk TPB dan niat pusing ganti di dalam industri perhotelan Malaysia. Kajian ini dapat memberi implikasi yang sangat besar dan penting kepada pengurus hotel dan pengurus sumber manusia di dalam industri perhotelan. Pemahaman mendalam terhadap faktor yang mempengaruhi niat pusing ganti pekerja dan sikap positif mereka terhadap organisasi dijangka dapat membantu para pengurus di dalam perancangan strategi dan alatan untuk mengekalkan pekerja di dalam sektor perhotelan.

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In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful. The path to the completion of this thesis has been very challenging and the supports received from several people have made this research a reality.

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I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hotel managers and the human resource managers, as well as the employees of all the participating hotels in Malaysia for taking part in my research. My appreciation goes to all the individuals who have contributed their time and effort in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. I would like to thank them for providing me with the relevant information and data during my research. I must also express my appreciation to many friends whom I got to know along this journey.

To my parents, who prayed for me and offered unconditional love and support, there will never be enough words to convey the depth of my gratitude to both of you for all you have done. You were always there when I needed someone during all the difficult situations outside of the country. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all my dear family members whose support started, followed, and finished this project; they are truly responsible for all the best achievements in my life. Specially to my father, who in spite of his poor health condition was always there as a source of strength and emotional support, whose patience and understanding with my preoccupation during these six years inspired me to complete my study and this research. I will never forget. Thanks for everything.

With a lot of great people around me to provide their support, love, and friendship, this research was completed and words are not adequate enough to express my gratitude to them.



This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The hospitality and tourism industry known as a service sector is one of the main growing industries in Malaysia. Service sectors in Malaysia have played important roles in the growth and development process of its economy (Chee, 2007). In any service sector, human resource is the most valuable asset. It enables organizations to carry out their businesses. For an organization to be successful, it must continuously improve employee satisfaction (Yee et al., 2008). The tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in Malaysia, is not held in high regard as being able to offer long-standing and prosperous career (AlBattat & Som, 2013). Many studies showed high labour turnover rates in Malaysia especially in the service industry (AlBattat et al., 2014; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), 2011). Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the employee turnover intention in the hospitality and tourism industry of Malaysia. Chapter one forms the introduction to the research and provides general explanations and an overview of the entire research process. Specifically, this chapter discusses the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study including theoretical and practical significance, scope of the study, and definition of terms, and ends with the summary of the chapter.

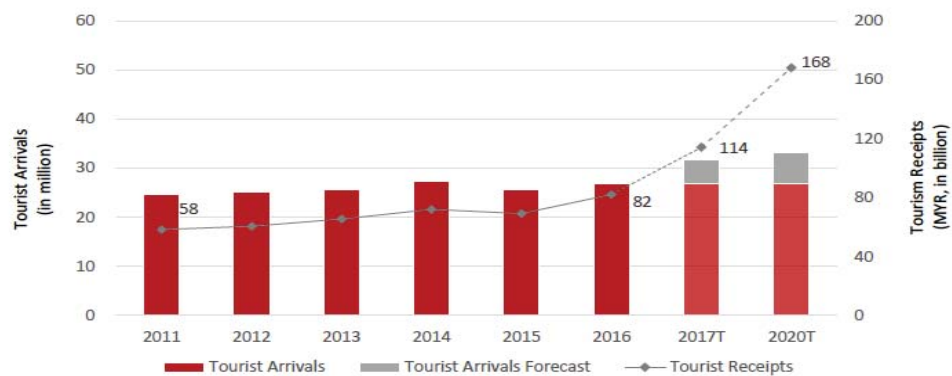
#### **1.2 Background of the Research**

This section describes the background to the study by providing a review of 1) the hospitality and tourism industry and 2) the hotel industry in Malaysia.

##### **1.2.1 The Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

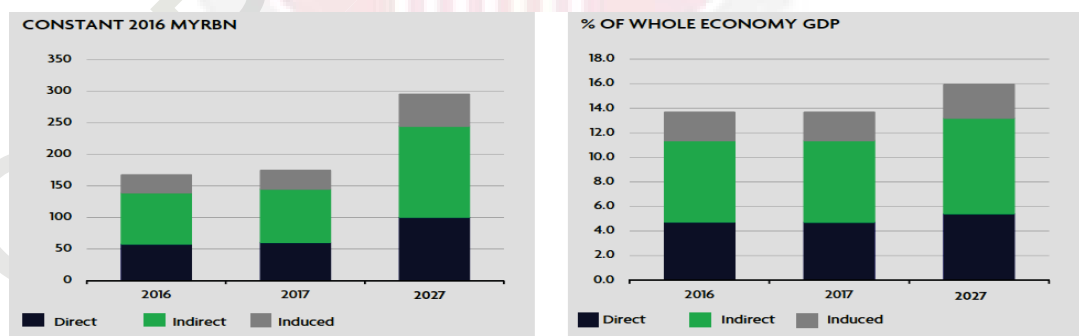
The hospitality and tourism industries were incorporated as one industry since there is an overlap of labours and sub-sectors between the industries (Baum, 2008). There is massive growth in the hospitality and tourism industry, globally. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) report that was published in 2017, the total contribution of the hospitality and tourism industry to Gross Domestic Products (GDP) around the world was USD7,613.3bn in 2016 (10.2% of GDP). WTTC's report in 2017 emphasized that for many countries, the hospitality and tourism industry is a significant source of employment. The hospitality and tourism sector around the world generated 292,220,000 jobs in 2016 (9.6% of total employment). This number included hotel employees and other employments by airlines, passenger transportation services, and travel agencies (WTTC, 2017).

One of the most popular tourist destinations in the world is Malaysia. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has ranked Malaysia as the world's 11th most visited tourism destination in 2013. Additionally, the travel and tourism competitiveness report, in 2017, ranked Malaysia 26th out of 141 countries overall, which made her the fifth best in Asia. According to the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) report, "Despite unfortunate events affecting Malaysia's aviation industry in 2014, the hospitality and tourism industry remained a major contributor to Malaysian economic growth" (ETP, 2014). In 2016, Malaysia recorded 26.7 million tourist arrivals, a 4% increase from 2015 (Tourism Malaysia, 2017) (Figure 1.1).



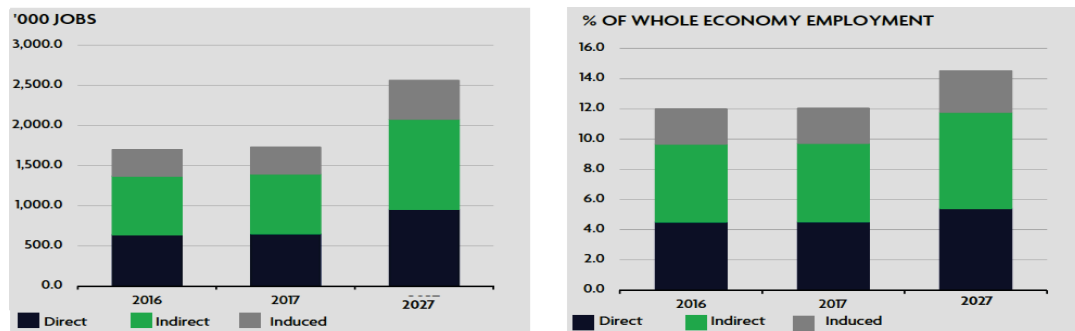
**Figure 1.1: Malaysia tourism arrivals (WTTC, 2017)**

In Malaysia, according to WTTC (2017), the total contribution of the hospitality and tourism industry to GDP was MYR167.5bn in 2016 (13.7% of GDP) and is forecasted to rise by 5.4% p.a. to MYR295.6bn by 2027 (15.9% of GDP) (WTTC, 2017), which are illustrated in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2: Malaysia Total Contribution of the Hospitality and Tourism to GDP (WTTC, 2017)**

In Malaysia, the hospitality and tourism industry generated 1,700,500 jobs in 2016 (12.0% of total employment). This number has increased by 1.8% in 2017 to 1,731,000 jobs. By 2027, the hospitality and tourism industry is forecasted to support 2,564,000 jobs (14.5% of total employment), an increase of 4.0% p.a. over the period (WTTC, 2017). Figure 1.3 shows the total contribution of the hospitality and tourism industry to the total employment in Malaysia.



**Figure 1.3: Malaysia Total Contribution of the Hospitality and Tourism to Employment (WTTC, 2017)**

According to the WTCC (2017) report, the number of employees in the hospitality and tourism industry in Malaysia is quite high. The hospitality and tourism industry is a service sector and it is well recognized that service sectors are highly dependent on the human factor, which has become a major part of the hospitality product (Robinson et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2012). Generating revenues, fostering employment, elevating the living standards, and providing many business opportunities make the hospitality and tourism industry a vital industry in Malaysia. As the country continues to boost the hospitality and tourism industry, job opportunities continue to expand (Apostolopoulos et al., 2013).

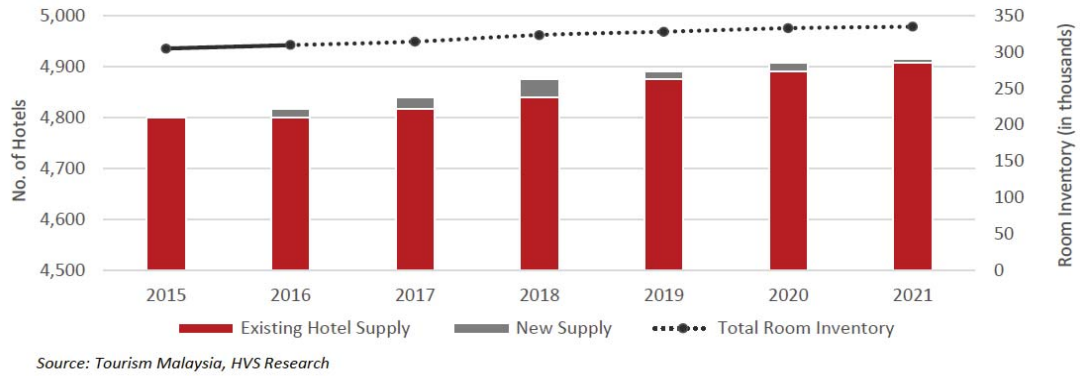
One of the major issues affecting the hospitality and tourism industry is the high rate of employee turnover (AlBattat et al., 2013; Zainol et al., 2015). This industry offers vast job opportunities, but it also faces the problem of high employee turnover. The most significant issue faced by managers in the hospitality and tourism industry is employee retention due to the shortage of skilled labour, economic growth, and employee turnover (Busby & Gibson, 2010; Karani, 2011). Malaysia, generally, has experienced high employee turnover rate in various industries specifically the hospitality and tourism industry (Zainol et al., 2015; Mastar et al., 2016). For instance, two reports have showed the high employee turnover rate in Malaysia in general. According to the Tower Watson report published in 2013, the average annual turnover rates in the general industry in Malaysia has increased from 12.3% in 2012 to 13.2% in 2013 (Towers Watson, 2013). Another annual report by "Randstad World of Work" released in 2014 showed that 66% of employees in Malaysia plan to leave their jobs in the next 12 months to advance their careers (Randstad, 2014), signifying that employee turnover will remain an issue for organizations.

According to the last report available from the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) in 2014, the hospitality and tourism industry hired a substantial number of individuals rated at 13% from the total Malaysian work force. Employees in the hospitality and tourism industry earned lower average wage compared to other sectors such as the financial services and energy sector (ETP, 2014). The low salary compels employees to resign from their current jobs and search for other high paying jobs. Regrettably, the low wages of employees and unfavourable working conditions are unchangeable facts about the hospitality and tourism industry in many countries (e.g. Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Buultjens, 2001; AlBattat & Som, 2013). The hospitality and tourism industry assumes a crucial role in the ETP: to “propel Malaysia into a high-income nation” (ETP, 2014). Employees play a very significant role in the hospitality and tourism industry. Nevertheless, the high turnover rates in Malaysia indicate that employee retention is not an easy task.

### **1.2.2 The Hotel Industry in Malaysia**

The hotel industry plays a vital role in complementing tourism as it provides accommodation to travellers and tourists. The Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), established in the year 1974, intends to enhance the hotel industry further. The Malaysian government implemented several strategies to improve the service sector to increase the economic growth (ETP, 2014). The hospitality and tourism industry is acknowledged as a potential service sector in contributing to the Malaysian economy. The growth of the hotel sector has been strictly associated with the hospitality and tourism industry that supports the policy to meet the economic growth. The hotel sector is one of the major components of the hospitality and tourism industry, which has been described as the provider of accommodation, recreation, and other amenities for travellers and customers. Based on the latest available data from the Department of Statistics (2014), the hotel sector earned RM 6.6 billion revenue in 2014 and there were a total of 112,670 people employed as the hotel industry's workforce (Department of Statistic, 2014).

In recent years, the hotel industry has been growing globally, and this growth can be observed in Malaysia due to the growth of the hospitality and tourism industry. According to the Hospitality Valuation Service's (HVS) report (2017), a significant number of hotels are expected to enter the Malaysian market. On top of that, an addition of 98 hotels, with 25,537 classified rooms, was publicly announced for the period of 2017-2021” (HVS research 2017) (Figure 1.4).



**Figure 1.4 : existing and future hotel supply in Malaysia**

According to Tourism Malaysia (2017), there are approximately 4,817 hotels in Malaysia with different ratings and sizes. From 2015 to 2016, hotel supply in Malaysia has increased by 18 classified hotels to reach 4,817 hotels and 309,369 rooms. Table 1.2 shows that the hotel industry is growing rapidly.

**Table 1.1 : Number of Hotels in Malaysia**

MALAYSIA	HOTELS (NUMBER)				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,724	3,094	4,072	4,799	4,817

(Source: Tourism Malaysia Official Website 2017)

The importance of the hospitality and tourism industry in generating Malaysia's economic growth is growing. The hotel sector is recognized as the backbone of the hospitality and tourism industry and is developing rapidly. Therefore, the hotel sector has been considered as one of the main contributor to the Malaysian economy (Tourism Malaysia, 2017).

### 1.3 Research Problem

As mentioned before, the growth of the hotel sector is closely aligned with the hospitality and tourism industry. Therefore, the hotel industry plays a significant role in the Malaysian economy and directly contributes to economic growth (ETP, 2014). A report by Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) in 2011 placed the hotel and restaurant industry in the third position with the highest annual average of employee turnover rate at 32.4 % after IT communication (75 %) and Associations (33%). Considering there are so many developments in the hotel industry, employee turnover is one of the biggest problems for hotel managers (Albattat & Som, 2013; Zainol et al., 2015). The hotel industry is highly dependent on human resources as employees

play an important part in hotel operations (Anvari et al., 2014). The issue of high voluntarily turnover is a matter of grave concern at the national level as it is poorly affecting Malaysia's competitiveness.

The Malaysian hotel industry has been facing shortage of workforce at all skill levels since 1990 (Aminudin, 2013). This staff shortage issue has been further aggravated by staff turnover among the existing workforce in hotels. The issue is that hotels keep losing skilled employees and training new employees are time-consuming. Thus, various researchers have investigated this issue from many different angles and identified the strategies to overcome this problem (Aminudin, 2013; Long et al., 2012). However, recent studies on the Malaysian turnover issue (e.g., Ahmad & Scott, 2014; Zainol et al., 2015; Mastar et al., 2016) showed that this problem still exists in the industry. To look further into the turnover issue in the hotels in Malaysia, two short interviews were conducted with a general manager (Mr. Aaron Nelson) of a five-star hotel and an operation manager (Mr. Puvanesan Kantasamy) of a four-star hotel, the names of which are kept anonymous at the requests of the hotel managers and accordingly, a confidentiality letter was completed and submitted to the hotels' HR managers. One main question was asked during the short interview: "is turnover still an issue for the managers in the hotel industry?"

According to Mr. Aaron Nelson,

*"Turnover definitely is still a problem. Many employees resigned because other hotels offered them better salary ... new employees most of the time show unfriendliness, and ruthless attitude towards customers, and they expected people to accept them. Their irrational behaviours such as lateness, long lunch breaks, and too much unreasonable emergency leaves showed that they don't feel any commitment, responsibility, or good attitude towards the hotel ... It is challenging for the hotel to accept employee resignation since it takes a long time to replace them, and it incurs so much cost..."*

According to Mr. Puvanesan Kantasamy,

*"Staff turnover is certainly so high which leads to staff shortage. Staff shortages, especially in the front office, are caused by the difficulty in getting and retaining employees because of the low pay and long working hours, they feel no commitment, no loyalty and they show bad attitude towards the hotels... The hotel tries to recruit people, but many do not take up the job because of the small pay... It is important to have enough staff to give excellent service. When you have enough staff, they have sufficient time to provide excellent services. You cannot provide excellent service when you are in a hurry ..."*

Based on the two short interviews, staff turnover is found to be a very important issue for the managers of the hotels. Additionally, employees' bad attitude towards the hotels and lack of commitment were the other significant problems mentioned by the managers of the hotels. Other issues mentioned by managers were low salaries and long working hours. However, given the nature of the hotel industry, changing the working condition, reducing the working hours, and increasing the salary are not affordable and profitable for the hotel industry. In the hospitality sector, wages are a major component of costs in the industry (Buultjens, 2001). Many hospitality firms are not able to provide sufficient funds to offer attractive and competitive compensation, higher salaries or rewards (Alonso & O'Neill, 2009; Tudor, 2011). Therefore, we cannot directly address this issue, since the nature of employment conditions (e.g. long working hours) and the characteristics of the job in the hotel industry cannot be completely controlled (Freedman & Kosová, 2012). According to the respondents, turnover is a big concern for the hotel industry since it is costly. The costs are made up of employment costs, training charges, departure rates, loss of efficiency, decreased confidence of the other employees, reduced quality, losing customers, and extra workload for the remaining employees (Boushey & Glynn, 2012; Simons & Hinkin, 2001). Hence, organizations should strive to reduce turnover. Consequently, hotels which are not able to decrease their staff turnover are expected to lose their competitiveness in the long run.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, employees' personality and personal psychological resources are essential as they exert critical influence on employee's job-related outcomes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). It is well documented that individuals with positive personalities, regardless of unfavourable working conditions, do not experience burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001) and consequently remain in the organization. Having positive personalities is specifically useful for the hotel industry since in comparison to the other industries, the working condition in the hotel industry is considered as unfavourable due to the following reasons. The hotel industry has no routine holiday (Yih & Htaik, 2011). The inadequate working conditions of the industry such as low pay, inflexible job attributes, extended working hours, seasonal service, low job position (Ahmand & Zainol, 2011), excessive workloads, low career security, and insufficient training and opportunities increase job dissatisfaction. These factors lead to high turnover rate among hotel employees (Yih & Htaik, 2011). As mentioned earlier, the nature of the works in the hotel industry is not completely controllable and cannot be changed. Therefore, the employee's positive self-evaluation and positive personality may be significant as a source of their own satisfaction. Nevertheless, employee's personalities as an antecedent of turnover is far less researched and not well understood in the hospitality and tourism industry (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009; Yavas et al., 2010). Due to the nature of the working conditions in the hotel industry as mentioned above, there is a need for employees with particular personalities who can adjust themselves to various situations, provide acceptable performance, and remain in the organization. Therefore, this study attempts to use individual personalities as an antecedent of turnover in the hotel industry.

Further, psychological theories clarified that individuals with different personalities show different intentions in various situations and behave differently (McCrae & John 1992). Therefore, personalities are important factors to be considered in predicting individual intention and behaviour. Additionally, many turnover models including the ones presented by Mobley (1977), Steers and Mowday (1981), and Steel and Ovalle (1984), have used "turnover intentions" as the utmost and exact predictor of "actual turnover behaviour". The idea that self-reported intentions are the finest predictors of behaviour has been particularized in the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). TPB theory is used in many recognized turnover models (e.g. Hom & Griffith, 1995; Mobley et al., 1977). A theory is expected to be valid if it works under diverse settings and situations (Bamberg et al., 2003). A review of available literature showed that previous studies presented an improved form of the TPB model and the findings were dissimilar from the primary TPB model. The literature identified limited number of research having applied the whole construct of TPB model in the hotel context (e.g. Gao et al., 2016; 2003; Kim et al., 2013). For instance, Gao et al. (2016) determined the relationship between TPB construct and the consumers' behavioural intentions towards green hotels. Kim et al. (2013) augmented the TPB constructs' predictive power of consumer intentions in selecting eco-friendly hotel/restaurants. Therefore, the current study tries to contribute to the TPB literature by proposing a conceptual model of the TPB to investigate the efficacy and predictive ability of the model in the hotel industry. Ajzen (1991) suggested that the TPB framework is open to the addition of extra predictors, which increased the predictive validity of the theory after the current TPB constructs have been taken into account. The TPB comprises three predictors of intentions and behaviour, namely attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude is a core component in the TPB model, and the theory will be rejected if attitude does not predict intention (Ajzen 1991). Finding particular personality traits, which influence the attitude of employees towards the hotels, could be the key to better understand employee intention in order to retain them in the hotel industry. Therefore, due to the lack of literature in this domain, the current study aims to understand the hotel employees' turnover intention by using the TPB theory and including positive personality traits to this model.

Moreover, research has shown that employees with positive personalities are more likely to display commitment (Louis & Lombart, 2010). Commitment has successfully demonstrated a negative relationship with turnover intention (Meyer & Allen, 1997). There have been few studies on the moderating effect of commitment (Aryee & Tan, 1992; Griffith & Hom, 2001) on turnover intention model. Jaros (1997, p. 322) suggested that while the majority of research examines "a direct, independent link between each form of commitment and turnover intention, it is possible that the three forms of commitment moderate other constructs' relationships with turnover intention". Research on the moderating effects of commitment would contribute to the understanding of turnover intention in Malaysia by suggesting the appropriate human resource practices to improve employees' commitment as a mean to reduce turnover intention. Hence, this research will attempt to investigate turnover intention by looking specifically at the role of commitment as a moderating variable added to the TPB model. There are several directions that future research might take including examining the moderating effects in the behaviour and attitude link (Robbins et al.,

2003). Besides, researchers suggested including moderator variables in an attempt to improve the fit of different models, since the main effect alone might not provide sufficient accuracy in prediction (Aguinis, 2004). After reviewing the TPB literature, it can be concluded that there has been no attempt to examine the moderating role of commitment in the TPB model. To date, there does not seem to be any research on the impact of integrated positive personality traits and commitment on the TPB constructs to predict turnover intention. It would be theoretically valuable to test an integrative model of TPB using samples in the Malaysian hotel industry.

Finally, past studies on hotels in Malaysia did not include either managers or non-managers in their research. According to the studies, hotel managers' turnover rate is stated to be lower when compared to the non-managerial staff (Carbery et al., 2003). On the other hand, the average cost of substituting managerial and supervisory staff is higher compared to operational staff or front-line employees (Davidson et al., 2010). Furthermore, high turnover among non-managerial employees results in low quality service and has negative influence on satisfaction towards and the brand image of the hotel (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). Therefore, analysing turnover at all levels of employees in the hotel industry is significantly important. Past few studies on hotel staff turnover in Malaysia focused particularly on either front line employees (Patah et al., 2009), or specifically at managerial level (Carbery et al., 2003). To the best of our, not much research has been done on hotel staff turnover that considers all levels of employees. The present study attempts to collect samples from various levels of employees (management and non-management) to better understand the employees in the hotel industry in Malaysia.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The general objective of the study is to propose and empirically test a conceptual model that integrates positive personality traits, commitment, and the Theory of planned behaviour (TPB) to predict turnover intention in the hotel industry in Malaysia. The present study attempts to control favourable employee attitude towards the hotel industry with a focus on two different sets of positive personality traits: "positive psychological traits" (PPT) and "core self-evaluation trait" (CSE). Specifically, this study aims:

- 1) to determine if there is a relationship between TPB constructs (Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control) and employee turnover intention in the hotel industry in Malaysia.
- 2) to determine the influence of personality traits of employees ("positive psychological traits" and "core self-evaluation traits") on employees' attitudes towards the hotel industry in Malaysia.
- 3) to establish if organizational commitment moderates the relationship between TPB constructs (Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control) and employee turnover intention in the hotel industry in Malaysia.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions are formulated to address the problem and underpin the study:

- 1) What is the role of TPB constructs (Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control) in predicting turnover intention? Which particular construct exerts the strongest influence on the turnover intention in the hotel industry in Malaysia?
- 2) What is the role of personality factors in predicting employee attitude towards the hotel industry in Malaysia? Which personality constructs of an employee exerts the strongest influence on employee attitude towards the hotel industry in Malaysia?
- 3) Can organizational commitment adequately moderate the relationship between TPB constructs (Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control) and employee turnover intention in the hotel industry in Malaysia?

## **1.6 Significance of Study**

The current study attempts to apply the TPB theory and extend it to better understand employee turnover intention and consequently retain employees in the organization. This study hopes to provide significant theoretical and practical contributions in the area of employee turnover in the hospitality and tourism industry, especially in the hotel context.

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Significance**

The findings of this study will enrich the existing body of knowledge on turnover intention and individual's decision to quit or remain in an organization. It would also make significant contribution to literature in the following ways:

Firstly, this study develops, proposes, and tests an integrative model of predicting turnover intention that consists of three main theories and model: theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), and Meyer and Allen's (1991) model of commitment. This study tries to expand the TPB model by adding a moderator variable (commitment), and antecedent variables (positive psychological traits (PPT) and core self-evaluation (CSE)) in the TPB model. Therefore, this study hopes to provide not only empirical evidence on how the main constructs of the TPB would lead to employee turnover intention in the hotel industry, but also an extended integrative model for future research on hospitality and tourism industry's employee turnover intention.

Secondly, the current study is one of the first to formulate and test the influence of PPT and CSE on attitude in the presence of the full construct of TPB. Previous studies on personality considered only the "Five-Factor Model personality" as antecedents on the TPB model. Moreover, Erez and Judge (2001) and Judge et al. (2002) showed that CSE is a more consistent predictor of organizational outcomes than the five factor model personality and provides incremental validity over the five-factor model. In addition, PPT are considered less stable and more open to change and development compared to the Big Five personality dimensions. PPT are more malleable and open to change and development through training programs (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Further, Picazo-Vela et al. (2010) suggested that the applications of other personality traits, rather than just the Big Five personality, in future research is required to enrich both the TPB and personality literature. Hence, by adding personality PPT and CSE in the TPB model, the current study tries to follow this suggestion.

Furthermore, the growing body of research to date indicates that PPT and CSE have a positive effect on important work attitudes (e.g., Youssef & Luthans, 2007; Villavicencio-Ayub et al., 2014). Employee attitude towards the hotel industry was one of the issues mentioned by hotel managers in the problem statement of the study. Rosentbluth (1991) argued that in the service industries such as hotels, without employees' positive attitude towards their jobs, it is impossible to achieve satisfaction. According Ajzen and Fishbein (1977), attitude is considered a major factor influencing individual's decision-making process. In other words, attitude is a core component in the TPB model, and the theory will be rejected if attitude does not predict intention (Ajzen 1991). Drawing from the TPB, we hope to identify and confirm positive personality traits that can affect employees' attitude towards the hotels and subsequently reduce turnover intention. Therefore, this study enriches the understanding of the effect of positive personality traits on the turnover model.

Thirdly, this research contributes to the existing turnover literature by demonstrating the moderating effect of three components of commitment, "Normative, Affective, and Continuance", on the turnover model. We hope to identify the critical role of commitment as a moderator between the TPB constructs and employee turnover intention (which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been studied before). Therefore, it is expected that the proposed integrative model of turnover will contribute to the development of turnover theory in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Additionally, current research hopes to contribute to the existing turnover literature in Malaysia. The hospitality and tourism industry is a major contributor to the economic growth and the turnover rate in the industry is very high in Malaysia. Although employee turnover intention in Malaysia has been widely discussed by many scholars (e.g., Ghazali, 2010; AlBattat et al., 2013), little attention has been given to individual factors and personality traits of the employee in the hospitality and tourism industry. Thus, this study contributes in adding more literature in this area specifically from the Malaysian hotel employees' perspective to decrease turnover intention. The results of

this study may be generalized to other countries in the Asia Pacific region since for the majority of the countries in this area, hospitality and tourism is a very significant industry.

### **1.6.2 Practical Significance**

The present study proposes significant practical implications for managers and the hospitality and tourism industry. Findings from the conceptual modelling and the empirical study of employee turnover may provide significant insights for managers who are challenged to retain employees. Positive personality traits as important drivers of employee attitude toward the organization were rarely investigated in previous hospitality and tourism literature. Results of this study would provide foresights for hotel HR practitioners in designing and developing strategies to enhance favourable employee attitude towards the organization.

Moreover, the study aims to reveal that it is not only important but also necessary to focus on the positive personality of individuals in the workplace through proper selection and training of employees as well as managers in the industry. Furthermore, the management and hotel HR practices may consider the valuable impact of positive personality traits on employees in their recruitment and selection process. Individuals' positive personality traits are essential to their job satisfaction and commitment level. Hotel organizations would gain benefits by using adequate selection process with the intention to hire individuals with better levels of positive personality traits (for instance by applying an instrument which evaluates the level of applicants' personality traits). Highlighting personality traits during the recruiting procedure delivers a critical message to potential employees that positive personality is a significant characteristic for the hotel employees. It would be great to consider adopting the instrument of personality traits in the early selection process.

Further, it is vital for hotels to recognize the importance of positive personality traits and advance training programs to help employees improve and preserve their positive personalities at high levels. Avey et al. (2010) emphasized that short training involvements can improve all dimensions of personality traits. Throughout the selection process and after that, managers can use the positive personality questionnaire to identify employees that require more training interventions. If training interventions were needed, managers can aid employees in establishing inspiring goals and avoiding unwanted goals, and provide some assistance for them to overcome various barriers in the workplace.

Finally, it is hoped that the results of this study would not only help hotel managers but also other hospitality organizations in generating strategies to minimize staff turnover rate, by enhancing the selection and recruitment policy and enhancing positive employee traits through training. Acquiring and retaining employees with positive personality traits is important because they can contribute to a practical working environment, assist as role models, and have significant effect on existing employees.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

This section provides definitions of the main variables that are adopted in the conceptual model of the study (refer to Figure 3.5). The following terms are defined to clarify their explicit usage within this study and to support the reader's understanding of the problems presented.

### **Turnover Intention (TI):**

*Turnover intention is the conscious and deliberate wilfulness to leave the organization (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978) and refers to the subjective estimation of an individual regarding the probability that she/he will be leaving the organization that she/he works for in the near future (Mobley, 1982).*

### **Attitude:**

*According to Ajzen (1991), attitude towards behaviour is the person's favourable or unfavourable feeling of performing that behaviour and is determined by behavioural beliefs about the outcome of the behaviour and evaluation of the outcome.*

### **Subjective Norm:**

*Individual's perceptions of social pressure in performing or not performing a given behaviour are determined by normative beliefs which assess the social pressures on the individual about a particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).*

### **Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC):**

*Function of control beliefs about the perceived ease or difficulty of carrying out the intended behaviour and may have both direct and indirect effects on behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).*

**Personality:**

*Personality refers to the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determines his/her unique adjustments to his/her environment (Allport, 1937).*

**Personality Traits:**

*Personality traits are typically defined as descriptions of people in terms of relatively stable patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and emotions (McCrae & Costa, 2003).*

**Positive psychological trait:**

*Positive psychological traits are comprised of Resilience, Hope, Optimism, and Self-efficacy, as proposed by Luthans and his colleagues based on the concept of positive organizational behaviour which shows positive organizational outcome (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).*

**Resilience:**

*Resilience is defined as “a dynamic process wherein individuals display positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma” (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000, p. 858). Resilience is the ability to cope with difficult life situations, and even come out stronger than before (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).*

**Hope:**

*Using Snyder’s (2002) hope theory, hope is defined as personality trait-like disposition and cognitions regarding one’s expectations and ability to attain important goals.*

**Optimism:**

*Optimism is a stable personality trait that reflects the extent to which one believes that his or her own future will be prosperous and favourable (Scheier & Carver, 1985).*

**Self-Efficacy:**

*Self-efficacy is an individual's appraisal of what they are capable of accomplishing (Bandura, 2001).*

**Core Self-Evaluation:**

*Core self-evaluation (CSE) refers to fundamental assumptions that individuals hold about their worthiness, functionality, and capability (Judge et al., 1998).*

**Organizational Commitment:**

*Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organizational commitment as a desire to belong to the organization and a willingness to display effort on behalf of the organization and constructed organizational commitment as multidimensional with three components: Affective, Normative, and Continuance commitment.*

**Affective Commitment:**

*Affective Commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).*

**Continuance Commitment:**

*Continuance Commitment refers to commitment based on costs that an employee associates with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).*

**Normative Commitment:**

*Normative Commitment refers to the employee's feeling of obligation to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).*

**1.8 Thesis Organization**

This section describes the organization of the research study. The current thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction and background of the study. It provides the problem and the objectives of the study. The theoretical and practical significance of the study and variable definitions are elaborated on. This chapter concludes with the organization of the research study for better referencing. Chapter 2 deals with all the relevant literature review. It exposes issues and discussions on the hospitality and tourism industry and turnover problems, which are then related

to the literature of employee personality, organizational commitment, and related theories that are significant to this study. Overall, the literature review highlights the importance of employee personality and the development of the TPB model, and their effects on employee turnover intention. The findings from previous research and research gaps will also be addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 provides a review of three leading theories and the model of the study including TPB, which forms the basis of the present study, social cognitive theory, and the Meyer and Allen model of commitment. The rationale for choosing the TPB model and other TPB-related research issues as well as the conceptualisations of the fundamental construct for this study are also included. The theoretical framework of the study will be formed whereby the conceptual framework and the expected relationships among the constructs will be developed based on solid literature review. All the variables elaborated in the framework are identified and deliberated upon, and the hypotheses are presented, in this chapter.

Chapter 4 clarifies the methodology adopted for the current study. The discussions elaborate the research design, the population of the study, sampling procedure, and the instrument used. This chapter also explains the data collection procedures, as well as provide a brief overview of the pilot study. Chapter 5 covers a discussion on data analysis and interpretation of data. The findings of the study are summarized and discussed. In Chapter 6, the research findings are summarized, disclosing also the contributions to theory and practice. This is followed by a discussion on managerial implications, research limitations, and suggestions for future study.

## **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study. A brief introduction to the significant role of hospitality and tourism industry in economic growth and how the hotel industry contributes to the hospitality and tourism industry was provided. There was also a description of how high employee turnover dilemma rose in the hospitality and tourism industry, specifically in the hotel industry in Malaysia. Furthermore, the importance of personality traits and development of TPB as a leading theory of the study was discussed. Lastly, definitions of the variables used in the conceptual model and the organization of the thesis were provided. The next chapter will provide a review of the applicable literature concerning the study.

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